

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Little Sheriff adds fun to AIP Foundation's helmet campaign – Child-friendly comic character to serve as awareness-raising ambassador



Ho Chi Minh City, 25 March 2009 - AIP Foundation's (Asia Injury Prevention Foundation) Child Helmet Public Awareness Campaign has a new face. The foundation unveiled the Little Sheriff comic character as the campaign mascot today at a launch ceremony at Tran Hung Dao primary school in Ho Chi Minh City.

The character will serve as a friendly introduction for children to the campaign launched last month in partnership with the National Traffic Safety Committee (NTSC) and the Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition (VHWC) to reduce traffic injuries and deaths, especially among children.

“Our previous helmet-wearing campaign was a huge success with adults,” said AIP Foundation Executive Director Mirjam Sidik. “However, for children, we went with a more comfortable and entertaining approach. Having a character that children like and admire will help convey our educational message in a fun way.”

Through the Little Sheriff personality, AIP Foundation hopes to foster excitement, interest and the desire to wear helmets among primary school students. Helmet use is widespread in Vietnam, but children's wearing rates are strikingly low. The campaign aims to address that critical situation, where traffic accidents are the leading cause of death of children worldwide, and in Vietnam.

“Two-thirds of child road traffic fatalities occur in Southeast Asia,” the Australian Consul-General Mr Graeme Swift said. “This region is the epicenter of the crisis, and with the child helmet campaign, we're aiming to make it the core of the solution, too.”

As part of the campaign, 150,000 booklets, posters and flyers are being distributed to students at primary schools in nine provinces, with support and encouragement from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET).

The booklet, titled “Thief with a long tail,” tells the story of a monkey stealing a helmet from a little girl during a school trip to a national park. Little Sheriff draws on his characteristic ingenuity to retrieve it.

Little Sheriff billboards also are displayed both inside and outside schools nationwide to attract the attention of parents, as well.

“The Little Sheriff imagery is targeted directly at children because we all know how persistent they can be once they're convinced they need something,” said Mr Do Quoc Anh, Director of chief representative office of

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MoET in HCMC, “but we want to get the message across to parents, too, so they understand their children’s requests and can attend to proper helmet use.”

Parents need to understand that “the chance of neck injury due to complications caused by helmet-use is negligible compared to the known benefits of helmet-use,” said Dr Truong Van Viet, former Director of Cho Ray Hospital. “There is no published data to support the conclusion that wearing properly designed and certified helmets will damage a child’s neck. Child helmets that meet QCVN 2:2008 standards are extremely lightweight and provide essential protection to a child’s brain in case of injury. Injuries are caused by the physical trauma of a motorbike accident, and are not caused by helmet use. All children on motorbikes over the age of 6 months – as soon as they can hold their heads upright – should wear helmets,” Dr Viet explained. “This is an international practice, not limited to Vietnam.”

AIP Foundation also established a Little Sheriff hotline for children to call with helmet-related questions or to share helmet stories. An animated video clip featuring the character is under development. More than 10,000 helmets bearing the Little Sheriff image will be distributed to primary school in the nine provinces during March and April.

Helmet distribution started at the Tran Hung Dao school launch ceremony. After the giveaway of more than 1650 helmets, festivities continued with a motorcycle road show through downtown Ho Chi Minh City, led by Little Sheriff.

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Notes to the editor:

About AIP Foundation (Asia Injury Prevention Foundation): AIP Foundation is an American non-profit organization that aims to improve road safety in the developing world. AIP Foundation has donated more than 400,000 helmets through its Helmets for Kids program since 1999. AIP Foundation established Protec in 2002, the world’s only not-for-profit commercial helmet company that designed the revolutionary and low-cost ‘tropical’ helmet now produced in Vietnam. The physically disabled are employed to assemble the helmets at the factory, creating a valuable social model. All profits are put back into the community. AIP Foundation also developed a national road safety curriculum in 2004, which has been recognized by the Department of Education and Training for traffic safety in all primary schools in Vietnam.

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About the Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition: The VHWC is a public-private partnership with the goal of increasing awareness of the importance of motorbike helmets in Vietnam. The VHWC was responsible for the highly successful National Helmet Wearing Campaign (2007-08) that contributed to the Government’s passage of a mandatory helmet law. Child helmet use continues to lag, though, and in response AIP Foundation launched its second Child Helmet Wearing Public Awareness Campaign in February 2009. The VHWC members supporting the Child Helmet Campaign include AIP Foundation, AusAID, the Danish Embassy, FIA Foundation, the National Traffic Safety Committee (NTSC),

Safe Kids Worldwide, Talisman Vietnam, UNICEF Vietnam, the United States Embassy, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO). Parties interested in supporting the Child Helmet Wearing Public Awareness Campaign should contact AIP Foundation.