

Reducing Preventable Injury Risk among Refugee Youth: The New American Safety Festival

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2014

Location: O.N.E. Community Center
Highlight: All bicycle helmets are distributed in the first hour and a single child passenger safety technician conducts inspections.

2015

Location: O.N.E. Community Center
Highlight: Community partners join the event. Blue Cross/Blue Shield participates and provides bicycle driver’s license for the children.

2016

Location: O.N.E. Community Center
Highlight: The number of child passenger safety technicians grows due to a new partnership with the Vermont Be Seat Smart Program.

2017

Location: Winooski School District
Highlight: Old Spokes Home joins as a community partner and fits 38 children with refurbished bikes.

2018

Location: Winooski School District
Highlight: Language Access Services joins as a partner. Interpreters are given brightly colored vests that clearly identify their languages.

2019

Location: Winooski School District
Highlight: Music performances and Zumba classes are added to the event, emphasizing physical health as well as safety.

INTRODUCTION

The New American community in the greater Burlington Area identified a challenge in purchasing and installing safety equipment recommended or mandated in the United States, such as child passenger safety seats.

The Pediatric New American Clinic at the University of Vermont Children’s Hospital partnered with University of Vermont Medical Center Injury Prevention, Safe Kids Vermont, and AALV (Association of Africans Living in Vermont) to develop a program specifically designed to meet the needs of the community. The result was the New American Safety Day. Over the past six years, this annual event has grown into the New American Safety Festival.



METHODS AND MATERIALS

The event was hosted at free locations in neighborhoods with large New American population. The event was advertised through the Pediatric New American Clinic, schools, and other non-profits by flyers and word of mouth.

Community partners were identified and invited based on their expertise with health and safety topics such as water safety, bike and pedestrian safety, environmental safety, and fire prevention.

Culturally appropriate safety equipment was acquired through grant funding for distribution. All distribution was accompanied by in-person education and materials.

RESULTS

Due to the large community nature of the event, exact attendance could not be tracked. However, the size of the event has increased each year in both the number of community partners participating and the amount of equipment distributed.

The first New American Safety Day in 2014 provided 32 child passenger safety checks, 37.5% of which were new installs of a child passenger safety seat. Of the 62.5% checks of already installed safety seats, 90% were shown to have a misuse error, much higher than expected or seen in the community at large.

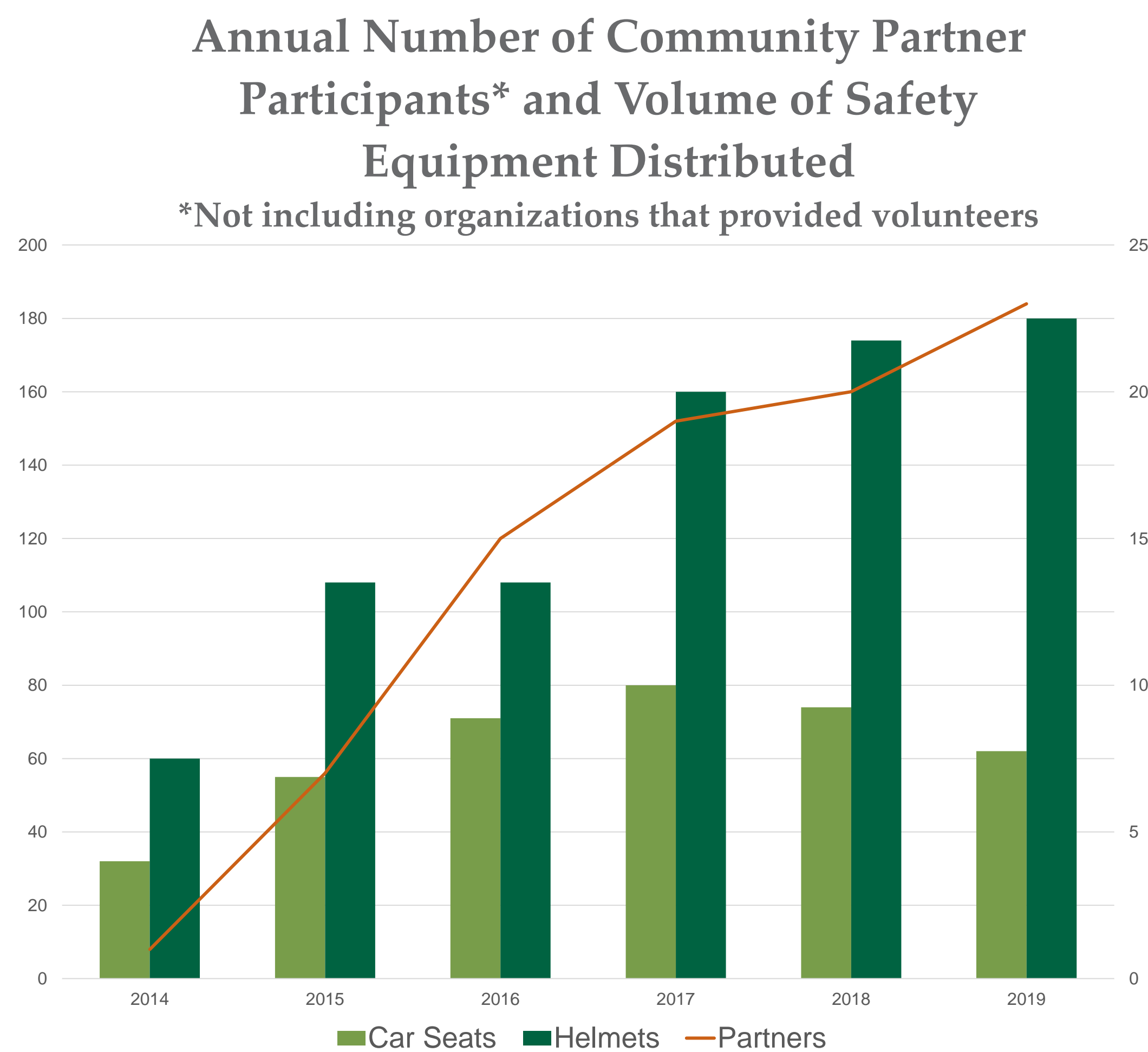
By 2019, the number of child passenger safety checks had increased to 96. 75% of these checks were of already installed safety seats and misuse errors were identified in 75% of them.

The volume of safety equipment distributed increased with each event requiring more volunteers to provide education and materials on best practices.

Table 1. Child Passenger Safety Inspection Results

	Total Inspections	New Installs	Misuse Rate
2014	32	12	90%
2015	60	22	92%
2016	90	41	94%
2017	110	28	82%
2018	109	41	78%
2019	96	24	75%

Chart 2. Annual markers for event growth



DISCUSSION

In 2014, the misuse rate for child passenger safety equipment was 90% among New American families. Comparatively, the University of Vermont Medical Center car seat fitting station saw a misuse rate of 70% in the general population of the same year.

By the fourth New American Safe Festival, the rate of misuse had dropped to 82% and the downward trend continued until the rate reached 75% in 2019.

The need for child passenger safety inspections has outgrown the techs and stations that can be provided at the event. Therefore, staff at 3 community partners serving New Americans were trained as certified technicians. They are now able to provide this service throughout the year.

Outside of child passenger safety, the increase in community partners each year has lead to a larger variety of topics and injuries addressed. Camp Splash, a program offering swim lessons and water safety education, more than doubled its registration between 2017 and 2019 and identified most of the growth as coming from New American families.

Materials were customized to match the languages spoken by the New American families and clearly identified translators assisted with the Child Passenger Safety Inspections as well as circulating among the community partner stations.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating cultural change around safety is a long term goal that can only be accomplished when you meet the community where they are and build strong community support networks. The annual and festive nature of the New American Safety Festival makes it an event that children and families look forward to attending each year and allows an increasing number of resources to be made available to them.

While short-term outcomes from the event did not show a change in safety behaviors, long-term results are more positive. The drastic decrease in car seat misuse demonstrates that changes in behavior and knowledge can occur with consistent outreach over time.

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