Schools to learn about sun protection

To help reduce the incidence of skin cancer in the area, Hingham Institution for Savings provided a generous grant to the Sun Protection Foundation to teach sun protection education on the South Shore.

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—Maryellen Maguire-Eisen, Sun Protection Foundation

The Sun Protection Foundation is a Hingham-based non-profit educational foundation that provides sun safety education to elementary, middle and high schools on the South Shore. The campaign, called the Learn Not 2 Burn program, teaches children about ultraviolet light intensity and its impact on the skin.

“We are pleased that we have been able to assist the Sun Protection Foundation in reaching so many students with this valuable campaign,” noted Hingham Institution for Savings president Bob Gaughen.

“Our goal is to provide children with a greater understanding of the impact of the sun on their skin, thereby preventing sunburn,” said Maryellen Maguire-Eisen, Sun Protection Foundation executive director. “One blistering sunburn can double a child’s risk of melanoma, the deadly form of skin cancer,” she cautioned. “Because most adults don’t realize that the risk of sunburn is greater in May than August, children are sent to school without any sun protection on very sunny days.”

Maguire-Eisen is a nurse practitioner and has taught sun protection in the South Shore for more than 10 years. She has taught thousands of children about sun protection in nine South Shore towns over the past two years. “I decided that if I was going to really impact a child’s risk of skin cancer then I had to make this a fulltime commitment,” she said.

The Sun Protection Foundation developed their Learn Not 2 Burn program over the past two years. It has three discrete program levels. All levels are designed to teach an understanding of the factors that affect UV intensity and skin sensitivity along with specific sun protection measures. A UV monitoring program is also available to participating schools.

“I’ve worked with Maryellen for more than two years,” said Gail Bork, Community Director, Cancer Control for the New England Division of the American Cancer Society. “The Learn Not 2 Burn program is one of the most effective implementation of a prevention based program that I’ve seen, specifically because of the passion and dedication to teaching children what Maryellen brings to her work.”

“And the UV monitoring program provides a daily lesson on UV intensity and appropriate sun precautions for the whole school,” added Judy Wilson, Hingham Middle School’s health educator.

Hingham-based schools participating in the program include the Wm. F. Foster Elementary School, Hingham Middle School, Hingham High School, Old Colony Montessori, Notre Dame Academy and Derby Academy. For more information visit www.sunprotectionfoundation.org or email Stephen Doran at stephendoran@comcast.net.