

Del Prado caps defend against skin cancer

'SunSmart America' safety program kicks off at Boca Raton elementary school

By **CARRIE PAGLEY**
STAFF WRITER

When the students at Del Prado Elementary School are outside playing from now on, they'll be showing their school spirit — and they'll be protecting their faces from the damaging rays of the sun.

School students and staff recently kicked off "SunSmart America," a curriculum developed by the Richard David Kann Melanoma Foundation that teaches students to take precautions to prevent and detect skin cancer.

"We're all aware of how important it is to teach our children about sun safety," said Donna Biase, Parent Teacher Association president.

"The younger you are when you learn, the easier it is to apply it everyday when you are older."

The Del Prado PTA bought 1,000 ball caps for all students

Sun safety

The problem

Overexposure to the sun is the leading cause of skin cancer, the most common type of cancer.

One in three Florida residents will be diagnosed with skin cancer at some point in their lives.

Nationwide, more than one million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed each year.

People receive the majority of their sun overexposure by the time they are 18 years old.

The solution

To decrease the chance of overexposure to the sun, always wear sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor of 15 or higher.

Protect lips and eyes.

Wear wide-brim hats to protect face, ears and neck.

Wear sunglasses, long sleeve shirts and pants.

Early detection of skin cancer is key. Watch moles, freckles and colorations on the skin closely.

See a doctor if there are any new changes in moles, spots or freckles.

Source: Richard David Kann Melanoma Foundation

to wear when they participate in outdoor activities at the school. The PTA, along with the melanoma foundation and several sponsors, passed out the

ball caps, sunscreen samples, sun guard laundry detergent and skin cancer prevention and detection literature.

The school district adopted

the skin cancer prevention curriculum for elementary schools last year. Del Prado parents, teachers and staff are hoping their program will be a model for other elementary schools.

"We're trying to set ourselves up as a model school," said Leslie Glickman, head of the school's health and safety committee. "If we can teach them to put on their sunblock now, maybe someday it will be like brushing their teeth, or like using seatbelts. Automatic."

At a recent kickoff event, school nurse Coleen Figliuzzi quizzed students on safe sun practices by asking parents to describe what they did each day to prepare themselves to go outside.

Students laughingly gave a "thumbs up" to one of their teachers dressed in a wide-brimmed hat, large sunglasses and covered in sunscreen on her way to the beach.

They told one parent that she wasn't sun safe because she didn't have time to use sunscreen that day — although she wore a sleeveless shirt.

Figliuzzi also described some of the negative effects of the sun — overexposure can lead to skin cancer — and how they can be avoided.

By using sunscreen, wearing hats, sunglasses and long sleeve clothing, and avoiding the sun 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., students can decrease their risks of being burned by the sun and developing sun damage.

Jill Shamban, executive director of the Richard David Kann Melanoma Foundation, said Del Prado's campaign was good start to implementing lessons about skin cancer and overexposure to the sun.

"Skin cancer is almost 100 percent detectable and preventable if it's caught early," she said.