



# Walk to School puts best foot forward yet

## 2005 International Walk to School Report, USA Summary

On October 3 - 7, communities around the country and the world celebrated a common interest – walking to school. Children and parents left the car at home and set out together to walk or bicycle to school. Families met at parks and in parking lots, carried signs and, in some cases, umbrellas, to make their way to school. Children who lived too far to walk from home were dropped off before reaching the school so they could join groups to walk the remainder of the route during International Walk to School Week.

### 2005 marked by tremendous increases in participation

While the celebrations took place during that week, the lasting effects of the energy and attention walking to school received spanned throughout the year and cast a spotlight on the benefits of providing safe and fun ways to walk and bicycle to school.

In its ninth year in the USA, an estimated 3,500 schools representing all 50 states participated in International Walk to School Day and Week, October

3-7, 2005. Nearly 1,900 schools registered an event on the Walk to School USA Web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)). This represents a tremendous 44% increase in registered participation compared to 2004. At the same time, the 2005



Spartanburg, SC

event saw a 143% increase in the number of people who agreed to act as resources for communities in their states.

**“This was our first year in participating in the walk to school initiative and it was fantastic! We included walk to school or walk to your bus stop as to not exclude any students. There were incentive prizes for the students and also for the adults, as an incentive for them to walk as well... hopefully the excitement will continue and expand in the coming years!!!”**

Point Pleasant, NJ



Phoenix, AZ



### Walk to School Highlights

- ➔ Compared to 2004, 44% more schools registered their participation in International Walk to School events. In the United States, 1,896 schools registered an event on the USA Walk to School Web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)), administered by the PBIC.
- ➔ Schools from all 50 states participated in Walk to School.
- ➔ Many schools modified the traditional “walk to school” format in order to include more children. Children and adults met off-campus and walked in parade-style to 38% of schools and 42% of schools offered a place for families that live further away to park and then walk.
- ➔ Walk to School activities were featured in at least 292 media outlets in the United States, reaching over 20.4 million people in the U.S. alone.
- ➔ Over 120 minutes of televised airtime was devoted solely to Walk to School activities, including national coverage from CNN Daybreak and CBS Early Show.
- ➔ Nearly 50% of schools reported that their Walk to School events resulted in a policy or engineering change that would improve safety for walkers and bicyclists, such as increased traffic enforcement near the school or the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards.



Prepared by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center with support from the Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

# Walk to School Day 2005 activities around the USA

"Everyone was involved – even staff who parked away from the school and walked each morning. ...We had walkers, bike riders, skateboarders, and rollerbladers. There was also a raffle in each classroom for anyone who participated all five days...Now we need to add a bike rack because we have so many kids riding their bikes to school. It is one more step toward teaching kids the value of healthy living."

Lombard, IL



Seattle, WA



Alhambra, CA

## Walk to School events kick off year-round programs

"We're optimistic the children will ask to walk to school more often now that they had such a great experience. The Walk to School Day campaign may change the culture in our resort town to a more walking/biking friendly environment."

Lake Pend Oreille, ID

"We use this as our annual kick off to our Walking Club which occurs on every Tuesday and Thursday morning - outside unless the weather is formidable - then we walk in the gym!"

Fair Haven, VT

## Registered schools win pedometers

In 2005, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and Walk for Life Pedometers, Inc. sponsored 5 weekly drawings leading up to International Walk to School Week and culminating in a grand prize awarded on Walk to School Day. Pedometers and educational materials valued at \$3,000 were given away through the drawings. The winners are listed below.

- Lobo Elementary, San Clemente, CA (grand prize winner)
- Norwood Elementary School, El Monte, CA
- Frost Elementary School, Jackson, MI
- River Ridge Elementary, Moore, SC
- Wake Forest Elementary GT Tech Magnet, Wake Forest, NC
- Glen Loch Elementary School, The Woodlands, TX
- Bemiss Elementary School, Spokane, WA
- Buena Vista Elementary School, San Francisco, CA
- McDowell Elementary School, Columbia, TN
- Woods Cross Elementary, Woods Cross, UT
- Wilson Elementary, Spokane, WA
- Simpsonville Elementary School at Morton Place, Simpsonville, SC
- Andover Elementary School, Andover, ME
- Ocoee Elementary, Orlando, FL
- Jackson Elementary School, Manitowoc, WI
- Walsh Elementary, Chicago, IL
- Putnam Elementary, El Paso, TX

## New Clearinghouse to coordinate USA Walk to School

Starting in 2006, the National Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse at the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (UNC HSRC) will serve as the National Coordinator for Walk to School events in the USA. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, also part of UNC HSRC, has provided this function since Walk to School began in 1997.



# Trends and transitions

Post-event surveys completed by Walk to School coordinators provide insight into the activities, results and motivators for participation. The following information was gathered from the completed surveys.

## Schools continue to participate in Walk to School for a variety of reasons

While many communities use the event to bring awareness or kick-off action to promote physical activity/prevent obesity, it is not the only motivator for participation. Communities choose to participate in Walk to School events for several purposes.

### 40% - Physical Activity/Obesity Prevention

"I hope we have encouraged neighborhood children and families to get out of their cars and choose a healthier way of getting to school. We are so excited to be able to participate every year. I hope our neighborhood families will choose to do it more!"

Tulsa, OK

### 30% - Pedestrian Safety

"On walk to school day each child and parent received a blinking safety strobe light to wear and each parent received the Safe Kids tip sheet on teaching children safe pedestrian practices."

Newark, DE

### 7% - Increasing School Spirit

"Approximately 100 students, parents and volunteers participated. The high school football team and cheerleaders provided the "spirit" for the walk to school. Students carried balloons, streamers and posters they made in art class."

College Corner, Ohio

### 6% - Reducing Traffic Congestion

"The students were so excited to walk to school, and it was wonderful to see no cars lined up at the road to drop off students."

Point Pleasant, NJ

### 4% - Building a Sense of Neighborhood

"Besides the obvious environmental and health benefits, the effort also fostered a strong feeling of community. Kids had fun walking with other kids, and parents got to know each other better."

Lexington, MA

### 4% - Air Pollution or Concern for the Environment

### 3% - Time for Families to be Together

"We have a family physical activity program that encourages families to walk and bike together. It was introduced in October along with Walk to School Week."

Tucson, AZ

### 2% - International Aspect of the Event

### 4% - Other



Wake Forest, NC



Norcross, GA



Urbana, IL



Elverson, PA

## Reach is extended to traditionally underserved groups

Schools that serve families with low-incomes and/or whose first language is not English are making deliberate efforts to be sure these families are included.

“Goudy Elementary has over 22 language groups. In forming the walking school bus and other walking/biking events, we advertise our message and call to volunteer through the school and mutual aid associations. We are currently beginning a walking school bus route led by Bosnian parents in addition to our other routes.”

Chicago, IL

## Safety concerns lead to action

### Changes to the built environment

“They had no school zone signals or crosswalks. The school board has agreed to put them in.”

Century, FL

“We are going to continue our Walk and Roll to School program, every Wednesday we will set up our crosswalk with two crossing guards.”

Carmichael, CA

San Bernardino, CA



### Walking school bus

Walking school buses provide a way for children to walk to school in groups while being supervised by adults. This addresses concerns about children walking alone and

can help make the walk to school more fun. Walking school buses are either organized by a coordinator or parents are encouraged to start their own with others that live nearby. Some walking school buses particularly focus on reaching low-income families or those whose first language is not English.

## Events are tied to making walking fun all year

Tracking miles walked and providing incentives are two strategies communities used to make walking fun. Children are walking to geographic destinations by logging miles that they walk to school. To include more children, often miles can also be accrued in neighborhoods or on the school campus.

“Burnley-Moran carries out a year-long, in-class incentive to get kids walking. Last year they ‘walked to Hawaii,’ this year they will ‘walk to Alaska.’ Classes walk around the school track logging laps that equate with miles that mark the distance to the target place.”

Charlottesville, VA



Mission, KS

## Barriers are overcome when it's too far or unsafe to walk

Many events included children who live too far to walk or who do not have a safe route. Three strategies for how coordinators accomplished this include:

1. Buses dropped off riders at a designated meeting point and adults supervised their walk to school.

“Every year our principal meets the buses and walks the kids down one of the paths so they can say they walked to school...”

San Rafael, CA

2. They promoted walking at the school or in neighborhoods.

“In past years, I held a before-school walk and parents had to accompany their child...however, the low-income and physically inactive children were missing. This year, I did the Walk in each PE class and invited parents to attend PE during that week.”

Simpsonville, SC

“Since students live too far from school, I decided to have them walk or bike for 30 minutes after school at home in their neighborhood with a parent...Incentives were given to students who participated...for 7 days.”

Baton Rouge, LA

3. Park and walk locations allowed parents to drive part of the route to school and walk the remainder with their child. Sometimes parents were allowed to drop off their children and teachers or volunteers walked the rest of the route with children.

# Media coverage

Walk to School coordinators worked diligently in 2005 to secure media coverage for their events to bring more attention to the positive impacts and broader issues surrounding Walk to School, such as physical activity, pedestrian safety and traffic congestion.

Coordinators used Walk to School media materials – template news releases, advisories and talking points – to alert and inform the media of the newsworthy activities surrounding their events. Over 46% of registered Walk to School activities received media coverage. Of the schools that attempted to obtain media coverage, 62% got desired results.

Walk to School activities were featured in at least 292 media outlets in the United States, reaching over 20.4 million people. Over 97 local and regional television stations across the country broadcast kids walking and bicycling to school, resulting in over 120 minutes of airtime.

 Walk to School activities in the U.S. also received national media coverage during the week of the event. CBS's The Early Show and CNN Daybreak were among the national media outlets that devoted airtime to Walk to School. The messages of Walk to School were also spread through WebMD Health and Reuters.

Major media outlets in the U.S. that covered 2005 Walk to School activities included:

Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Miami Herald
Arizona Republic	Oregonian
Baltimore Sun	Orlando Sentinel
CBS Early Show	Sacramento Bee
Charlotte Observer	San Diego Union Tribune
CNN Daybreak	San Jose Mercury News
Detroit News	Seattle Times
Indianapolis Star	St. Petersburg Times
Journal of the American Medical Association	Star-Telegram
	Tucson Citizen



Champaign, IL



Hyattsville, MD

“It went great!!! All 500 kids walked (wow!!), I got on ABC news with our local councilman who is running for County Executive, and 2 state senators and 2 county councilmen came and walked with third graders who had written letters asking them to come along. We had breakfast for the parents and speeches out front for the whole school!”

Columbia, MD



Nashville, TN

## Walk to School Web site and resources used

Schools across the country used the USA Walk to School Web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)) to register their event and take advantage of the downloadable materials for their event. A survey of event coordinators indicated that the popular materials used included:

- Talking points
- Printable event certificate
- Fill-in-the-blank press release and media advisory
- Public service announcements
- Banner

# Snapshots of International Walk to School 2005 around the world

The USA is one of many countries that care about promoting safe walking to school and is a member of the International Walk to School Committee. The PBIC hosts the international Web site that contains information from around the world at [www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org).



Jovellanos, Matanzas, Cuba



Mezago, Milan, Italy



Taipei City, Taiwan



Communities from the following 38 countries participated in International Walk to School events.

## Africa

Kenya  
Namibia  
Nigeria  
South Africa  
Zambia

## Asia

India  
Pakistan  
Philippines  
South Korea  
Taiwan

## North America

Canada  
Mexico  
United States

## South America

Argentina  
Brazil  
Chile  
Columbia  
Cuba

## Australasia

Australia  
New Zealand

## Europe

Belgium  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Liechtenstein  
Norway  
Spain  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom (Scotland, England, Wales)

## IWALK award winner announced

Morton Way Public School in Ontario, Canada, received the 2005 International Walk to School Award for its efforts and success in encouraging walking. For additional information on the award and a full list of applications please visit [www.iwalktoschool.org/award\\_app\\_list.cfm](http://www.iwalktoschool.org/award_app_list.cfm).



Prepared by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center. For additional information, please visit [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).