



# St. Croix Ride Safe Program “Thankful for Life”

The Ride Safe Child Passenger Safety Program is a Head Start-based child passenger safety program that provides curriculum, child safety seats, and training to Head Start staff, parents, and community partners.

Through the Ride Safe Program, the St. Croix Head Start in Wisconsin provides child safety seats to Head Start children living in eight communities on the Reservation. Kathy Dittmar and Velma Broom, Honoring our Children Program, and Janet Nelson, St. Croix Head Start co-coordinate this Program.

Ms. Dittmar learned of the following story from Wanda McFaggen, grandmother of 4-year old Anthony. In February 2008, Ms. McFaggen was driving her car with Anthony securely buckled in his Ride Safe child safety seat. While driving in steadily accumulating snow, Ms. McFaggen noticed a car ahead of her sliding while braking to make room for an emergency vehicle in the opposite lane. When she tried to brake, Ms. McFaggen started to slide sideways, hitting the median, rolling, and landing on the passenger side. Anthony was lopsided in his child safety seat, but secured. First responders at the scene remarked that they were amazed that Anthony was not hurt in the crash. That day, eighteen vehicles had crashed in a two-mile stretch of road.

As written by Ms. McFaggen, “My grandson and I are very spiritual people...we ask for life in the ceremonies and I strongly believe our request was granted. This is one part of life, but another part is to do what we can as humans to keep us safe. That is why I am grateful to the St. Croix Honoring our Children Program and to Kathy Dittmar and Velma Broom. They have provided us with car seats from the day I brought my grandson and his mother home from the hospital, and to this day four years later. I can’t express enough how important it is to wear seat belts and to persuade your kids to get them into their car seats and buckle up. After we got home, I talked with my grandson about seat belt safety and he made Gramma promise to always wear her seat belt too. It’s been a few days now but my thoughts keep going back to that day and I cry because I am so grateful for life. My world would crumble if I ever lost my grandson Anthony or any of my grandchildren because we were in too much of a hurry to buckle them in. Or if, because we didn’t want to fight and argue over it, we as parents and grandparents just gave in.”

*“Please buckle your kids in car seats. Car seats do help us to save our little ones lives. Miigwetch” Wanda McFaggen*

