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Certified officers to help residents install, inspect car seats

BY SARAH WOJCIK

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP —

Two Shelby Township police officers recently underwent a four-day training course to inspect and install car seats. Residents are encouraged to make a free appointment with them at the Police Department.

The process will take approximately 25 minutes and alleviate a lot of the stress and worry that parents and caregivers might feel about properly installing car seats themselves, Police Chief Robert Shelide said.

"I feel proud of this. To me, this is community policing at its

finest," Shelide said. "There's not a parent around that didn't feel afraid the first time they put a car seat in."

Shelide said the first time he had to install a car seat, he took it to his brother-in-law's house and had him do it.

Officers Mark Benedettini and Joseph Wojcik underwent 32 hours of training to become certified child safety restraint technicians. The state of Michigan certified them.

"(They) are two of our stars who weren't deterred by four days of training," Shelide said. "The training was very intense. It's no joke, and there was no screwing around. They had a lot of mate-

rial to get through, and now these guys are experts. They can tell you right away if (a car seat) has been recalled."

Shelide said at least one technician will attend several family events put on by the Shelby Town-

ship Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Department this summer.

The Police Department will announce beforehand which township events the child safety restraint technicians will attend on its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ShelbyTwpPolice.

Information also will be available on the PRM Department's website, www.shelbytwp.org/departments/prm, or its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ShelbyTwpPolice.

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See CAR SEATS on page 9A

Join Us For Our Preplanning Open House At Resurrection's Garden of the Ascension Mausoleum

Sunday, June 26

1-4 p.m.

• Light refreshments



Car seats

from page 4A

by Twp Parks and Rec.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, properly installed car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers.

NHTSA data shows that 59 percent of car seats are not installed properly and that every 34 seconds, a child younger than 13 is involved in a crash.

Michigan law requires that all children from birth to age 8 be properly restrained in a child safety seat or booster seat until they are taller than 4 feet 9 inches.

Carole Guzzetta, an NHTSA highway safety specialist, said there are approximately 35,000 technicians who have completed the extensive child safety restraint course in the country.

"A good number of them are in the law enforcement and public safety field," Guzzetta said. "It's a wonderful community thing. To see law enforcement with little babies (at community events) is a beautiful sight — just trying to make everybody safer."

Guzzetta said car seats are im-



Joseph Wojcik, a Shelby Township police officer, demonstrates how to properly install a car seat at the Shelby Township Police Department June 17. Wojcik recently underwent a four-day training program to become a certified child safety restraint technician.

Photo by Sarah Purlee

portant because children are smaller and more fragile than adults, so it is important for them to be restrained and safely positioned in case of an accident.

Infants should be in rear-facing car seats to protect their backs, she said. Car seats help children sit where their legs bend naturally at the knees and protect their bellies from internal damage potentially incurred from a seat belt, she said.

"The shoulder portion (of seat belts) rubs on their neck (when children are belted in without a car seat), so sometimes they put it behind their arm or behind their back," Guzzetta said. "Under the arm leads to more serious inju-

ries, and behind the back there is no upper body protection, so they flop forward."

Because there are so many makes and models of both car seats and vehicles, a trained expert is a valuable asset to ensure car seats are installed safely, Guzzetta said.

To make an appointment, call the Police Department at (586) 731-2121 or visit www.shelbytwp.org/departments/police_department. The Police Department is located at 52530 Van Dyke Ave., south of 24 Mile Road.

For more information, visit www.safercar.gov.

Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.