

## In the Schools

# Bike safety program big hit at Juanita Elementary

By Lynn Kohlwes

During the first three weeks of October, something new and exciting happened for the fourth- to sixth-grade students of Juanita Elementary. They were the first school in the Lake Washington School District to ride brand new bikes in Group Health's Basics of Bicycling provided by the Cascade Bicycle Club Education Foundation.

Students and volunteer parents waited anxiously for the arrival of the trailer packed with 30 brand new BMX bikes and bike helmets. It gives me the opportunity to teach safe cycling to her students during my physical education class.

Because this was hands-on, bicycling skills and safety courses were designed to give young students skills and knowledge in traffic-wise bicycling. According to statistics, kids age 10 to 14 years old suffer from the highest number of bicycle collisions — nearly twice that of any other age group.

The unit also empowered parents and grandparents to volunteer and get involved with their child's/grandchild's physical education program.

Here is what some of those volunteers had to say:

*"This safety program from the starting lesson was exceptional. The curriculum was well planned and thought out. The safety video shown the first day should be shown to students of all grades both in the spring and fall."*

~ Sharon Langlois, grandparent volunteer

*"This is a wonderful program! It was amazing to see kids who have never ridden a bike, learn as quickly as 20 minutes. Also being a bike enthusiast myself, I understand the importance of learning the safety skills. This program should be standard in all the elementary schools in our area. What a fun way for the kids to learn bicycle safety."*

—Suzy Waltar, parent volunteer

The first lesson showed students how to adjust their helmets so that the helmet fit appropriately. Additional lessons included something for all levels of ability: Some students learned to ride bikes for the first time while other students who had bike riding experience were challenged with riding stations that required them to use more advanced skills such as using appropriate hand signals



Photo courtesy of Lynn Kohlwes

**Mrs. McCaig's Juanita Elementary sixth-grade students, along with P.E. teacher Lynn Kohlwes (right, dark sweatshirt), Suzy Waltar (kneeling) and Sharon Langlois (white sweatshirt) in front of the bike trailer.**

when turning or stopping, and negotiating obstacle courses to improve handling, cornering and control. A big hit was the figure eight course which included understanding traffic signs and how to cross an intersection safely. All of this took place in a safe

environment on Juanita Elementary's blacktop playground area.

The Basics of Bicycling program is being provided for all elementary schools Lake Washington School District through a grant from Group Health Cooperative and The Cascade

Bicycle Club Education Foundation. After taking a half-day workshop last year, all physical education teachers had the opportunity to sign up for this three-week bike safety unit.

*Lynn Kohlwes is the physical education teacher at Juanita Elementary School.*