

Safety program reaches more kids

Class has grown to teach more than 1,400 children

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LAKE STEVENS — Keeping kids safe is a basic necessity of life.

So why aren't more children taught more about safety in schools?

They soon will be.

Cindy Brengman, director of Sunnyside Preschool in Lake Stevens, and Robert Marshall, fire prevention specialist with Snohomish County Fire District 8, have been working for four years with a children's safety program called Risk Watch.

Two years ago, they received a \$5,000 grant to expand the program to 25 classrooms.

Now, the Risk Watch program is being taught in seven public elementary schools and two private preschools in Lake Stevens, reaching 75 classrooms and 1,440 students.

This fall, Marshall and Brengman plan to train employees at Fire District 1 in Everett and Fire District 4 in

Snohomish so more kids can be taught how to be safe.

Washington has more areas, about 18, involved in the Risk Watch program than any other state.

Brengman and Marshall recently received a Partners in Public Education award in Minneapolis, Minn., from the National Fire Protection Association, which started the Risk Watch program in 1988. The honor recognizes collaboration between a private sector and fire service partner in implementing a safety education program.

Marshall said students are taught safety techniques for:

- Fire and burns.
- Choking, strangulation and suffocation.
- Firearm safety.
- Poison.
- Falls.
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Motor vehicle.
- Water safety.

Marshall said those are the eight areas where kids age 14 and younger are most often hurt or killed.

By teaching the youngsters how to deal with the eight situations, the hope is they can help themselves and others avert

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tragedy.

That's already happened in the local program three times that organizers know of. A child saved someone who was choking, another told someone on fire to drop and roll, and another child confronted a situation with a firearm.

A variety of professional people — from deputies to nursing students at Everett Community Col-

lege — teach the classes, often as volunteers.

Brengman said she's proud that the pilot program at her preschool started locally.

"It really works," she said. "The preschool-age kids soak it up."

"It empowers them that what they learn can help their families be safe."

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