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## Grant will expand Risk Watch program



(Left) Fire prevention specialist Robert Marshall checks out four-year-old Zackary Maxfield's firefighter costume. Zackary was saved from choking two years ago by his sister after she went through the Risk Watch program. (Below) Sunnyside Preschool teacher Cindy Brengman applied for and received a \$5000 grant to expand the program to more classrooms.



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The preschoolers watched the fireman with caution as he pulled on the heavy protective suit and hat. Was this the same friendly man they had grown to trust?

Understanding that a firefighter in full gear is not someone to fear, but instead the very person to run to in a bad situation, is just one of the many lessons taught to preschoolers and elementary students by the Risk Watch program.

Locally, Risk Watch is credited with saving the lives of three people. Already in 60 classrooms in the Lake Stevens School District and private preschools, a \$5000 grant will expand the program to 22 additional classrooms beginning next fall.

Sunnyside Preschool teacher Cindy Brengman won the Fred Meyer grant, one of three selected from more than 500 entries. Her preschool class visited fire prevention specialist Robert Marshall at the Chapel Hill fire station last Thursday as part of the Risk

Photos by Jennifer Madison Davis

Watch curriculum.

Risk Watch was designed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to give children information to help avoid preventable injuries. The curriculum covers eight areas: fire safety and burn prevention; motor

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vehicle safety; choking, suffocation and strangulation prevention; poisoning prevention; firearm injury prevention; water safety; bicycle and pedestrian safety; and fall safety.

"Risk Watch empowers children with knowledge. Children are natural helpers - this program gives them the skills and safety information to help themselves and others," said Brengman. That point was driven home on Dec. 21, 1998 when one of Brengman's preschoolers, then five-year-old Courtney Maxfield, helped save her brother Zackary's life. Just week earlier Courtney had participated in a Risk Watch unit at Sunnyside Preschool on choking.

According to mom, Michelle Maxfield, Zackary, then two, choked on a piece of candy while she was in the other room. "Courtney knew he was choking and kept him calm and brought him to me," said Maxfield. As Maxfield turned around, Courtney began to try the Heimlich maneuver, as teacher Brengman had demonstrated, when Zackary coughed

up the candy.

Zackary is now four and on Thursday wore a firefighter's costume as he clambered aboard the fire truck with his preschool classmates, seemingly unaware of his celebrity status.

The program has been offered for three years by a coalition including Snohomish County Fire District 8, Lake Stevens Police Department, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, Everett Community College nursing program and the Washington State Patrol. Marshall coordinates the program and is working with the state fire marshal and other agencies to expand it statewide.

In addition to Zackary, Risk Watch is attributed with two other "saves" in Lake Stevens: a man whose grandchild instructed him to "stop, drop and roll" when his pants caught on fire, and a second-grader who wouldn't let a cousin play with a handgun they discovered, instead alerting an adult. "Risk Watch gives kids suggestions on how to make safe habits a part of their daily lives," said Marshall.