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Ocean City police mount effort to educate pedestrians, cyclists

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By CAITLIN DINEEN, Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, September 8, 2010



Donna Pfeffer, a seasonal resident of Ocean City, aware of the city law against bicycle riding on the sidewalks, began her ride on the street after shopping in downtown on Asbury Avenue.

Ocean City Councilman Keith Hartzell was treated just like any other jaywalker in downtown Ocean City.

He was motioned over by a police officer and reminded of the danger of illegally crossing the street before he was handed an information card about the importance of pedestrian safety.

"There's more to walking safe," Hartzell said, adding that jaywalking was an offense he regularly commits. "I jaywalk too much."

Hartzell said he received the informational card when he illegally crossed Asbury Avenue. The card included information stressing the importance of pedestrian safety on busy streets and warned violators that they could also receive a fine for jaywalking within city limits.

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Looking Towards All
Seasons Marina Photo
By: ~*Jersey Girl*~

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Police officers from the Ocean City Police Department were visible in the downtown section of Ocean City between Aug. 17 and 19 as part of new efforts to protect and educate pedestrians.

Ocean City Lt. Steven Ang said the department received funding through the

Casey Feldman Memorial Foundation and used part of the funding to conduct the three-day pedestrian education program.

"It's dangerous down there," Ang said, of Asbury Avenue and other congested areas of downtown Ocean City. "We're trying to have visibility and get a little education down there."

The foundation was started last year in memory of Feldman - a senior at New York University - who died July 17, 2009, after she was struck by a van while on her way to work in Ocean City.

Feldman was from Springfield, Pa., and was walking to her summer waitressing job when she was struck by the van. She was rushed to AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, City Campus, in Atlantic City, and died five hours later.

Four officers were assigned recently to patrol the bustling shopping hub near Asbury Avenue to help enforce pedestrian safety by alerting all pedestrians to traffic safety laws and any violations they may have made.

And no pedestrian was safe from the arm of the law.

Officer Craig Wilson - who helped coordinate the program - said officers issued 1,000 pamphlets and warnings during the program.

Wilson, who is part of the department's traffic safety unit, said 500 were issued to pedestrians and bicyclists and 500 were issued to motorists.

He said pedestrians often were seen crossing without using the crosswalk or without a crossing signal, and cyclists did not adhere to motor laws, but instead acted like pedestrians.

Hartzell said he was glad to see city public safety officials manning the streets and keeping an eye on pedestrians who may not think twice about walking into busy roadways between cars, or even crossing the street against the light when there is no oncoming vehicular traffic.

Additionally, Hartzell said he thought the recent program was necessary for the Police Department to coordinate because it combined pedestrian safety and bicyclist safety.

He said officers monitoring pedestrian traffic also reminded cyclists that bikes are prohibited from downtown sidewalks. The combination of consumer and bike traffic in city's downtown has been a talking point for City Council members this summer.

Council members said they are researching ways to alleviate and reduce safety concerns associated with the busy Asbury Avenue section of town.

"(The program) was a learning thing for me, too," Hartzell said.

Ang said this was the first summer police officials have focused on pedestrian safety, and he hopes to continue reaching out to the community in the future.

"It might be too little, too late with the end of the season," Ang said, adding that Asbury Avenue and other sections of downtown are considered a "high priority" area for city police.

Wilson said he thought the program went well and said it was important to educate local pedestrians and motorists instead of hitting them with a fine.

"The main goal right now is education," Wilson said.

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