

➤ First Look for Charity

February 9, 2006



Thank You!

Thank you for participating in the Chicago Auto Show's First Look for Charity.

The word "big" comes to mind when you think about the Chicago Auto Show. But did you know that biggest cause of death for America's children is automobile crashes? Not drugs, suicide, or abuse. Yes, cars are the number one killer of children and young adults in this country.

According to a recent report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (U.S. Department of Transportation), "In 2002, motor vehicle traffic crashes were the leading cause of death for every age 3 through 33. Because of the young lives consumed, motor vehicle traffic crashes ranked 3rd in terms of the years of life lost, i.e., the number of remaining years that the person is expected to live had they not died, behind only cancer and diseases of the heart."¹

Automobile crashes aren't the only way that cars threaten the health and safety of our children. From the increasing prevalence of child obesity and diseases like diabetes, to smog-induced asthma and bronchitis, children pay a disproportionate price for our nation's addiction to automobiles.²

And Chicago's children suffer even more. According to the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago (one of the charities participating in tonight's event), children in Chicago suffer asthma hospitalization rates twice the national average, as automobile emissions continue to be the major contributor to our city's poor air quality.³ And it's not just children: over 40,000 Americans are killed by cars every year, and many more are injured.⁴

Charity events like this benefit many people. But the best thing we can do to help ourselves and our children is to reduce the number of cars on the roads. Unfortunately, Chicago is headed in the wrong direction. While the automobile and oil industries reap windfalls, basic transit services in Chicago are in danger of being cut or eliminated. Meanwhile, Chicago's drivers waste millions of hours stuck in traffic gridlock each year. And building more roads isn't the answer: more roads only lead to more cars.⁵

But what can we do? Don't we need our cars to get around, to take our kids to school, to the doctor, to soccer practice? Certainly the automobile and oil industries want us to think so. But it wasn't always this way, and it doesn't have to be. In fact, Chicago is a great place to live car-free or car-light. We can build communities where children can walk or bike to school, where alternative transportation is clean, efficient, and comfortable, where congestion, smog, global warming, road rage, and urban sprawl do not threaten our health and our economy. Don't our children deserve that? Don't we all?

Thank you for reading this. Please drive safely. Our children are depending on you.

The Auto Show Truth Commission

Sources:

1. NHTSA Research Note, January 2005: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809831.pdf>
 2. World Health Organization report: <http://www.who.int/inf-pr-1998/en/pr98-57.htm>
 3. American Lung Ass'n of Metropolitan Chicago, Asthma Facts: http://www.lungchicago.org/news/Chicago_Asthma_Fact2.doc
 4. NHTSA Fatality Analysis Reporting System: <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/>
 5. Fixes that Fail: Road Congestion: <http://www.systems-thinking.org/theWay/sff/ffx02.htm>
- For more information, please visit www.carfree.com, www.worldcarfree.net, or www.breakthegridlock.org.