



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# GEORGIA TRAFFIC INJURY PREVENTION INSTITUTE

*The Governor's Office of Highway Safety*

## Tech Talk

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### Saved By the Belt

*Submitted by Tonda Tucker, Grady County, Georgia*

I have worked for the past seven years as a 911 dispatcher, the last four of those years at Thomas County E-911. During that time, I have talked countless people through dangerous, frightening, and life-threatening situations, all the while urging them to remain calm and assuring them that help is on the way. I never realized how powerful those words could be to someone who is sick, hurt, or afraid until I found myself needing the very services I work every day to help provide.

I looked forward to our 20-minute commute from Cairo to Thomasville. It was a short, easy drive and I enjoyed the company of my co-worker very much. We alternated driving, and on Friday, December 30, 2005, it was my day to drive. As we chatted about New Year's Eve plans, we headed east toward Thomasville on Highway 84. It was no different from the hundreds of other times we had made

the same journey, until we began to see debris in the roadway. As I hit my brakes and began slowing, I remember thinking, "Just hit whatever it is head on. You have airbags and crumple zones." With that thought still in my head and braking hard for a second time, we hit an overturned log truck head on. I called out to my friend two times, and she did not respond.

The next memory I have is of a man holding my hand and telling me help was on the way. I remember hearing a woman's voice as well. I couldn't see anyone or make out much of my surroundings. I began to pray out loud. I must have known I was injured because I am told I spoke to a woman and told her my ankle was broken. As first responders, volunteer firefighters, and EMS workers began to arrive, I remember telling each one that I had a strong airway and didn't feel weak.

The extrication took an hour and a half. I spent just over two hours trapped in my 1996 Ford Windstar while workers cut through the twisted metal. The bar that my seat belt was attached to had pinned my head, keeping me from injuring myself further by moving too much. It



**Tonda Tucker's Ford Windstar**

also held pressure on a severe head wound that began to bleed a great deal once they moved me. I lost two units of blood in the ambulance (a five-minute ride) and the ER. It wasn't until I reached the hospital that I found out there was a second truck involved. After we hit the overturned log truck that was across both eastbound lanes, a loaded tanker truck topped the hill and literally drove through the van. My friend/co-worker passed away at the scene despite her seat belt, but I can assure you she was a very strong advocate and believed firmly in the use of them.

I sustained nine broken bones, including a broken and severely dislocated right ankle, broken right tibia, crushed right knee, two bro-

ken ribs, several broken bones in my left hand, a broken left clavicle, a head wound, and countless bruises and cuts. I have spent the past 14 months in and out of a wheelchair. Most of my injuries have healed, but I am still having some difficulty with the bones in my right foot and ankle. I have been back to work for almost a year now, and I am determined to make a full recovery.

When people tell me I am "lucky" to have survived such an awful crash, I have to correct them. I am not lucky; I am Blessed. God brought me through that accident, and He used my seat belt (and the bar it was attached to) to protect me that day.

#### Inside This Issue

Safety Belt Teaching Tool	2
Using Your Noodles	2
No Expiration on RightFit Boosters	2
Local Spotlight: Lamar County	3
Get a Handle (Up) on Combi Centre	3
New GTIPI Staff Members	4

*GTIPI is funded by a grant from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.*

## Safety Belt Teaching Tool



Safety2Go™ Kit  
Photo from [www.safety2go.com](http://www.safety2go.com)

From time to time, technicians ask where they can get their own latch plates and retractors to use in teaching.

Hunting at an auto salvage yard is one option, but you could also buy a ready-made set.

One such product is the Safety2Go™ “seatbelt demonstration kit” sold by Beam’s Seatbelts. It comes with four retractors (a belt-sensitive ELR, a vehicle-sensitive ELR, a switchable retractor, and an ALR), three locking latch plates

(including a lightweight locking latch plate), two sewn latch plates, a sliding latch plate, and three types of buckles. It

also includes webbing with a web-stop button, 25 pieces of webbing for practicing belt shortening and locking clips, and two red clips to hold webbing out of a retractor while demonstrating a belt shortening clip.

The kit sells for about \$300 and comes in a cardboard case. Optional items (such as a fabric bag and switchable latch plate) are sold separately. For more information, go to [www.safety2go.com](http://www.safety2go.com) or call 405-793-0505.

Thank you to Jane Garrison of the Chatham County Health Department for sharing this tip!

## Using Your Noodles

Occasionally, when teaching a parent or caregiver to install a rear-facing seat, it is difficult to obtain the correct recline angle. There are important reasons for the seat to be secured at the proper angle. If the head of a very young or sleeping child slumps away from the shell, there may be greater force on the head in a crash. With a very young infant, the airway may be closed off if the head flops onto the chest.

Be sure to follow the manufacturer’s instructions for the acceptable rear-facing angle. Many new infant seats have adjustment mechanisms on

their bases, so you might not need a noodle at all. Not all manufacturers recommend a recline all the way to 45 degrees. REMEMBER, the correct recline angle is never more than 45 degrees from the vertical.

There is no “magic” number of noodles. The important element is the proper angle. A tightly rolled blanket, towel, or newspaper can also be used. Whatever material is used should be as solid as possible, yet soft and lightweight, so it won’t injure anyone if it becomes dislodged in a crash. The item is placed at the seat bight before positioning the

child safety seat on the rolled object.

Additionally, the material should not interfere with the routing or tightness of the belt. Avoid using too much material, which can force the child safety seat away from the vehicle seat and affect performance in a crash.

Two sources of noodles are Georgia Construction Products (770-491-9100), which has solid core noodles from 2 to 6 inches in diameter, and Gladon Company in Wisconsin (1-877-445-2366), which offers a 4-inch solid core noodle.

Thanks to Wendie Parker of Cobb/Douglas Public Health for this tip!

## No Expiration on RightFit Boosters

Do you have unused RightFit boosters? Don’t throw them away just because of their age.

In your CPST class or an update, you probably learned the recommendation that child restraints be discarded once the seats are older than six years (2004 NSCPSTP Curriculum, p. G-38.)

However, the CPS field is always changing, and at least one CR manufacturer allows use of a specific seat indefinitely. Evenflo RightFit backless boosters are no longer manufactured but do

not have an expiration date. Randy Kiser, Director of Product Safety, Research & Development for Evenflo issued this explanation by e-mail:

“Some child restraint manufacturers began marking some of their products with a ‘do not use after’ date about eight years ago. The purpose of this was to reduce the use of second-hand seats with missing or broken parts and to ensure that the seats that are being used meet the latest safety standards. The “do not use after” date is not in place because the

material can degrade over time.

“The Evenflo RightFit does not include an expiry date, as this model was introduced prior to this practice coming to the fore. Any RightFit that has been in storage and is unused, complete and not otherwise damaged is appropriate for use.” (Electronic communication, February 14, 2006)



Evenflo RightFit  
Photo from [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

# Local Spotlight: Lamar Co. Receives Grant

Sherry Farr, Lamar County Nurse Manager and CPST, received a \$500 Good Neighbor Grant from State Farm Insurance. This grant will support and supplement the Lamar County Health Department's existing car seat safety program, which has already reached 100 local citizens.

Last year, the Lamar County Health Department began partnering with five other city and county agencies to provide education about child safety seats in Lamar County. They teach two-hour classes to increase parents' and caregivers' awareness of the necessity and proper use of child restraints. The first hour of the class consists of a safety pres-

entation, with the second hour set aside for participants to install their child restraints with a CPST's guidance.

The Lamar County Health Department also receives a CPS mini-grant from the Injury Prevention Section of the Georgia Division of Public Health (see the December 2006 issue of *Tech Talk*), and many of their CPS technicians completed their certification requirements at the four-day trainings offered by GTIPI.

Phillip Bell, the insurance agent who presented the check, says that he and State Farm are "proud to be sponsors of this program to keep our kids safe" in Lamar County.



**Sherry Farr, Lamar County CPST, receives \$500 check from State Farm Agent Phillip Bell**

## Earn a CEU with the CPS Board's TECH Update

The National CPS Board and the certifying body, Safe Kids Worldwide, have announced that technicians and instructors can earn recertification CEUs online at <http://www.cpsboard.org/ceus.htm>. You may qualify for up to one CEU per certification cycle for reading the TECH Update. To qualify, read two issues of the TECH Update and complete the quiz for both editions.

# Get a Handle (Up) on the Combi Centre



**Combi Centre**  
Photo from [www.target.com](http://www.target.com)

The Combi Centre is a carrier and child restraint for rear-facing infants from 5 to 22 pounds and up to 29 inches long. It is available in three models, the ST, the DX, and the EX, each with slightly different features.

This infant seat is an exception to a "rule" many technicians learned previously, that the handle on an infant carrier

should usually be placed down or back when installed in a vehicle. Some newer seats give parents the option of placing the carry handle in either location. However, the Combi Centre's instructions state that its carry handle MUST be up when the seat is used in a vehicle.

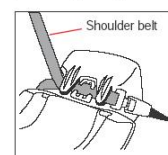
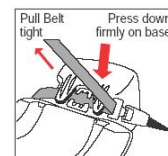
The carry handle location isn't the only difference on this seat. Some models have a rebound bar. Another option is an adjustable headrest that allows parents to change the height of the shoulder straps without re-threading them through separate harness slots as the baby grows.

The Centre can be installed with or without its base, but it has a built-in lock-off (referred to as a "built-in locking clip" in the instructions) on the base. The safety belt must be routed through this lock-off when using the base. (See the excerpt from the instruction manual pictured on the right.)

The base also has an adjustable foot for changing the recline angle. The manufacturer's instructions mention us-

ing a rolled towel or noodle in the bight for "extra support" if the seat is still too upright. A LATCH strap is included *within* the base; parents must release the adjustable foot to remove the strap from the storage area.

The Combi Centre retails for \$110 to \$130, and additional bases are available for approximately \$50 each. For more information from the manufacturer, visit [www.combi-intl.com](http://www.combi-intl.com) or call 800-992-6624.



**LAP/SHOULDER BELT**

Select the best position in the vehicle and position the base at the correct angle. (See pages 19,20,21 and 24)

Route the vehicle Lap belt over the front of the base threading the belt under the routing lugs, and through the built-in Locking Clip.

**Pull the belt tight!**

Then pass the shoulder belt back under the routing lugs and through the Locking Clip. Maintain the belt tension.

**WARNING:** Not all vehicle belts are suitable for a car seat installation. See Section 11 for more information on suitable vehicle belts.

**Detail of Built-in Locking Clip**  
from Combi Centre Instruction Manual

*NOTE: These columns are for information only and are not intended as an endorsement for any product. Descriptions are those of the manufacturer.*

# GTIPI Training Dates

## CPST 4-Day Trainings

April 17-20 Martinez  
May 9-10 & 16-17 Conyers  
May 24-25 & 30-31 Conyers  
June 5-8 Cleveland (FULL)

## CPST Workshops (for 5-7 CEUs)

April 3 Cornelia  
April 26 Warner Robins  
July 17 Dalton

## P.R.I.D.E. Instructor Certification

April 24 Fort Valley  
May 1 Bainbridge  
May 22 Conyers

## P.R.I.D.E. Instructor Recertification

April 25 Fort Valley  
May 2 Bainbridge  
May 23 Conyers

## Car Fit Event Coordinator Training

April 26-27 Conyers

## More Training for CPSTs

### Manufacturer's Workshop Presented by Evenflo for CEUs

May 3 Perry



## New GTIPI Staff Members

**James Freeman** is a military retiree who works part-time in our Resource Center and brings valuable experience from many sources. He resides in Covington with his wife, Sheila.

**Andrea O'Neal** returns to GTIPI as a part-time data entry clerk. Andrea is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University and comes to us with experience in education, customer service, and membership services. She resides in Decatur.

**Harry Park** serves south Georgia as a program specialist. He is a former banker, and he and his wife, Mary, have three children and eight grandchildren.

**Aischa Paul** also works part-time in our Resource Center and brings experience in retail management. Aischa and her husband have three boys, the youngest of which rides in a properly installed rear-facing convertible seat.

**Please join us in welcoming them!**



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800-342-9819 or 678-413-4281  
[www.ridesafegeorgia.org](http://www.ridesafegeorgia.org)

**United Nations Global Road Safety Week**  
**April 23-29, 2007**

more information online at <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/en/>



**ROAD SAFETY  
IS NO ACCIDENT**