

# Ten years of moving feet, hearts and minds

Walk to School Day celebrated its 10th year in the USA in 2006. The USA partnered with the United Kingdom and Canada in 2000 to make the event international, and its growth continues. What started as a one-day event has led to long-term commitments by schools and communities to promote more active lifestyles and to change mindsets about how children travel to school.

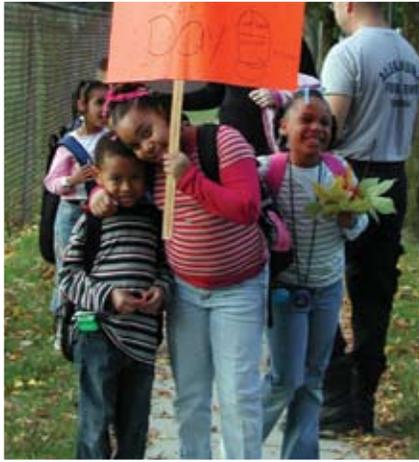
## 2006 events tie to Safe Routes to School

Many schools that conduct Walk to School events are taking action to make it safe and appealing for children to walk and bicycle to school throughout the school year. This year these efforts have been boosted by Federal funding for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs: comprehensive programs that use a combination of encouragement, education, enforcement and improvements to the physical environment to get more children using their feet to safely travel to school. Each state has a full-time SRTS Coordinator to oversee its program, including funding for local efforts. Walk to School organizers are an important source of leadership for this program. In fact, 46% of registered Walk to School events were part of SRTS programs.

Compared to 2005, more organizers are aware of SRTS programs and indicate that their school is involved. For more information about SRTS, go to [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).

The National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) acts as National Coordinator for International Walk to School events in the USA, providing event planning information, downloadable materials, e-mail newsletters, technical assistance and a Web-based event registration system. From 1997 through 2005, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) served in this role. The Web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)) and staff for Walk to School stayed the same.

**For additional information, please visit [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).**



Alexandria, VA

## Walk to School highlights

- ➔ More schools than ever before—a total of 2,044—registered their participation in International Walk to School events on the USA Walk to School Web site ([www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)).
- ➔ Schools from all 50 states held events.
- ➔ Most registered schools have celebrated Walk to School for at least one year prior to 2006.
- ➔ More than 50% of registered schools conduct walking and/or bicycling promotional activities throughout the year.
- ➔ Nearly 50% of registered events are part of a Safe Routes to School program.
- ➔ More than 50% of organizers reported that Walk to School events resulted in policy or engineering changes that would improve safety for walkers and bicyclists, such as the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards or required safety education.
- ➔ More than 50% of events included children traveling to school by bicycle.
- ➔ Media coverage doubled from the 2005 event, with nearly 600 news stories covering Walk to School events.
- ➔ Coverage included nearly 400 TV news segments, resulting in over 235 minutes of airtime.



Lynchburg, OH



# Walk to School Day 2006 activities around the USA

What happened on Walk to School Day? Here are some quick facts and descriptions about events around the country based on a survey of Walk to School organizers and stories they shared.



## Percentage of surveyed events that participated in the following activities

- 48%** Kids met and walked in a parade
- 54%** Kids bicycled from their neighborhoods to school
- 48%** Media coverage
- 33%** Kids participated in an organized walk during the school day
- 56%** Kids and parents were offered a place to park and walk



Inman, SC

"Our students were very excited about our first Walk to School Day. **Everyone wore their Natcher Elementary T-shirts for this special day.** Our parents have voiced such positive comments about the day. Some parents arrived late to work so they could walk their child to school, some are **wanting to make it a practice** to walk their children to school at least 2 days a week. The excitement of seeing the students and their parents walk was breathtaking. We had a student that has braces on her legs walk with her father. Her father drove his car to an adjoining neighborhood so they could walk together. **Her smile and his was worth every minute** it took to plan the event." –Bowling Green, KY



Woodbridge, VA

"We just held our first Walk to School event yesterday and it was a great success. We had over 215 kids participate out of our 508 student population. Plus, **we had 60 parents, three policemen, two firemen, staff members, local media, school board members** and miscellaneous babies. It was great! Safe Routes hooked up with us and we're going to be meeting to discuss the possibility of working together on projects in our area." –Prescott, AZ



Nashville, TN

"It was a great opportunity to **build community among our neighborhood schools** and between our own three campuses. Naturally we had PTA support and we took the day as a chance to roll out our new school t-shirt... We also **got some funding to buy pedometers and refreshments.** The National Park police came with their horses. The DC Police led walkers and stopped traffic to get us across streets. It was **simply a celebration and FUN!**" –Washington, DC

# Trends and transitions



Corrales, NM

Post-event surveys completed by Walk to School organizers lend insight into how communities address barriers to walking and bicycling to school, such as distance between home and school; lack of a safe route and challenges in reaching low-income families and those whose first language is not English. The following quotes, excerpted from survey responses, demonstrate creative approaches that led to the inclusion of more children and families, integration of concepts related to walking and bicycling into the classroom, inspiration to walk and bicycle more often, and improvements to physical conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists:

## Inclusion

"Many of our neighborhood children are second language English speakers and low-income. Walk to School Day created a perfect opportunity to recognize and award these families for the walking that they do regularly."

"Our school made a special effort to involve children with disabilities."

"All of the flyers and posters were written in Spanish and English to insure that all would understand and have the opportunity to participate."

"Teachers showed up at drop-off points to excite those kids who had to get dropped off and walk to school because they lived too far."

"Additional information will be offered through ESL classes and after school programs for non-English speakers."

## Integration

"Staff included walking into their daily curriculum and students received a hole punch for each walk they did. The whole school went to a trail center and we had a 'hike day' and I handed out reflective zipper pulls to all kids who completed their walk to school week punch card."

"The city suggested that walk to school day could be a service learning project. A sixth grade class chose to take on the issue for their project."



Monterey Park, CA



Lafayette, CO



Alexandria, VA

## Inspiration

"Cowden Elementary has a club for bike/pedestrians that meets and takes different routes to school. Participating children's activities are reported on a wall at school and are entered to win a free bike at the end of the year."

"Palm Bay Elementary 'Walk to School' on Thursdays each week. Faculty leave the school at 7 am to walk to meet the students at a starting location (approx 3/4 mile). We then all walk back to school together. Participants receive plastic foot tokens...all who collect ten or more during the year receive a certificate at the end of the year."

"We have incorporated...walking partners until we get our walking school bus in place. Students walk with partners or small groups who live in their neighborhoods. They meet in a designated spot in the afternoon and walk home."

"We're doing a weekly Walking Wednesdays program to increase walking and biking. We partner with area businesses and law enforcement to cheer on our students and parents each week, and it's working! 35% of our student body participates since we started the program. We hope to apply for a DOT grant for physical improvements. We offer off-site parking to parents."

## Improvements

"Along with community members, we got our city commission to add a pedestrian refuge on a major street near our school."

"Constructed a walking trail nearing completion. Rural school out in the country not in a residential setting, not safe for children to walk to school, near a very busy highway. The trail answers many concerns and provides a wonderful place for children and staff to exercise and teach!"

"We are working with our local road department for signs."

"We created a path from the ditch to get to the school from the east side of the road safely on foot and on horseback. We have a small corral out front for horses."

"Our city has done its best to improve our crosswalk with additional signage and innovative traffic signal timing. We even have a regular crossing guard, something we did not have..."



Oakland, CA



Linwood, NJ



Fairway, KS



Bedford, OH

# Media coverage

With headlines such as “100 Pupils Get in Step with Fitness” and “Taking Strides Toward Safety,” media coverage in 2006 reached an all time high.



Walk to School event organizers piqued the interest of their local media with hooks surrounding the need for physical activity for children, the importance of pedestrian safety and the impact of traffic surrounding schools.

News media coverage of events in the USA doubled from 2005, with an impressive amount of coverage in nearly 600 media outlets. Coverage included nearly 400 news segments from local and regional television stations across the country, resulting in over 235 minutes of airtime.

In addition to assisting organizers with local media materials, such as template news releases and talking points, the National Center for Safe Routes to School also distributed a national news release the week of the event. This release was distributed to every major media outlet in all 50 states.



Albuquerque, NM

Major media outlets in the US that covered 2006 Walk to School activities included:

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| AOL News                | Orange County Register     |
| Arizona Republic        | Rocky Mountain News        |
| Baltimore Sun           | Salt Lake Tribune          |
| Boston Globe            | South Florida Sun Sentinel |
| Chicago Tribune         | St. Petersburg Times       |
| Ft. Worth Star Telegram | Tampa Tribune              |
| Houston Chronicle       | Tucson Citizen             |
| Indianapolis Star       | USA Today                  |
| Oakland Tribune         |                            |

**Number of local media stories featuring Walk to School events in '06: 595 vs. '05: 292**



Chattanooga, TN

## Registered schools win backpacks, pedometers

The National Center for Safe Routes to School partnered with others to offer products that promote physical activity and safety as giveaways that schools could win by registering on the USA Walk to School Web site.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education and Walk for Life Pedometers, Inc, sponsored four weekly drawings leading up to the event and culminating in a grand prize awarded on Walk to School Day. In total, 16 schools won pedometers and educational materials through the weekly drawings and one grand prize winner received 30 pedometers, educational materials and an opportunity to use Walk 4 Life's online mileage tracking program.

### Congratulations to the grand prize winners

Walk 4 Life giveaway:

Oak Elementary School, Hinsdale, IL

Lands' End giveaway:

Berry Shoals Intermediate School, Duncan, SC

Towne Meadow Elementary School, Carmel, IN

Lands' End also sponsored weekly drawings leading up to International Walk to School Week and culminating in two grand prizes awarded on Walk to School Day. A total of 40 schools each won 20 Cool Blue high-visibility backpacks through the weekly drawings and two grand prize winners won 100 backpacks each for their schools.

# Snapshots of International Walk to School Month from around the world

This year marked the first International Walk to School Month, providing the opportunity for more countries around the world to participate. And more countries did! This year, forty countries celebrated the event.



Communities from the following 40 countries participated in International Walk to School events.

## Europe

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

## Australasia

Australia  
New Zealand

## Asia

China  
India  
Nepal  
Philippines  
South Korea  
Taiwan

## Africa

Kenya  
Namibia  
Nigeria  
South Africa

## North America

Canada  
Mexico  
United States

## South America

Argentina  
Brazil  
Chile  
Columbia  
Cuba



Lodi, Italy



Caherconlish, Ireland



Bayamo City, Cuba