

# Stay alert . . . stay alive protects children

Stay Alert ... Stay Safe, a registered Canadian charity, has a mandate to provide an integrated, national education program to encourage practical and intelligent child safety practices among school children.

Lesley Parrott, a founding

member and director of Stay Alert ... Stay Safe, remarks: Our program answers the urgent and critical need children and their families have for practical, well-researched safety information. Our goal is to make children more aware of potential problems by

teaching them to identify and avoid trouble situations. This is an up-beat program that goes far beyond streetproofing. It is designed to encourage kids to use safety tips as second nature. We want them to be alert, not afraid. Our hope is that, by educating them properly, we will give them the confidence to recognize and deal with potentially difficult situations."

The concept of Stay Alert ... Stay Safe was established in 1987, through the combined efforts of Carole Cameron, Lesley Parrott and Janet Jessop, three mothers of murdered children.

Ms. Parrott brought the idea for an educational child safety program to the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson (Canada) Limited, for who she works. Ms. Parrott joined staff from JWT, public relations agency Hill and Knowlton (Canada) Limited, and other communications experts in creating a Stay Alert ... Stay Safe volunteer management committee. Together, the teams devised strategies for developing and securing support for the Stay Alert program.

Since then, the group's work has been impressive and well rewarded. Stay Alert ... Stay Safe solicited and received support and/or endorsement from the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department and the Toronto Board of Education shortly after its inception. The committee volunteers worked to have Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton declare June 22, 1987 "Stay Alert ... Stay Safe Day." The event was timed to heighten awareness of children's vulnerability to crime prior to the summer holidays, when children are at their most vulnerable.

To date, the Stay Alert team's major project has been the researching, writing and distribution of a safety education brochure in English and French for elemen-

tary students in the Metropolitan Toronto area. In this brochure, a sister/brother pair of cartoon rabbits named Bert and Gert speak directly to the children, giving them smart, friendly advice and safety tips - and encouraging their young readers to "keep their radar up."

In September, 1989, Stay Alert ... Stay Safe was granted charitable status and received the endorsement of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. In October, 1989, they received a crime prevention award from the Solicitor General of Canada.

Their prime supporter - Canadian Tire - came on board in November, 1989 with total corporate commitment to Stay Alert ... Stay Safe, including a \$700,000, first-year donation to expand the project into a full-scale elementary education program aimed primarily at grade 3 and 4 students across Canada.

Their involvement will allow Stay Alert ... Stay Safe program to enter over 16,000 elementary schools nationwide. The company will also provide the marketing resources of its network of over 410 associate dealer stores to bring the safety message to the people. This is a long-term pledge of support.



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