

## Accident triggers mother's campaign

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Burnaby student Jordan Stafford remembers every moment of a September skateboard accident that put him in hospital. The Grade 9 student, who turns 14 today, was riding his skateboard down a steep hill on his way to Moscrop secondary school, when he started picking up speed.

"I lost control and then I couldn't do anything," said Jordan. "I fell off the board and hit my head and then I bounced up and hit it again. When I stopped, there was blood all over the place, and my nose was broken."

Jordan suffered a concussion and scraped the flesh away on his hip down to the bone. He admits he wasn't wearing a helmet at the time of the accident, something he promises to do now that's he's finally skating again.



June Stafford: Mother's project makes helmets affordable - and creative.

Making sure her son wears a helmet is also something his mother, June Stafford - who works for the Vancouver Courier, a sister paper of the NOW - has taken on as a mission. She's not stopping with her son. Stafford is determined to get as many skateboarding and snowboarding youth in the Lower Mainland wearing helmets as she can, with an eye on future provincial and national safety campaigns.

Like Jordan, Stafford hasn't forgotten the day she received the phone call at work telling her he'd been injured.

"I was very worried," said Stafford. "It's not often an ambulance attendant calls you and says they're taking your child to the hospital with lacerations, a concussion and swelling."

Stafford said Jordan didn't like wearing his helmet because of peer pressure, so she set out to change that attitude. She came up with an idea for a program that lets kids purchase and decorate a helmet at a minimal cost at events held at community centres and schools. She hopes that, by designing their own helmet, kids will be inspired to wear it. She partnered with Vancouver teacher Colin Jack, who helped her design a website and create a pilot program called RAD B.C. They also started buying helmets for the division of a new company they've created called Numbskullz.

The first event takes place today at St. John's private school on West 10th Avenue in Vancouver. Upon arrival, the Burnaby and Vancouver students will listen to a lecture by physician Milton Tingle, who's volunteering his time to explain what happens when a human head meets the road. The students will create designs for a helmet, which they'll apply and paint after lunch.

The price for each student is \$20, which includes the helmet, lunch and transportation, but Stafford said the actual cost is substantially higher. Stafford and Jack are paying the difference and are seeking sponsors to expand the program.

"We need to purchase a lot of equipment to make the program successful," said Stafford. "We also want to reduce the direct cost of the helmets and supplies to the students as much as possible. We're also looking for volunteers from the art community and teachers who are interested in co-hosting workshops at their schools or community centres."

Jeff Chan, with the Vancouver Skateboard Coalition, said he doesn't know of any local programs similar to RAD B.C. Chan said that, at age 35, he's not concerned with peer pressure but is very familiar with how it affects younger skaters. "If you go to a skate park and no one's wearing a helmet, you're probably not going to wear one either," said Chan, who noted two skateboarders died this past summer from accidents.

He added the RAD B.C. program could work. "If you get one group of kids going, it could spread to another," he said. Meanwhile Jordan Stafford is not only wearing a helmet these days, he's also impressed with his mother's efforts.

"It's pretty cool," he said. For more on Rad B.C. and Numbskullz, go to [www.radbc.ca](http://www.radbc.ca).