



>> Walk and die it may not be yet, but Lee County is still the most dangerous place for a kid on foot in the Sunshine State

## mean streets

BY JEFF CULL  
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**S**chool-age children are at greater risk of being hit by a car while walking in Lee

County than any other Florida county.

That's according to a recent University of Miami study that puts Lee ahead of Miami-Dade, Palm Beach and Pinellas counties — all urban, metro areas — in the number of pedestrians younger than age 14 hit by cars per capita.

"It took us all by surprise," said Michelle King, director of the Child Advocacy Program at Lee Memorial Hospital and a member of the Lee County Injury Prevention Coalition.

The University of Miami,

Miller School of Medicine study shows that cars in Lee hit 49 school-aged children in 2005, the most recent year in which data was available. Those accidents required

26 trips to area emergency rooms where five children were hospitalized and one died. Lee's crash rate of 57.2 per 100,000 population of kids younger

than 14 dwarfs No. 10 on the list — Alachua County, home of Gainesville, which had a rate of 28.4 incidents.

Yet as bad as the accident rate among children is, walking or riding a bike for anyone of any age in Lee County is more dangerous than every county in the U.S., except two.

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top 10 worst

>>Florida counties in number of child pedestrian accidents per 100,000: #1 Lee (57.2); #2 Pinellas (53.5); #3 Palm Beach (52.0); #4 Orange (51.4); #5 Broward (51.0); #6 Volusia (50.2); #7 Hillsborough (47.9); #8 Miami-Dade (46.4); #9 Escambia (44.6); #10 Polk (42.4)



## New shelter gives hope to domestic abuse victims

BY MICHELLE START  
Florida Weekly Correspondent

Victims of domestic abuse and their children in need of long term, transitional housing could soon have a new option available.

Mary's House of Hope, a local non-profit, is hoping to have a 10-bedroom duplex built in Fort Myers by Christmas.

"We have shelters, but they are short-term," said founder Wanda Hurt. "They're able to stay there two or three weeks,

sometimes four."

She said once women leave a shelter, they frequently return to abusive relationships.

"This will give mothers and their children the ability and the time to set goals for themselves and establish self-sufficiency," Hurt said. "This program is about the mothers empowering themselves."

The families will be able to live in the House of Hope for two years, time enough to further their education and save up money for housing.

Hurt has been talking with Edison College, Florida Gulf Coast University, International College — now known as Hodges University, a beauty school and some people within the construction field about helping these women rebuild their lives.

Children living there will be offered a variety of classes, including art, music, dance and theater.

"We're getting ready to build it," Hurt said. "We're in phase one. We're in the

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