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## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Child Safety Seats Prevent Tragedy in Horror Salina Wreck

*Two children survived rollover crash that destroyed SUV;  
Free installation inspections make children the safest people in the vehicle*

**LAWRENCE** – Amanda Meier of Salina had a nationally certified technician inspect the installation of the child safety seats in her SUV. That’s why her children are alive today.

They survived a February crash that rolled their vehicle 360 degrees. It landed back on its tires, but facing the opposite direction. The force of the impact knocked the shoes off the feet of all three passengers, and the vehicle was totaled.

Neither Meier, nor her 3- and 6-year-old children, suffered so much as a scratch.

The crash was caused by a speeding motorist who ran a stop sign while fleeing from police. It happened at 11 a.m. in broad daylight on a quiet city street with a 30 mile-per-hour speed limit.

“There is no such thing as a short trip you don’t have to worry about,” Meier said.

She told her story at a special event at Lawrence Memorial Hospital Sept. 17, designed to kick off Kansas’ observance of the national Child Passenger Safety Week, which runs Sept. 19 through 25. She was joined by several safety advocates from across Kansas.

The speakers stressed the importance of both using age-appropriate child passenger safety equipment, and making sure that equipment is properly installed. Speakers stressed the importance of booster seats for children in the 4- to 8-year-old range.

John Drees oversees the official seat installation inspection program at the hospital. That station serves Douglas, Jefferson and Leavenworth counties, and similar inspection stations are available statewide. He said he has seen firsthand how many well-meaning parents incorrectly install the seats, unknowingly putting their children at risk. He estimated about 80 percent of those he sees need adjustments.

(A full list of Kansas inspection stations staffed by nationally certified technicians can be found here: <http://ktsro.org/images/CPS%20List%202009.pdf>)

Drees explained that, between the number of different vehicle makes and models, and the number of different child safety seats on the market, there are about 100,000 potential combinations of seats and vehicles. Getting the seat properly installed for maximum protection can be a real challenge. Often, he said, parents who are certain they have installed a seat properly visit an inspection station, only to find they need an adjustment.

“Used properly, this equipment makes the child the safest, most protected person in the vehicle,” Drees said. “In Douglas County alone, we have had eight children survive a crash, uninjured, in which an adult was killed.”

Meier and her two children are lucky – Meier’s mother is a certified technician, and she had checked and adjusted the child safety seats in Meier’s SUV regularly.

Cherie Sage, State Director of Safe Kids Kansas, discussed troubling statistics on use of child safety seats among certain age groups of children. While surveys show 97 percent of Kansas families using recommended child safety seats for infants and toddlers in the age group from birth through age 4, the rate drops to an alarming 76 percent for the 5 through 9 age group. That is 6 percentage points lower than the adult rate of 82 percent.

“Kansas parents are doing a really good job protecting children from birth through age 4,” Sage said. “We know parents don’t stop loving their children when they turn 5, so they shouldn’t stop protecting them either.”

It is in that age group that children typically outgrow infant-toddler seats. Standard seat belts designed for adults, however, are set too high to secure small bodies safely and properly. Booster seats put the child in the proper position for the seat belt to do its job.

That is also the age when children can start to protest and resist safety belt usage. Both Sage and Meier said parents have to be firm with their children on safety.

“When it comes to safety, I am a tough parent,” Meier said. “Once they are buckled in they are not allowed to disconnect for any reason until the car is parked and turned off. If they drop something, they have to wait until I can get it for them.”

Also at the event, Jim Hanni, Executive Vice President of Public and Government Affairs of AAA Motor Club of Kansas, presented a \$19,500 donation to the SAFE Program. SAFE is a special peer-directed seat belt advocacy program for Kansas teens. Jason Hammes, President of the Kansas Motor Carriers Association, donated 105 child safety seats to the Kansas Highway Patrol.

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