

NEWS RELEASE



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ARKids First and Arkansas Public Libraries Partner to Focus on Summer Safety

Public libraries to host series of events to help keep kids safe this summer

JULY 7, 2010; LITTLE ROCK, ARK. – ARKids First, the state’s CHIP program (Children’s Health Insurance Program), has partnered with the Arkansas Public Library System’s popular summer reading program to provide educational materials and a series of safety events during July and August. The educational materials and events are aimed at keeping kids safe during the summer and encouraging parents of already enrolled kids to utilize ARKids benefits for well-child doctor visits.

All public library branches in the state’s system will have summer safety educational packets available for children who register for free summer reading programs. A series of eight summer safety events will be held at public libraries throughout the state. The events will focus on educating kids and their parents about summer safety through fun and interactive activities with Radio Disney. All events and materials are available at no cost. Quantities may be limited at some libraries.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five children (infancy to age 17) has had one or more emergency room visits over a 12-month period. Medicaid patients are more likely to frequent emergency rooms than those with private health insurance. Arkansas has one of the nation’s highest rates of all-terrain vehicle (ATV or 4-wheeler) injuries for children younger than 16 years old. The CDC reports that the two most commonly diagnosed conditions in emergency rooms are injury and poisoning – both preventable. “One of ARKids First’s goals is to keep Arkansas children healthy and safe. In order for us meet this goal, we need to educate children and their parents about safety in order to help prevent injuries and other harmful conditions” said Julie Munsell, director of communications for the Arkansas Department of Human Services.

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Ruth Hyatt, manager of extension services for the Arkansas State Library, says the Arkansas Library System’s summer reading program has grown in the last three years to encompass over 113,000 children. She says

libraries are popular places for children to spend their time during the summer and a natural place to reach parents with educational material.

“We realized that by partnering with the libraries we could reach out to these kids and their parents to provide valuable health education and wellness messages on behalf of ARKids First,” said Munsell. “Libraries will be armed with valuable information and resources like activity books describing safety measures and safety information handouts. The events will help families learn about summer safety and ARKids First’s well-child benefits in a fun and interactive environment, which we hope will help keep kids healthier and out of the emergency rooms this summer,” said Munsell.

ARKids First serves more than 300,000 kids in Arkansas who might have been uninsured without this option. The program encourages parents to develop a relationship with a primary care physician and set up well-child check-ups for their children in order to stay current on immunizations and other important screenings. Among other benefits, ARKids First also covers vision and dental care without a referral from a doctor.

For more information about ARKids First, visit www.ARKidsFirst.com. For more information about the events, visit www.radiodisney.com/littlerock . For more information about Arkansas public libraries, visit www.asl.lib.ar.us .