

# WALK TO SCHOOL DAY 2012

## ANNUAL CELEBRATION BECOMING A TRADITION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

From Alamogordo, New Mexico, to Lincoln, Vermont, comments from event organizers show that Walk to School Day has evolved into an important tradition at schools around the nation.

Schools and communities are bringing a level of excitement and commitment to the event that the founders could only have dreamed of back in 1997 when Walk to School Day began with a single school. Since then, Walk to School Day participation has grown every year, with the 4,281 events registered through [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org) in 2012 setting another record. Around the world, more than 40 countries celebrate International Walk to School Day and Month.

In the U.S., even some schools holding their first Walk to School Day event—more than 1,500 this year—are already thinking of making the event a tradition, as we heard from Cushing, Oklahoma: “During the walk, we were already being asked if we could make this an annual event. Our response... ‘Of course!’”

The reasons for this unbridled enthusiasm largely revolve around three major reasons for communities coming together to celebrate walking and bicycling:

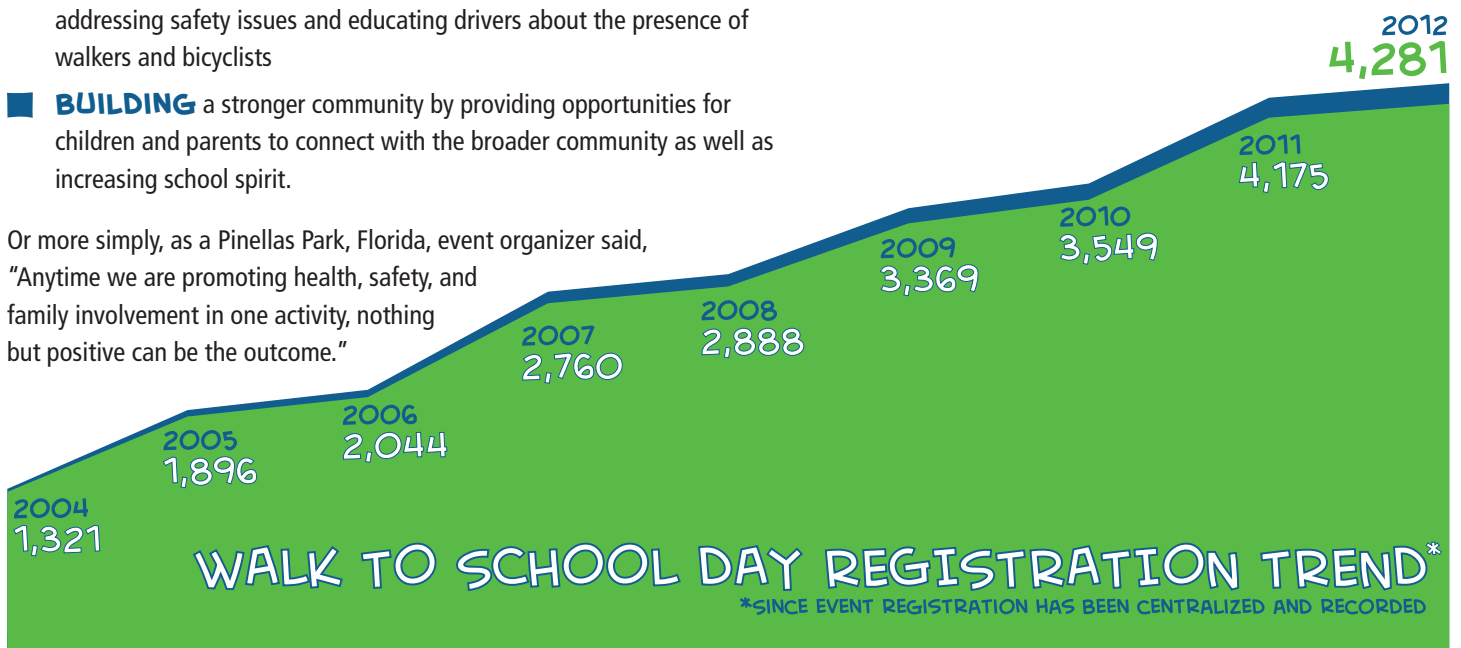
- **PROMOTING** an active lifestyle and forming lifelong healthy habits of physical activity
- **INCREASING** safety for pedestrians and cyclists by calming traffic, building supporting infrastructure such as sidewalks, identifying and addressing safety issues and educating drivers about the presence of walkers and bicyclists
- **BUILDING** a stronger community by providing opportunities for children and parents to connect with the broader community as well as increasing school spirit.

Or more simply, as a Pinellas Park, Florida, event organizer said, “Anytime we are promoting health, safety, and family involvement in one activity, nothing but positive can be the outcome.”



PHOENIX, AZ

“This is our 5th year taking part in Walk to School. Students love this special event!! It gets bigger and better every year.”  
 - SPRINGFIELD, MA



# POWERFUL NATIONAL SUPPORT

The strength of the walking and biking to school movement in the U.S. is the strength of numbers. When one student walks to one school, the world doesn't take much notice. But when hundreds of thousands of students walk to more than 4,000 schools, the nation bolts to attention.

Across the country, Walk to School Day 2012 was big news thanks to the thousands of local organizers who planned events. Elected officials, business leaders, professional and Olympic athletes, beauty pageant winners, and myriad other notable personalities participated.

Near Washington, D.C., U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation John Porcari joined students, parents and teachers for Walk to School Day at Piney Branch Elementary School in Takoma Park, Maryland.

"Every child should have the opportunity to walk to school safely," Porcari said. "Walk to School Day encourages children to experience walk-friendly environments and affirms the importance of walking and biking for a new generation of Americans."

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, expounded on the benefits of walking to school in a blog post later that day:



Walking to school is more than just a fun way for students to get good exercise. Walking to school gives students time to talk to their parents, caregivers, friends, and neighbors. It helps them arrive to class alert and energized, ready to take on the school day. It also helps our environment by reducing congestion near schools, putting less pollution in the air our children breathe. And it enhances the quality of life for the entire community.

- U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION RAY LAHOOD



Walk to School Day continues to build momentum here in the U.S. and around the world, and continues to bring visibility to the benefits of walking and bicycling to school for children, families, schools and communities.



## WALK TO SCHOOL DAY 2012 PARTNERS:

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

SAFE KIDS USA



We used pedometers to add up everyone's steps for the event and all together we calculated 1,668,478 steps for that day.

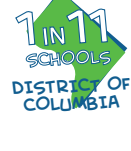
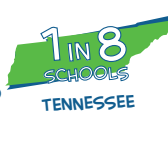
It was a lot of fun!

- GULFPORT, MS





## HIGHEST REGISTRATION RATES



## 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 11th consecutive Walk to School Day with a 100-percent participation rate among states. Nationally, an estimated 1 in 21 elementary and middle 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 and middle 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.)

“ We invited mayors, school superintendent, nurses, etc., and on the morning of the event we were shocked to see two local newspapers covering the event and close to 200 parents, grandparents and children.  
– BOLIVA, TN ”



\* Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for “schools beginning with grade 6 or below and having no grade higher than 8.” The number of public schools derives from the Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey (current as of the 2010-2011 school year) and the number of private schools derives from the Private School Universe Survey (current as of the 2009-2010 school year). Go to <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx> for more information.

“ Because our families commute from all over the city, and some outside of the city, we established four drop-off locations each 1 mile from the school.  
 - SEATTLE, WA ”



# WHY WALK IN 2012

For the 9th straight year, survey respondents said “physical activity/obesity prevention” was the primary motivating factor for holding a Walk to School Day event.



\*"Other" includes: Traffic congestion; air pollution or a concern for the environment; international aspect of the event; time for families to be together; and other factors

“ We have serious traffic problems around our school, and introduced 2 walking school buses as part of our Walk to School Day event. The buses were such a success that parents are now organizing permanent walking school buses, which should be a major benefit to the school (in terms of congestion), the neighborhood and the environment!  
 - WASHINGTON, DC ”

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.WALKBIKETOSCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.WALKBIKETOSCHOOL.ORG)

**SafeRoutes**  
 National Center for Safe Routes to School

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

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