

Heads UP!

The official newsletter of SMARTRISK

Winter 2008-2009

SMARTRISK Heroes: book for spring

SMARTRISK Heroes toured Western Canada in the fall and finished 2008 in Southern Ontario. The new year brings more shows across Canada but space is still available throughout the spring season. For a list of dates and locations, or to find out more about booking a show, email smartriskheroes@smartrisk.ca or call 416-596-2703.

Coming soon: golf with SMARTRISK

Rogers Communications has stepped up as our new presenting sponsor for the 15th Annual SMARTRISK Golf Tournament. Stay tuned for date and location!

Your support of our annual charity golf tournament helps us present our award-winning programs across the country, reducing injuries and saving the lives of young Canadians.

For information on how you can contribute or participate in the day, email info@smartrisk.ca or call 416-977-7350.

NO REGRETS

2008 was a great year; 2009 promises to be even better

SMARTRISK's peer leadership program for high school students, No Regrets, finished 2008 with a national honour and enters 2009 on the road to expansion.

Already, students in 80 high schools across Canada are helping their peers learn to live life with no regrets. By spring, this number will rise as SMARTRISK staff head to Yukon, Nova Scotia and into Ontario rail communities to bring new schools into the fold. Yukon will also be the site of a new evaluation project that will include, for the first time, pre-tests and post-tests with students' parents, as well as students themselves.

Built on research that points to the power of peers in teenagers' lives, SMARTRISK No Regrets trains youth leaders and their staff advisers to implement injury prevention activities and events in their high schools. The activities are designed to influence the attitudes and risk-taking behaviour of students related to such activities as driving, skateboarding, snowboarding, snowmobiling and partying. The activities use SMARTRISK's messages: *Buckle Up, Look First, Wear the Gear, Get Trained* and *Drive Sober*. A recent evaluation found that after a single year's exposure to No Regrets, students reported fewer injuries requiring medical care.

The Canadian Institute of Child Health recently honoured SMARTRISK No Regrets with its 2008 Health



Promotion and Innovation Award of Excellence. We accepted the award on behalf of our students and advisers at the Institute's gala in Ottawa on National Child Day, Nov. 20, 2008. The awards committee was "particularly impressed by the incorporation of positive messaging and especially the quality of the peer-to-peer training and evaluation of the program," the letter states. "Congratulations for your work to address this serious threat of injury to children and youth in Canada so effectively." We look forward to welcoming our new recruits to the SMARTRISK No Regrets team!

Chris Bourne



Chris Bourne says he once lived a carefree life. At the age of 23 that changed, after a freight train slammed into his car during a moment of inattention. He has used a wheelchair ever since.

Chris now advocates for smart risk. “My risks are calculated risks. I still go ripping

down a mountain in a sit ski at 60 km/h but I do it in control, with tuned equipment and the proper gear, on trails I know, not skiing beyond my capabilities.” That’s the message he offers his teenage audiences as one of SMARTRISK Heroes’ newest injury survivor presenters. A top athlete, a seasoned presenter and the acting executive director of the Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability, Chris was eager to present with SMARTRISK Heroes, calling the one-hour assembly “intensive and stimulating”.

Like many of his peers, Chris gave no thought to the risks of being injured when he was a youth, feeling he was “bullet proof”. Active in sport and outdoor activities, Chris grew up in Orillia, Ont. After finishing university in Ottawa, he headed back to his hometown for the summer. “I was your typical 23-year-old,” he recalls of life before the crash. “I had life by the tail.”

On his last day of holidays before starting his summer job, he and his girlfriend headed out to join friends for a day of water skiing and “fun in the sun.” They stopped to buy snacks and beer and were on the short drive back to the campground. Chris was driving and

chatting with his girlfriend and didn’t notice the train chugging up the tracks he was about to cross. The rail crossing (which no longer exists) was unmarked with no flashing lights or gates. Regardless, Chris says, it was his responsibility to check the tracks – he knew trains used them. He admits he wasn’t paying the kind of attention he should have been while at the wheel.

That inattention led to a train smashing into the driver side of his car. He was thrown from the car and landed 20 metres away as his horrified girlfriend watched.

“Aside from my severed spinal cord and three broken vertebrae, I had a broken arm, two broken ribs, a collapsed lung and cuts and bruises all over my body. I sustained a slight head injury that’s had some obvious effects on my memory and ability to concentrate.”

Chris made the best of a bad situation, with the help of supportive friends and family. He now holds a master’s degree in recreation management and works four days a week heading a non-profit organization headquartered in Ottawa that encourages people with disabilities to embrace recreation and physical activity.

After he was injured, “a lot of things I loved about sport were still there. I saw it as a way to beat my disability, a way to challenge myself.” Chris’s competitive focus is on triathlon and water skiing and he holds a number of medals from world championships. He and his wife have just adopted two young brothers.

Chris believes it’s important to share his story. “It’s not that I was being reckless and trying to beat that train,” he tells the rapt Heroes audience. “Fact is, I was careless.” Not any more. “Sure, there are other ways that I still put myself at risk, but when I do, I’ve done everything I can to minimize that risk... I play hard but I play safe. I learned the hard way that life is too fragile not to take precautions.”

Sponsor news

SMARTRISK is delighted to announce an exciting new partnership with State Farm Canada. A major investment by State Farm will allow us to bring our No Regrets peer education program to many more Canadian schools, through the launch of a cutting-edge website that will help us to provide training from a distance, reducing travel costs and staffing resources.

State Farm’s investment will also help SMARTRISK research and develop new resources tailored to teens and driving.

SMARTRISK is also pleased to enter into a new partnership with the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, which began with visits from the SMARTRISK Heroes show. The Yukon organization was so impressed with the impact of Heroes that it has invested in bringing No Regrets into its high schools.

Finally, we are happy to renew a valued partnership with RBC Foundation. RBC’s funding will help to support No Regrets schools across Canada. We extend our gratitude to all our valued sponsors and the individuals and corporations who sustain our work.

RISK RADAR

SNOWMOBILING INJURIES

It's a popular winter activity: here's how to prevent injuries

Snowmobiles were initially developed and marketed as work or transportation vehicles for snowy areas that would otherwise be inaccessible to cars and trucks. But Canadians have taken to these winter machines in a big way, using them more and more for recreational purposes.

There are more than 600,000 registered snowmobiles in Canada and more than 160,000 kilometres of snowmobile trails. As the machines have become more popular and as they have become bigger, heavier and ever more powerful, reaching speeds as high as 140 kilometres per hour, it's not surprising that the number of serious injuries and deaths has also risen.

Human factors, rather than mechanical failure, are at the root of these predictable and preventable injuries. Drinking alcohol before sledding, speeding, and riding in avalanche-prone terrain, are all activities that can substantially raise your risk of injury.

MANAGING THE RISKS

Here are a number of ways to manage your risks while enjoying the outdoors on your snowmobile:

Look First

- Plan your route well in advance and ensure the areas you're traversing are designated as safe for snowmobile travel.
- Travelling over frozen bodies of water is always risky, as it's more difficult to get traction and there is always the risk of plunging through the ice. Check first to ensure the ice is at least 25 centimetres thick.
- If you're snowmobiling in avalanche country, check the daily avalanche bulletins provided by the Canadian Avalanche Centre before venturing out. Always check weather forecasts.
- Most snowmobiling incidents that lead to injury occur away from marked trails. Sticking to the marked snowmobile trails reduces your risk of injury. You're also less likely to run into unexpected wires, fences or other objects.
- Ensure your equipment is in good condition before using it. Check all parts and ensure safety features are working properly and that you have adequate fuel.
- Keep your speed reasonable, especially if travelling at night: avoid over-driving your headlights.
- Tell someone responsible where you plan to travel and when you plan to return. Go with a friend.

Wear the Gear

- Pack a first-aid kit, survival kit and tool kit as well as food and water. Bring a map, compass, extra socks and mittens, boot liners, flares, a metal cup and extra fuel.
- Wear a safety-certified helmet, designed for snowmobiling. Dress in several layers of clothing designed to keep you warm and dry, including a flotation suit if you plan to travel over ice. Goggles will protect you from the sun and help you see in heavy winds or snow squalls.



- In avalanche country, wear and know how to use equipment that will help locate and dig you or others out, including transceivers, portable shovels and related equipment.

Get Trained

- Before venturing into avalanche country, ensure you have been trained in using the necessary safety equipment and in recognizing unstable snow conditions. The CAC offers avalanche skills training.
- Ride within your ability and skill level. Snowmobiling associations offer courses in safe snowmobiling.

Drive Sober

- Make sure you're operating on plenty of sleep and are free of drugs, alcohol and any distractions that could impair your abilities and decision making.

For more information, visit the [Canadian Avalanche Centre](#), the [Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations](#) and the [Canadian Red Cross](#).

POINT of VIEW

Here's what's planned for 2009

As this is the first newsletter in the New Year, it seems natural to reflect on the year just completed and the new one just begun.

Our New Year's resolution at SMARTRISK is to increase our impact in 2009. The evaluations consistently tell us that our programs for young people – SMARTRISK Heroes and SMARTRISK No Regrets – work. Indeed, we were thrilled that No Regrets was recognized with the 2008 Health Promotion and Innovation Award of Excellence by the Canadian Institute of Child Health. It is a challenge, however, to present our programs to as many young people as we would wish to. Like most charities, we have limited resources. Combine that with a worldwide recession that makes fund development more challenging and it's natural that we at SMARTRISK would invest in some new thinking to get our messages across as efficiently as possible.

Here's a sneak peek into a few changes for this year. First, you'll notice that this Heads Up! arrived in your email inbox, not your mailbox. While there is much to be said for paper newsletters, we couldn't justify the continued expense. We have taken this opportunity to redesign Heads Up! so it is attractive and easy to read on your computer. We hope you like it.

Second, as you know, SMARTRISK Heroes is our flagship, travelling road show for youth. An injury survivor hosts this large-scale DVD presentation and gives a live talk, presenting positive choices to reduce the risk of injury. As we enter our 18th year of bringing SMARTRISK Heroes to teen audiences across the country, we are planning to modify our distribution methods to increase our audiences. Currently, we reach up to 70 high schools a year. We are devising plans to triple the number of students who experience this award-winning show. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Third, we are making additional investments in SMARTRISK No Regrets, our program that gives a permanent home in high schools to smart risk messages. No Regrets trains student leaders and staff advisers in injury prevention, leadership and teamwork. Students then organize fun, interactive injury prevention events for their peers throughout the school year. We have begun the process to bring No Regrets to many more than the 80 schools who currently host the program. A major new investment from State Farm will help us redevelop our website to communicate more effectively with schools so we can manage greater numbers. Our plan also includes reaching youth by using tools such as YouTube and Facebook.

SMARTRISK is keenly aware of the challenges we face during this recession. We hope you will continue to lend us your support as we work to help Canada's youth adopt smart risk taking for life. We wish you and your loved ones a Happy New Year. May all your risks be smart.

Bob Baker, President and CEO, SMARTRISK



SMARTRISK is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to preventing injury with smart thinking.

Our mission is to help people see the risks in their everyday lives and show them how to take those risks in the smartest way possible so that they can enjoy life to the fullest.

Find out about our award-winning injury prevention programs for youth, including SMARTRISK Heroes and SMARTRISK No Regrets, by contacting us at:

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