

news

# Keep the kids safe is parents top job

Achieving Justice

PAUL HERGOTT



The protection of children's legal rights (topic of my last two columns) is important, but doing our best to protect our children from being harmed in

the first place is even more so.

We do our best to keep our children safe in all sorts of life scenarios. It is important to recognize that one of the most dangerous places for our children is in an automobile, even if properly strapped into a car seat or booster seat. The starting point is our own road traffic behaviours. A substantial proportion of children's claims are against a negligent parent.

Our driving culture is one where the task at hand, driving, takes a back seat in favour of daydreaming, thoughts of the office, fatigue, various "behind the wheel activities", cellular phone conversations, texting, and other things that successfully compete for or interfere with our attention. It takes a conscious choice for each of us to drive different from the culture we are immersed in.

Our driving culture also continues to tolerate impaired driving. We are seldom at the extreme of the Florida alcoholic who recently was caught having her four year old blow into the interlock device that was installed on her vehicle, but impaired driving continues to occur all around us and it takes a conscious choice to plan ahead to ensure we do not end up in an impaired circumstance where we might make even poorer choices.

What about when we hand our children over into the care of others? It happens all the time when we get help from family members to get our children here and there, sometimes an older sibling, aunt, uncle or grandparent. It also happens when parents car-pool with others to get children to and from school, sporting and other events.

What steps do you take to ensure that those other people will keep your child safe? Apart from equipping them with a car/booster seat, we just assume they will be responsible drivers. Perhaps we should do more than that? Might it be sensible to ask if they ever talk on their cell phone while they drive, or if they've ever been handed a roadside suspension? You might not expect an honest answer, but bringing attention and awareness to road safety might have a helpful impact on their driving.

My 11 year old daughter was recently dropped off at a birthday party, with arrangements that the "party parent" would drop her off, with others, at a certain location. The party parent confirmed, when asked, that there would be enough seats for bums so that everyone would have a seatbelt. The party parent was wrong, and my daughter was dropped off without a seatbelt on.

Yes, I'm angry. My child will never again be in that parent's care, but how could we have avoided that situation in the first place? One answer, I think, is empowering our children. We empower our children with regard to body awareness and sexual abuse (perhaps inadequately, but that's another topic). How about empowering our children with regard to traffic safety?

I asked my daughter about what decisions she might have made, faced with an adult putting her in a vehicle without a seatbelt. It hadn't occurred to her that she might have refused to get in the car. That's my fault. I failed to empower her with that option.

Imagine empowering all of our children with such scripts as: "My daddy doesn't allow me to drive with someone who talks on a cell phone while driving"; "My mommy doesn't let me get into a vehicle with someone who has had any alcohol at all"; "My daddy doesn't let me drive with someone who speeds."

Not only will we be helping our children protect themselves from danger, we will be helping turn around the Titanic of a poor driving culture by raising a new generation of drivers with traffic safety consciousness.

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## MENTAL HEALTH

# Former dragon promotes healthy workplace

Dragon's Den alumnus and a local software developer have joined forces to promote workplace mental health.

On November 4, Dragon emeritus W. Brett Wilson lends his voice to CMHA Kelowna's Mental Health Voices breakfast along with a local tech company that specializes in helping employers promote healthy and safe workplaces.

Xilo, powered by EARA Technologies, saw employers buried in paper as they tried to keep track of Worksafe requirements, occupational health and safety meetings and individual employee needs. The company decided to develop a software solution—one that brings together the talents of rehabilitation and information technology professionals to make health and safety information available at the click of a mouse, anytime, anywhere. "In short, we make it

easier to keep workers working," said Monica Kyveris, VP sales and client relations at EARA Technologies. "Our human resources are our greatest assets and when they aren't well, the business suffers too." The average company loses up to 12 per cent of its payroll to employee disability through loss of productivity and sick leave. "There is no question that an employee's mental health is a key part of their productivity when they are at work, but there is also a key connection between mental health and an employee's ability to return to work after an injury. This is why we are so proud to sponsor this event," said Kyveris.

Former Dragon and Global Fitness owner, W. Brett Wilson, will provide a keynote speech providing personal and business insight on mental health in business and has donated several copies of one of his book

projects to be given away at the breakfast. Sick to Death of the Silence came out of Wilson's desire to end the stigma associated with mental illness.

This event will engage the business community in conversations about mental health in the workplace and two local businesses will be presented a Mental Health Voices Award for demonstrating leadership and excellence in this area.

"We are very excited about bringing this event to our community," said Shelagh Turner, executive director of CMHA Kelowna. "Every day 500,000 Canadians miss work due to mental illness. We want to share with businesses why they should care about mental health, what mental health looks like in the workplace and provide employers with low and no-cost ideas that they can implement right away."

Mental Health Voices

will be held Nov. 4, 7 a.m. at the Coast Capri Hotel. Tickets are available for \$50 + GST. When booking a table of 10 your company will receive logo recognition at the event. Visit [www.cmhakilowna.com/mental-health-voices](http://www.cmhakilowna.com/mental-health-voices).

The CMHA Kelowna branch is a charity that promotes the mental

health of all through community-based programs and services, public education, advocacy and research. It is part of a network of more than 10,000 CMHA volunteers and staff in over 135 communities across Canada.

For more information visit [www.cmhakilowna.org](http://www.cmhakilowna.org).

## Timmies delivers with Smiles

The results are in. Kids across the Central Okanagan are smiling as Tim Hortons restaurants in the Central Okanagan donated \$34,650 to YMCA of Okanagan.

The campaign, which ran from Sept. 14 to 20, saw thousands of Tim Hortons customers purchase and enjoy a Smile Cookie for \$1. All proceeds from Smile Cookie sales were included in the donation.

"We're proud of the growth and success of our Smile Cookie campaign," said Chris Chapman, on behalf of the Kelowna, West Kelowna and Lake Country Tim Hortons restaurant owners. "I can't think of a charity that is more deserving or makes a bigger impact on the lives of kids in the Okanagan than YMCA of Okanagan."

Funds from the donation go to the YMCA Strong Kids Healthy Snacks Program where the YMCA provides healthy snacks for children participating

in their preschool and child care programs.

"It is critical that we help children in our care get a healthy snack as part of their daily routine," said Colleen Keeler, child care manager early years. "Many kids in our programs come to us without having breakfast or without snacks during the day. Some parents cannot afford to provide their kids with adequate nutrition. These funds will ensure every child in our care has access to good food to help them learn, grow and thrive."

Tim Hortons customers bought more Smile Cookies than ever in the Central Okanagan. In 2014, YMCA of Okanagan received a \$32,000 donation from the campaign.

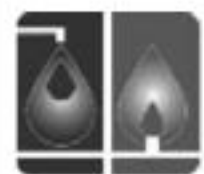
YMCA of Okanagan operates preschool and childcare programs at seven locations across Kelowna and West Kelowna, serving more than 11,500 healthy snacks per year.

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