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## **Safety Group to Launch Initiative to Keep Farm Children Safer**

(Marshfield, WI) The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network is a newly formed coalition of health and safety organizations across the nation. These groups have combined their efforts for the first time to bring a unified safety message to agricultural communities. The message is geared towards protecting children from preventable injuries. The first year of the program is centered on tractor safety and keeping children off of tractors.

### **Why is this important?**

In the U.S., agriculture consistently ranks among the four deadliest jobs, along with mining, transportation and construction. According to the National Safety Council's most recent report (2005), agriculture had the highest rate of worker deaths at 29.2/100,000 workers compared to an average across all jobs of 3.5 deaths/100,000 workers. And agricultural workers suffered 90,000 disabling injuries that same year. Nearly all these deaths and injuries are preventable.

One of the main differences between agriculture and other industries is the presence of children in the worksite. Farming is typically a family business, where children are raised on the farm and participate in farming activities beginning at young ages. Annually, more than 100 children are killed and 26,000 seriously injured in farm-related events in the United States.

Over the years, a growing number of organizations have identified the seriousness of these statistics and have promoted farm safety, especially for children. Across the country, they have created local or regional marketing programs addressing safety issues in farming communities.

Now one unifying coalition, The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network (CASN), speaks with one voice, advocating farm safety for children.

### **The Message**

CASN looked at safety messages with year-long themes, with a three year overall plan. The first year is dedicated to tractor safety—the number one cause of childhood deaths on the farm. The second year is planned to launch a marketing program based on All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) safety. The third year theme has not been confirmed at this point.

The message selected for the tractor initiative may create some controversy within the farming communities. CASN takes a “tough love” approach, stating that it is never okay for a child younger than 12 years to be on a tractor. The group advocates that the earliest a child should be on a tractor is when they are old enough to take and pass tractor safety educational classes.

In many rural areas, having children ride on the tractor with parents, or grandparents, is considered part of the farming tradition. Some farm adults consider this “quality time” with the child. Children even just a couple years old are often seen riding on tractors with adults, either riding on the lap, sitting on a fender, or standing on the axle.

Unfortunately, this quality time can turn into a horrific experience quickly, with children falling from the tractor and being crushed by tires, caught under mowers or other pull behinds, with the child being killed or maimed for life. And the biggest tragedy of all is that these events are one hundred percent preventable.

CASN is taking the position as an advocate for the child on the farm. These safety advocates acknowledge that the message that children should never be on or near tractors may be unpopular or even upset parents and farm owners.

### **Bury A Tradition**

Although advocating safety for children, the marketing message is meant for adults. The main advertising components will carry a headline of *It's Easier to Bury a Tradition than a Child*. Talking directly to the farming community, the goal is to change behaviors. Much like seat belt messages have helped reshape the usage of seat belts in cars, CASN is hoping that their message to keep children off of tractors will make people think of the consequences and realize that it is in the child's best interests to follow this simple rule. No one wants to bury their child.

A print campaign is part of the initial launch. Supportive agricultural-based newspapers have already agreed to donate space for this important message and more are being contacted. An effort is in the works to find a sponsor to help bring the message to the airways, with television and radio commercials. A website, [www.childagsafety.org](http://www.childagsafety.org), has been launched, with additional content coming soon.

### **The Organization's Roots**

The coalition was nearly a decade in the making.

In 1997, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) started its national childhood agricultural injury prevention initiative and provided funds for the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, Marshfield, WI, to coordinate activities between government, private organizations, and the farming community.

By 1999, there were three major groups dedicated solely to children and farm safety: the NIOSH-funded center in Wisconsin, Farm Safety 4 Just Kids in Earlham, IA and Progressive Agriculture Farm Safety Camps of Birmingham, AL.

In 2000, these three primary organizations were joined by 10 additional groups focusing on projects related to children and agriculture.

### **A Network is Created**

From 2000 to 2006, a "network" of child safety advocates grew with a common bond of preventing childhood agricultural diseases and injuries.

In 2001, CDC/NIOSH sponsored the Summit on Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention. More than 150 professionals gathered to plot the course for the future. At this meeting, it was suggested that a yearlong approach to communicating safety issues was in order, in addition to the annual Farm Safety and Health week activities.

These plans sat on the back burners until January of 2006 when leaders of the three primary child farm safety organizations held a strategic planning retreat. Included were Barbara Lee, of The National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety; Marilyn Adams of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids; and Susan Reynolds of Progressive Agriculture Foundation.

These three leaders agreed to pool their organizational talents and committed to "make a difference" in protecting children. They resurrected the 2001 recommendations and generated interest within other similar-minded organizations. The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network (CASN) was now moving forward with a major joint project.

In the Spring of 2006, a search was launched to find an advertising agency to help create marketing plans and materials. The Gunter Agency, a Madison, WI-based full service ad agency was selected to produce the materials for the campaign. A meeting in Madison, WI, on May 2nd included CASN members and the advertising agency where they defined the advertising messages. In a follow-up meeting on June 27 in Sheboygan, WI, in conjunction with the National Institute for Farm Safety's Annual Conference, CASN members convened to select the creative campaigns for the first year.

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