

Memorial Times

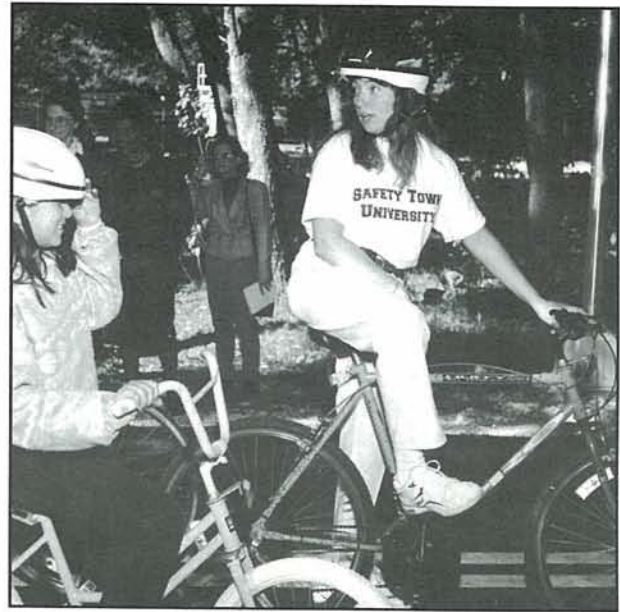
January 1996

Hollywood, Florida

Safety Town University graduates first class!



Bonnie Kissell helps this Indian Ridge Middle School student fasten his bike helmet.



Vivian Bango-Sanchez instructs students on the importance of obeying traffic signs.

In late November, the Memorial Healthcare System celebrated the grand opening of its third Safety Town location. With sites already in operation at T.Y. Park in Hollywood and C.B. Smith Park in Pembroke Pines, Memorial's latest addition to this key safety program is situated in a shaded area of Tree Tops Park in Davie. Dubbed "Safety Town University," this particular Safety Town location is the world's first designed for use by middle school students. Many local dignitaries helped celebrate the grand opening. Dorothy Chlad, founder of Safety Town International, also participated in the event.

While kindergarten and first-grade students learn about such important issues as bike safety and "stranger danger" at our first two Safety Towns, the older children who attend Safety Town University learn about a whole host of issues that directly affect their particular age group. For example, while rotating through a series of six "safety" houses, the inaugural class from Indian Ridge Middle School learned about bike safety, gun and gang violence, explosives and firecracker safety, water safety, head and spinal cord injury prevention as well as environmental safety and recycling.

A project of Memorial's Community Relations Department, Safety Town University is staffed by local community agencies, including the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, Davie Police Department, Hollywood YMCA and the Davie Fire Department. Trips to Safety Town University, as well as our other Safety Town locations, are scheduled as school field trips.

Job requirements: a green thumb



Horticultural therapist Robert Bornstein surrounded by his handiwork.



You may have seen him. He guides a cart filled with potting soil, plastic pots and green cuttings through the hallways and up and down the elevators. His name is Robert Bornstein and, unusual as it may sound, he's a horticultural therapist.

Horticulture therapy is the use of plant and related activities to improve the mind, body and spirit. By nurturing plants, Memorial's psychiatric patients learn to build their self-esteem which in turn promotes independence. Robert works with our patients two days a week in a non-threatening environment conducive to healing. On the job for a year now, Robert has a veritable greenhouse located within the psychiatric center. When he first started last January, this screened area had only a few ficus trees and some tables and chairs. Now it's a lush garden of Eden complete with hanging baskets, creeping vines and exotic flora.

Robert takes his patients on "field" trips around the hospital campus, teaching them about plant life cycles and their similarity to human life cycles. He helps them learn how to cultivate plants, appreciating the sensory aspect of gardening. They make pressed flower note

cards together. And table arrangements. Even potpourri. They use the herbs they grow to season their meals. They play horticulture bingo. They learn the language and sentiment of flowers. For example, did you know that the daffodil stands for unrequited love? Or that the goldenrod symbolizes encouragement?

The psychological benefits are many. Patients gain confidence while learning to nurture and care for something else. They achieve pride in their accomplishments. Their problem-solving skills are enhanced. They gain a sense of purpose and an interest in the future. Life has more meaning. Their social skills improve. And, all the while, their feelings of depression, frustration and helplessness are lessened. In some cases, patients even learn a marketable trade, helping them to secure jobs and integrate into the community.

Robert has perhaps one of the most interesting jobs we've heard about lately. Just ask him about it. He's happy to share his philosophy and he might even give you a few handy tips to help revive those plants hanging around your office!