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**Reducing and Preventing ATV Related Injury and Mortality through participation in the 4-H State Level & ASI ATV *RiderCourse*<sup>sm</sup> Healthy Living – Personal Safety Initiative**

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Abstract:

There are two reasons why 4-H staff and volunteers should get involved with ATV safety. Learning how to operate an ATV safely can prevent injuries and can save lives. Too many young people and adults are operating ATVs unsafely; youth are operating adult-sized ATVs and riding double while both youth and adults often don't wear the proper protection, including helmets. There are nearly ten million ATVs in use across the United States. Many ATV owners share their ATVs so it is essential that riders and non-riders alike understand the importance of the safe and responsible use of ATVs.

Key Words: Personal safety, safety, healthy living, ATVs.

## **Reducing and Preventing ATV Related Injury and Mortality through participation in the 4-H State Level & ASI ATV *RiderCourse*<sup>sm</sup> Healthy Living – Personal Safety Initiative**

There are two reasons why 4-H staff and volunteers should get involved with ATV safety. Learning how to operate an ATV safely can prevent injuries and can save lives. Too many young people and adults are operating ATVs unsafely; youth are operating adult-sized ATVs and riding double while both youth and adults often don't wear the proper protection, including helmets, long –sleeved shirts and long pants. A report by Bowman et al, *Injury Prevention*, January, 2009, indicates in a National study of ATV riders of all ages admitted to trauma centers: un-helmeted riders are at a 62% increased risk for any traumatic brain injury, three times more likely to sustain severe traumatic brain injury, three and a half times more likely to have neck and face injuries, and more than twice as likely to die in the hospital. By taking an ATV Safety Institute (ASI) ATV *RiderCourse*<sup>sm</sup>, a hands-on 4-hour training course, both youth and adults can learn how to safely operate an ATV, without putting their lives and others at risk. (A 2-hour online ATV e-Course is also available at [www.atvsafety.org](http://www.atvsafety.org)).

There are nearly ten million ATVs in use across the United States, being operated by more than 35 million Americans. Many ATV owners share their ATVs so it is essential that riders and non-riders alike understand the importance of the safe and responsible use of ATVs.

Nearly 90 percent of youth ATV-related injury incidents occur when a youth is operating an ATV manufactured and intended for use by an adult. Parental supervision is a key element to a child's safety and children under the age of 16 must be supervised at all times when operating an ATV. Parents literally hold the key to their children's safety. Every ATV has an ignition key, and when a parent or guardian controls the key, they control the use.

Consumer Product Safety Commission data show that 92 percent of all ATV-related crashes are the result of warned-against behaviors.

In 2008, National 4-H Council began awarding state level grants to train 4-H staff and volunteers to become ASI ATV *RiderCourse* instructors and reach a specific number of participants completing the *RiderCourse*. The 2010 grants were awarded to six (6) state level grantees: AR, LA, MS, NE, TN, and TX. One Hundred Twenty 4-H staff and volunteers have been licensed and over 1,600 youth and adults have completed the ATV *RiderCourse*. The ASI ATV *RiderCourse* is offered free to 4-H families where 4-H staff and volunteers have become licensed ASI instructors.

The 4-H ATV Safety grant is one of 4-H's most successful grants. Many 4-H'ers and their families own or operate ATVs and approximately thirty percent of rural families own or operate ATVs. For more than 25 years, 4-H has shared ATV safety awareness principles through workshops, exhibits, fairs, community events, school programs/PE classes, after school programs & club meetings, and through media efforts.

You and your state can get involved. At the 2010 training, we invited two new states who are interested in applying for a 2011 grant to participate and get a jump start on developing a core team and plan of action. Your state can become a part of this important effort. We

can assist your state with forming a collaborative team to start addressing ATV safety issues and provide information on how to get started.

National 4-H Council partners with ASI, along with state and community educators to implement ATV safety programs. Since 2005, 120,000 youth and adults have participated in educational activities that reinforce ATV safety principles and the ATV Safety Institute's (ASI) "Golden Rules." In addition, 630 4-H youth leaders have partnered with adults to encourage others in their communities to practice ATV safe riding principles and act responsibly.

These programs not only achieve short-term goals like teaching participants what to wear and how to ride more safely, but also accomplish long-term goals like encouraging state legislatures to adopt uniform safety statues through increased regulation. Of course, the ultimate long-term goal is to help ensure the safe and responsible use of ATVs. By teaching youth and adults how to ride safely and enlisting youth to be ATV safety ambassadors in their communities, 4-H is making a difference by not just improving lives, but in the case of ATV safety grants, often helping to save them. Visit our new website at [www.4-h.org/atvsafety](http://www.4-h.org/atvsafety) to play the Tread-Sylvania game, take the ASI e-Course, and learn more about ATV safety. For more information, contact Sheila Chaconas, Account Manager, National 4-H Council, 301-961-2858.