



Who's Watching the Children?

Written by: Connie Lewis Leonard | Photos by: Don Treadwell Photography

Learn how the organization, radKIDS, is doing their part to help save the lives of local children.

Amber Alert! A parent's or grandparents worst nightmare: Elizabeth Smart, Jaycee Lee Dougard, Michelle Knight, Amanda Berry, and Georgina "Gina" DeJesus. Each of these are children abducted by predators and held in captivity while their families suffered unimaginable grief, wondering where their child was and whether they were dead or alive. "Each year, 800,000 missing children, approximately 2,000 children every day, are reported to local law enforcement agencies" (children-laws.com).

What can we do to protect our children? We may consider asking law enforcement professionals:

1. How do you enhance the protection of the children in this community?
2. How are we not teaching them how to be safe and to escape violence and harm?
3. Would you rather see a child who gets trapped by someone trying to hurt them with an attitude of, "How dare you touch me!" or one of "Help Me, Help Me?"
4. Are we not teaching them what they deserve and may need to know?

School bullying. Cyber bullying. Columbine. Virginia Tech. Teen suicide. "Approximately 160,000 teens reportedly skip school every day because they are bullied; one in ten teens drops out of school due to repeated bullying; 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys report being bullied either in school or online; and 75 percent of school shootings have been linked to harassment and bullying against the shooter" (nobullying.com).

Who can protect our children? We may consider asking community educators:

1. Can we guarantee the safety of our children in the school and community today? 2. Is there a bullying issue in your child's school? Are the current policies working? 3. Would you rather your child's school or education facility be a Zero Tolerance facility where children feel they can't defend themselves without getting into trouble or a Zero Victimization school where no one is allowed to hurt anyone? 4. Is it time to empower our children to meet our expectations instead of just telling them what we want them to do? If so, are we not teaching them to be safer and to be able to respond to our greatest fears?

"APPROXIMATELY 160,000 TEENS REPORTEDLY SKIP SCHOOL EVERY DAY BECAUSE THEY ARE BULLIED; ONE IN TEN TEENS DROPS OUT OF SCHOOL DUE TO REPEATED BULLYING; 83 PERCENT OF GIRLS AND 79 PERCENT OF BOYS REPORT BEING BULLIED EITHER IN SCHOOL OR ONLINE."

- NOBULLYING.COM

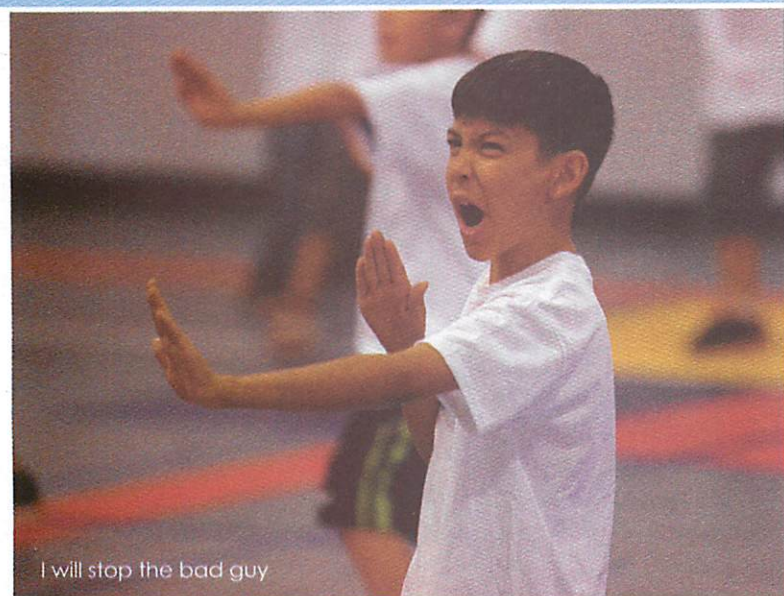


radKIDS stance

HOMETOWN LIVING AT ITS BEST



SAN ANGELO COMMUNITY MEDICAL CENTER (SACMC) HAS LED CHILD SAFETY IN THE CONCHO VALLEY FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS BY SUPPORTING SAFE KIDS SAN ANGELO WITH A FULL TIME COORDINATOR AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.



I will stop the bad guy

San Angelo Community Medical Center (SACMC) has led child safety in the Concho Valley for the last 20 years by supporting Safe Kids San Angelo with a full time coordinator and educational program. Catie Wiedenhofer is the current Safe KIDS and radKIDS coordinator. SACMC and the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health invited Elizabeth Smart to speak at the SACMC Healthy Woman/Laura Bush Presents annual event in April 2012. Her story was inspiring and fit perfectly with SACMC and Safe Kid's long-time mission of prevention of childhood injuries. During the event week, connections were made with San Angelo Independent School District (SAISD) and the police department to see if radKIDS was possible in San Angelo. The answer was yes, making San Angelo one of the first school districts in Texas to embrace the program.

During the initial meeting, Dr. Bonds, Superintendent of SAISD, whispered in Catie's ear, "We are in." After hearing details of the curriculum, Shelly Hullihen, Assistant Superintendent said, "When can we start?" According to Catie, "The miracles then started happening! I have a very close relationship with my school district and am on 20 different school campuses daily. I love, love my school district! Being a graduate of San Angelo Central High School, it is even 'sweeter' to give something back to my district."

Our kids are our MOST precious resource!

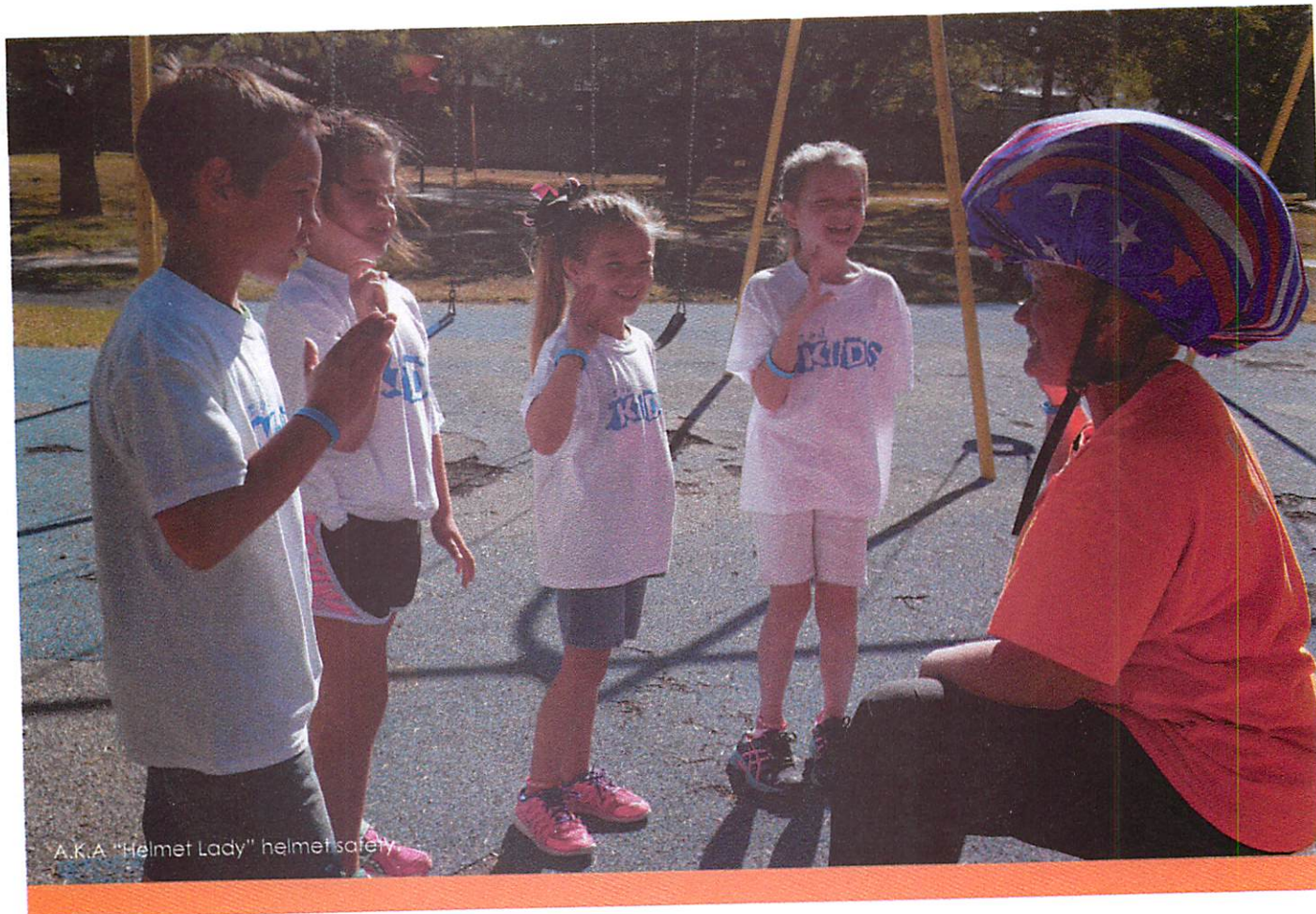


The administration asked Catie to attend a national radKIDS instructor training. "I loved the training. It was a new safety curriculum that empowered children with their own personal safety and dovetailed perfectly with the Safe Kids program/mission. SACMC supported the radKIDS movement from day one."

The next step was to fund the program. SACMC and Safe Kids partnered with the Angelo State University WED Center (Community Wellness, Engagement and Development) to request a grant from the San Angelo Health Foundation. The Foundation awarded the grant to Safe Kids San Angelo with the opportunity to train more than 50 people in the community, all SAISD elementary P.E. teachers, music teachers and middle school coaches to become National radKIDS Instructors. The San Angelo Police Department, Child Advocacy Center, and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Investigators were trained as part of the community group.

THE FOUNDATION AWARDED THE GRANT TO SAFE KIDS SAN ANGELO WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAIN MORE THAN 50 PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, ALL SAISD ELEMENTARY P.E. TEACHERS, MUSIC TEACHERS AND MIDDLE SCHOOL COACHES TO BECOME NATIONAL RADKIDS INSTRUCTORS.





A.K.A. "Helmet Lady" helmet safety

SAISD serves as a role model for implementation. Catie said, "SAISD graciously continues to implement this curriculum with the understanding that the safety of our children is paramount. It is making a POSITIVE difference in the school system!"

radKIDS is a proactive first step in prevention of child abuse, including human trafficking. It promotes: "self-value + self-worth = empowerment" and "life skills" to help children defend themselves, should danger arise. The bullying component of radKIDS is exceptional. Empowering children is a first step for enhancing a healthier, safer community in San Angelo. The program eventually changes the culture of our community.

Cultural change is based on the three principles of radKIDS:

1. "No one has the right to hurt me because I AM SPECIAL." Low self-esteem and low self-worth can lead to our children hurting themselves.
2. "I DO NOT have the right to hurt anyone else, including myself, UNLESS you physically try to hurt me. Then I CAN STOP YOU." A radKID is taught skills to stop them—powerful empowerment!
3. "It's not my fault so I CAN TELL!" We give them back the power to defend themselves if need be and CHOOSE TO RUN AND TELL.

Catie explained, "radKIDS works the instinctive side of the brain because we actually take kids through drills. We Teach, We Do, We Teach, We Do. 'BLOCK/RUN/TELL.' radKIDS is not fear based. We laugh a lot and prepare the kids to use their skills to get away. Our goal is a 'Zero Victimization' school, not a 'Zero Tolerance' school. Let's empower our kids and give them the right to defend themselves if necessary. This is not a 'fighting' program. Everything is done 'defensively.' Most of the time when a child says in a loud voice, 'Stop It!' the teacher gets there very quickly. It works!"

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"Stomp on top of foot"



radKIDS covers every safety risk area: vehicle safety, school safety, out and about safety, bike/pedestrian safety, water safety, in the home safety, dog safety, internet safety, good-bad-unwanted touch, stranger tricks, and self-realization of personal power. Catie said, "It was a goal, as well as a 'calling' for me to become a 'radKIDS Instructor Trainer' so that I may train adults to become national radKids instructors. I would love to help any school district or community empower as many children as possible. SACMC, SAISD, and ASU clearly see how this program helps the safety and health of our community. Our children are worth it!"

"radKIDS is a program that was created not to react to a heinous crime committed against a child, but to prevent crimes from happening to children. There are many incredible people who devote much of their time, energy, and resources to going out and hunting down child perpetrators. The "Internet Crimes Against Children" task force are some of those people. How can we afford to not support those who stand as guardians and rescuers, who do everything they can to prevent crimes and protect our children? Every child in the world deserves to have a life without abuse in any form. Children are the future."—Elizabeth Smart. ✦ **SAL**



TOP: Assistant superintendent Shelly Hulihan, A "Stay back, you're not my dad!" **ABOVE:** Catie Wiedenhofer