

Walk to School Day 2011

Celebrating the benefits of walking across the U.S. and around the world

Since 1997, communities across the United States have celebrated Walk to School Day. The event, which began with a single school, was celebrated in 2011 at more than 4,000 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Many more communities celebrated Walk to School Day with an event, but didn't register at www.walktoschool.org. Around the world, more than 40 countries celebrate International Walk to School Day and Month. These communities come together to celebrate walking and bicycling for many reasons, including:

- Promoting an active lifestyle and forming lifelong healthy habits of physical activity
- Supporting sustainable modes of transit that work toward a cleaner, greener environment
- Increasing safety for pedestrians and cyclists by calming traffic, building supporting infrastructure such as sidewalks, identifying and addressing safety issues and educating drivers about the presence of walkers and bicyclists
- Building a stronger community by providing opportunities for children and parents to connect with the broader community.



Quotes from Walk to School organizers



"Parents were so energized by the event that they asked us to organize a monthly walk/bike to school day. We had our first one last week."

- Smithville, Texas

In the U.S.

For the 15th Walk to School Day, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood joined a group of Anne Beers Elementary School students in Washington, D.C., on the walk to school, as a part of the District Department of Transportation's Walk to School Day celebration.

"As students across the country take to the streets this year for International Walk to School Day, it's critical that parents and caregivers make safety their top priority," said Secretary LaHood. "Whether they're walking to school or heading down the block, children need to know to look both ways, use crosswalks and stay alert to stay safe."

Walking and bicycling to school embodies two goals of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign: To increase children's physical activity and to empower parents to make these kinds of healthy choices.

"The terrific thing about Walk to School Day is that it gets a lot of kids and parents out walking to school who might otherwise be driving," said LaHood on his blog. "Once they see how easy it is, how safe it is, and how much fun it is, that one day could turn into a year-round habit."



U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood joins student walkers in Washington, D.C..

// "It was a wonderful morning of bringing the community together. This is a must every year!"
- Clearwater, Florida



Grover from Sesame Street helps New York City students celebrate Walk to School Day and recognize the U.N. Decade of Action for Road Safety.

As a part of something bigger

While safety is a focus for Walk to School day each year, the 2011 Walk to School Day event recognized the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety.

"The goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety is to save 5 million lives and prevent 50 million injuries over the next 10 years across the globe, and International Walk to School Day represents what the Decade is all about," said Dr. Bella Dinh-Zarr, Director of Road Safety, FIA Foundation, on behalf of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. "The students who walk with us today are a symbol of the challenge facing us—to make sure that that every child, in every country, can walk to school safely every day."



"The city councilman participated and read a proclamation declaring it Walk to School Day."

- Sumter, South Carolina

State stand-outs

The fact that every state had at least one registered Walk to School Day event is truly impressive. Even more impressive is the fact that this year marks the 10th consecutive Walk to School Day with a 100-percent participation rate among states. Nationally, nearly one in 28 elementary schools registered a Walk to School Day event this year, with some states recording exceptional participation.



Obviously, states with more schools would be expected to have more events. In order to level the playing field between smaller states and bigger states, a Walk to School Day participation rate was calculated to compare states. In other words, for each state, the number of events was compared to the total number of public and private elementary schools, where the vast majority of events take place. (The growing participation among older students and non-school groups are exciting trends that the National Center is monitoring.)



"As an incentive, we offered a popcorn party to the class(es) with the highest percentage of participation. As a result, we had three classes that tied with 83-percent participation."

- North Las Vegas, Nevada

Top 10 states with the highest registration rates:

- #1 **Mississippi:** 1 in 6 elementary schools
- #2 **Colorado:** 1 in 7 elementary schools
- #3 **Oregon:** 1 in 8 elementary schools
- #4, 5 **South Carolina and New Mexico:** 1 in 9 elementary schools

- #6 **Idaho:** 1 in 12 elementary schools
- #7, 8 **Arizona and Massachusetts:** 1 in 14 elementary schools
- #9 **Nevada:** 1 in 15 elementary schools
- #10 **Vermont:** 1 in 16 elementary schools

Why walk in 2011

Top 3 reasons that communities participate in Walk to School Day:

- #1 Physical activity/obesity prevention
- #2 Increasing school spirit
- #3 Building a sense of neighborhood

Physical activity/obesity prevention and Support a SRTS program were the two primary motivating factors for holding a Walk to School Day event in 2011, upholding a 5-year trend.

	Most common motivator	Second most common motivator
2011	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2010	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2009	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2008	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2007	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Support a SRTS program
2006	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2005	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety
2004	Physical activity/obesity prevention	Pedestrian safety



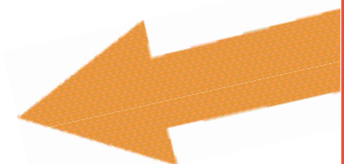
“We had no in-town bus pick-ups that day, and our rural buses dropped our elementary students off about 5 blocks from the school. Our ‘Walk to School’ was led by our superintendent, elementary school principal, and our mayor.”
- Ravenna, Nebraska

Catalyst for change

74% of 2011 Walk to School Day events led to policy or engineering changes, according to Walk to School organizers.

Top three policy or engineering changes:

- 35% of events prompted the addition of promotion of walking and bicycling to existing school policies.
- 35% of events led to the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards.
- 22% of events led to the addition of signage near school.



Hike it. Bike it. I like it!

This year, the National Center hosted a competition to create a new safety slogan for Walk to School Day events and ongoing walk and bicycle to school programs.

The winning slogan, submitted by Horace Mann Elementary School students in Oak Park, Ill., emphasized the fun of safely walking and biking to school.

As the contest winner, Horace Mann Elementary School was awarded a Walk to School Day \$250 mini-grant, which was used to implement a week-long campaign to encourage safe, active transportation as part of the school's Walk to School Day events.



In our 'Friends are for Talking, Feet are for Walking' program, our students in grades pre-K through fifth grade participate in a morning (3 laps/1 mile) walk with their 'walking buddies' around our elementary school building. Teachers and staff members join our walking, too!"

- Shinglehouse, Pennsylvania

Moving forward

Walk to School Day continues to grow, and so does the National Center for Safe Routes to School's support of the event. In 2011, event coordinators frequently requested more information on best practices and suggested a forum where they could exchange ideas and advice with other planners. In 2012, the National Center will roll out a newly redesigned website in support of Walk to School Day, www.walkbiketoschool.org, with a section for coordinators to share event advice, success stories and photos.

The website will also feature biking resources in support of the first-ever Bike to School Day, to be held May 9, 2012. Bike to School Day will contribute a child-focused event to the League of American Bicyclists' National Bike Month and will provide a bicycle-focused event in the spring semester.

For additional information, visit www.walkbiketoschool.org



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Prepared by the National Center for Safe Routes to School with support from the Federal Highway Administration. Sources for this report: Walk to School event registration (www.walktoschool.org/register), Walk to School organizer surveys and Walk to School organizer photos (www.iwalktoschool.org/photos).