

**Children ticketed for bike helmet use
Tickets include coupons for fries and Slurpees**

Updated 1 month ago

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PORT COLBORNE — Getting a ticket isn't so bad in this case. Children and teens are being rewarded for following the law this summer through a new program initiated by Niagara Regional Police.

The program kicked off Monday with three elementary school children receiving "positive tickets" and helmets for winning a colouring contest that encouraged children to wear bicycle helmets.

Staff Sgt. Joe Garvey said the program began as a Safe Communities initiative supported by Port Colborne- Wainfleet Community Policing. It was based on a similar program run in British Columbia where instead of stopping people and telling them what they're doing wrong, police commends people for doing what's right. By law, anyone under the age of 18 must wear a bicycle helmet.

Children under the age of 16 who are caught riding a bike without a helmet make their parents liable to pay an \$80 fine.

To thank children and teens who do ride with a helmet, officers will handout coupons for a free Slurpee from 7- Eleven, free fries from Harvey's/Swiss Chalet, coupons for the Nutty Chocolatier and the downtown business improvement area.

Police will also hand out \$10 Canadian Tire gift cards for those who aren't wearing helmets to help them purchase one.

"It's commonly known a helmet absorbs the impact (of a bike collision)," Const. Nilan Dave said. But he was quick to note wearing a helmet that isn't properly fastened won't protect children. He said it's important to take five minutes to read helmet instructions and properly adjust straps to ensure a proper fit. Officers will be out on patrol this summer in cars, on bicycles, on ATVs, on foot and, on special occasions, on horses.

"We're increasing awareness and promoting a positive rapport with children," Dave said. kforand@wellandtribune.ca

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