

SAFETY SENSE

Two Families Share Message Of Lawnmower Safety

(NAPSA)—For many, the smell of freshly cut grass signifies the onset of warmer temperatures, backyard barbecues and spending quality time outdoors. For others, though, it evokes painful memories of learning lawnmower safety the hard way.

What started out as innocent horseplay with his brother, Brent, ended up leaving 5-year-old Kevin Hartley under the blades of a lawnmower. Kevin jumped off the top of the swing set slide and accidentally landed in front of where his brother was mowing with the riding lawnmower. Kevin's left leg was badly mangled, as was his right heel and toe.

Local hospitals near their hometown of Leetonia, Ohio, did the initial treatments and then amputated Kevin's left leg. It wasn't until a few weeks later that the Hartleys were referred to the Erie Shriners Hospital for Children by the parents of another Shriners' patient.

"We walked in and immediately felt very welcomed," said Kevin's mother, Becky Hartley. "The hospital staff went out of their way to make us feel at home. The chief of staff even told us about his own son who was in a lawnmower accident."

From that moment on, Kevin's life was in the hands of Shriners doctors, who started doing skin grafts and later fitted him with a prosthetic for his left leg. Like a typical young boy, Kevin's activity kept him constantly going back for new prosthetics—a little thing like an artificial leg wasn't going



To prevent accidents, always make sure children are a safe distance away from lawnmowers.

to stop him!

"My treatment at Shriners Hospital has opened up a lot of doors for me," said Kevin. "I can do anything that anybody else can do."

These days, 17-year-old Kevin is a senior in high school, and plans to study religion when he goes to college. The artificial leg doesn't keep him from hunting, canoeing, snowboarding or any other outdoor sport he loves.

At the age of 3, Stefanie Rex also found herself sucked underneath the blades of a lawnmower when the riding mower she was on with her mother, Betty, hit a bump. Her mother stopped the lawnmower and tried to take action, but she wasn't quick enough. Stefanie's leg was mangled and needed immediate attention.

Doctors at the Rexes' small local hospital in Dixon, Ill., suggested they take Stefanie to another larger hospital in a nearby town, where doctors would be better equipped to deal with such a large injury. The doctors there had good

news for Stefanie. She was not going to lose her leg, but she would need specialized care while the damaged leg healed. That's where the Chicago Shriners Hospitals for Children came into the picture.

The staff at the Chicago Shriners Hospital had to work to make Stefanie's injured leg as functional as possible. Doctors implanted internal hardware, and plastic surgery addressed the significant scarring. Doctors found that Stefanie's growth plate was also severely damaged, which meant she would need surgery to lengthen her leg in a few years.

By following a few simple rules, all lawnmower accidents can be prevented. For free pamphlets on lawnmower safety in English or Spanish, contact Shriners International Headquarters, P.O. Box 31356, Tampa, FL 33631-3356 or fax your request to (813) 281-8496.

For more information on Shriners network 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org. Treatment is provided to children under age 18 regardless to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.