FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As Our Community Mourns Tragic Loss of Two Young Children Due to Vehicle Crashes, Families Seek Child Passenger Safety Information

*Free Car Seat Safety Checkups: Saturday, September 24, 2016*

Missoula, MT – Safe Kids Missoula joins the community in mourning the loss of an infant and a toddler in two separate vehicle crashes recently. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of unintentional deaths to children in the United States. Correctly-used car seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71 percent, but 73 percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly. Our community has trained and certified experts who will help parents learn to properly install and use their child(ren)’s car seat and the Safe Kids Missoula Coalition, the Missoula/Granite County Buckle Up Montana Coalition and Montana Department of Transportation are working together to raise awareness and help children ride safer in the car.

Coalitions of Safe Kids Worldwide host car seat safety checkup events across the country. At these events, certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians teach families how to transport children correctly. They also help make sure everyone in a vehicle is buckled up on every ride.

The Missoula/Granite County Buckle Up Montana Coalition is partnering with A Carousel for Missoula and Safe Kids Missoula Coalition to hold a free car seat safety checkup event on National Seat Check Saturday -- September 24, 2016. The event will take place from 9 a.m. until noon at Caras Park in the parking lot area in front of A Carousel for Missoula. Appointments are not required for this event.

Missoula Rural Fire Department (MRFD), in collaboration with Safe Kids Missoula, will also host a free car seat safety checkup event on Saturday, September 24, 2016 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at MRFD Station #1, located on the corner of South Avenue and Reserve Street. This event requires an appointment and appointments can be made by calling 406-549-6172.

“We know parents want to do all that they can to protect their children. These tragedies are a reminder that we need to continue to promote injury prevention.” said Kira Huck, Safe Kids Missoula Co-Coordinator. “We need to continue to educate and raise awareness so all parents have the information and resources they need to keep their kids safe.”

(continued)
Safe Kids Missoula and its partners encourage parents and caregivers to keep kids safe with these important tips:

**Top Tips for Parents:** Make sure your car seat is installed correctly:

- **Right Seat.** Check the label on your car seat to make sure it is appropriate for your child’s age, weight and height; like milk, your car seat has an expiration date. Double check the label on your car seat to make sure it is still safe.

- **Right Place.** Kids are VIPs, just ask them. We know all VIPs ride in the back seat, so keep all children in the back seat until they are 13.

- **Right direction:** Keep your child in a rear-facing car seat until at least age 2. When he or she outgrows the seat, move your child to a forward-facing car seat and make sure to attach the top tether after you tighten and lock the seat belt or lower attachments (LATCH).

- **Inch test.** Once your car seat is installed, give it a good tug at the base where the seat belt goes through it. Can you move it more than an inch side to side or front to back? A properly installed seat will not move more than an inch.

- **Pinch Test.** Make sure the harness is tightly buckled and is coming through the correct slots (check car seat manual). Now, with the chest clip placed at armpit level, pinch the strap at your child’s shoulder. If you are unable to pinch any excess webbing, you are good to go.

Lonie Hutchison, Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician/Instructor, reminds parents and caregivers, “Children need to be both buckled in, and buckled in the right kind of seat – whether a child safety seat, booster seat or seat belt – every trip, every time.”

To learn more child passenger safety tips, visit [www.safekids.org/tip/car-seat-tips](http://www.safekids.org/tip/car-seat-tips). Information about the Safe Kids Missoula Coalition can be found by visiting fchwmt.org or by calling 406-926-2522.

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**About Safe Kids Missoula**

Safe Kids Missoula Coalition, a local partner of Safe Kids Worldwide, is led by Foundation for Community Health. The Coalition includes safety experts from more than 30 nonprofit and government agencies dedicated to protecting kids from preventable injuries—the number one cause of death to children in the United States. The Coalition works together to increase awareness and create safer environments with the goal of preventing traffic injury, concussion, poisoning, child gun access and more. In 2015, more than 7,000 children, parents and caregivers received hands-on education and take-action information through Safe Kids Missoula. For more information, visit fchwmt.org/safe-kids-missoula.