

## MANVILLE: Bicyclists wearing helmets may get ice cream

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It's that time of year again when the sun is shining, the days are warm and children will do anything they can to grab the attention of a police officer while riding their bicycles — because they know it could mean free ice cream.

From now until just after Labor Day, the Manville Police Department will be holding its annual safety helmet program, encouraging children to wear their helmets in exchange for tickets for free ice cream at LJ's Boardwalk Ice Cream and Eatery on South Main Street.

The program began in 2006 after the state's safety helmet law was changed to require anyone 17 and under to wear a helmet, according to Nickolas Franzoso, Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) president.

"(Manville Police) Chief Mark Peltack wanted to encourage kids to wear their helmets through positive reinforcement," Officer Franzoso said.

Teaming up with LJ's Boardwalk, the Police Department decided to offer incentives through ice cream by mandating that anyone under 17 years of age found wearing a safety helmet, during the specified months of the program, would receive a ticket for a free ice cream cone.

"The Manville PBA purchases ice cream tickets from LJ's Boardwalk, and distributes them to all of the officers in the department," Officer Franzoso said. "When the officers are on patrol and observe a child wearing a safety helmet, they issue an ice cream ticket."

Those not wearing the safety helmet, Officer Franzoso said, receive either a summons or a warning.

"Usually if there is a large group of kids, we try to just give a warning," he said.

Children seen wearing helmets on different days have the opportunity to receive more than one ticket, though it is always at the officer's discretion, Officer Franzoso said. And, he said, officers will normally not give more than one ticket to any person in a single day.

Although there have been no changes in the program since its inception, Officer Franzoso said the department has noticed more children wearing their safety helmets. He said he does not have statistics, but he knows the numbers have increased.

"We feel that when the law took effect, there was a low compliance rate," he said. "But now, through this program and education, we noticed that there has been a substantial increase in children wearing their safety helmets year round."

And aside from the safety aspect, Officer Franzoso said, the kids love the idea of getting free ice cream. When some kids start receiving the coupons, many of their friends start to find officers just so they can show off that they are wearing helmets too, in hopes of getting the free ice cream.

"The children who receive the reward are very excited," he said. "And the parents are thankful, and feel it is a good idea."

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