

A BICYCLE IS NOT A TOY; IT IS A CHILD'S FIRST VEHICLE

Many Charlotte County children receive new bicycles at the beginning of a school year, and many will be riding them to and from school. Young children leave their homes to explore a world where adventure awaits. Unfortunately, so does danger. Young children are especially at risk in traffic situations because:

- They expect others to look out for them.
- They do not understand complicated traffic situations.
- They overestimate their knowledge and physical strength.
- They focus on one thing at a time.
- They assume that if they can see a car, the driver can see them.
- They think that cars can stop instantly.
- They have difficulty estimating the speed a car is traveling.
- They have a field of vision one third narrower than adults have.
- They have difficulty determining the direction of sounds.

As children grow older they begin to ride on busier streets where cycling demands greater skills to avoid collisions. If children develop safe cycling skills and learn to follow the rules-of-the road, many collisions can be avoided. Some crashes, however, happen through no fault of the cyclist, and that is why children must be taught to ride defensively and to wear bicycle helmets.

- 85% of all head or brain injuries could be avoided if cyclists wore bicycle helmets.
- 85% of all bicycle crashes occur within five blocks of home.
- 47% of all bicycle crashes occur off the road, in driveways, and on sidewalks.

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➤ 90% of all accidental deaths to children on bicycles occur when they dart into traffic from a driveway or when they cycle through a stop sign.

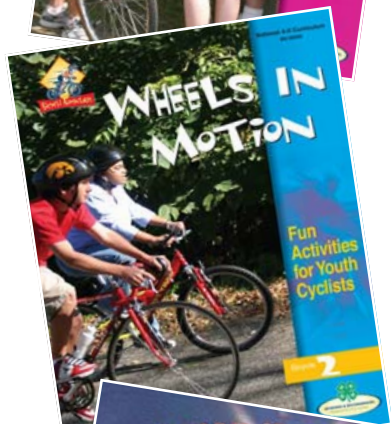
Traffic laws tell children what rules they must obey when cycling. Traffic laws alone, however, cannot protect them. To be safe they must develop cycling skills and good judgment. The 4-H project, Bicycle Adventures, teaches children how to ride bicycles skillfully and defensively. The project takes the cyclist through selection of a bike, care and repair, as well as personal safety while cycling.

Cycling skills every person, young and young-at-heart, should develop include:

- Wear a Properly Fitted Bicycle Helmet.
- Adjust Your Bike to Fit.
- Check Your Equipment.
- See and Be Seen.
- Control Your Bike.
- Watch for and Avoid Road Hazards.
- Avoid Riding at Night.



If you would like to start a 4-H Bicycle Adventures club or purchase the 4-H Bicycle Adventures project booklets, please contact Charlotte County Extension Service.



Pamela Phillippe is the 4-H/Youth Development Agent for Charlotte County. 4-H/Youth Development is a University of Florida/IFAS Extension Program. Pam can be reached at 941.764.4345.



PAMELA PHILLIPPE
4-H/Youth Development Agent
Pamela.Phillippe@CharlotteFL.com

CHARLOTTE COUNTY UF/IFAS EXTENSION SERVICE
25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3 - Port Charlotte, Florida 33980
941.764.4340 - 941.764.4343 (fax) - <http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu>