**2004 International Walk to School Report**

**USA Summary**

During the week of October 4 – 8, school buses were empty and cars stayed parked in driveways as kids took to the streets for the 2004 International Walk to School Week. With over 37 countries participating, Walk to School events increased visibility across the globe to the importance of making walking and biking safe ways to travel to school.

In its eighth year in the USA, Walk to School Day had an estimated 3,000 schools from all 50 states participating with 1,321 events officially registered on the Walk to School Web site. This represents 200 more registered schools than in 2003.

This year, over 25 percent of participating schools expanded their Walk to School Day activities to week-long events. Many schools reported their events as part of ongoing programs that last throughout the school year.

In the USA, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center acts as the national coordinator, providing event planning information, downloadable materials and technical assistance as well as maintaining an event Web site where schools can register their events. The Web site www.walktoschool.org enables Walk to School coordinators to make their school and community’s participation known through an interactive map of the USA. Schools get to see their events displayed on the Web site and get to find out who’s participating in their area.

“Today, the “International Walk to School” event was a huge step in the right direction... the community atmosphere was wonderful and supportive, and students came to school excited and ready to learn. One teacher called this event an opportunity for a new beginning. Our challenge now is to keep this success going.”

– Natomas Park Elementary School, Sacramento, CA

**Walk to School Highlights**

- Registered events for 2004 Walk to School event surpass 2003 numbers by 200 schools – for a total of 1321 registered schools.
- Schools from 37 countries participate in International Walk to School events.
- Over one-half of schools celebrate Walk to School as part of ongoing efforts to promote walking and bicycling.
- Over one-fourth of events last a full week.
- Schools expand their events to promote walking and bicycling beyond the trip to school.
- At least 205 media outlets across the country cover the 2004 Walk to School event – reaching over 21.5 million people in the United States alone.
- Over 100 minutes of televised airtime is devoted solely to Walk to School Day.
- Coordinators say the most common reason to participate is physical activity or obesity prevention. This is a change from past years, when participation was most often motivated by interest in pedestrian safety.
Walk to School Day 2004 activities around the USA

“Grades 4 and 5 participated in completing the walkability checklist and the 5th graders competed in an essay contest ... involving risk and consequences. We gave away some excellent prizes and the grand winner read their story to the 5th grade assembly. Our parents were out in force walking their children to school, sharing concerns and furnished me with good pictures and documentation.”

– Lynette Talbott, R.N., Sutter Elementary School, Long Beach, CA

“We sponsored a Walk or Bike to School Week promoted with posters around school, letters and flyers sent home (translated to Spanish to reach all parents). The Calistoga City council supported our efforts with a signed resolution posted in Town Hall. The local bike shop offered FREE Bike Safety Checks. Local police helped identify dangerous spots and best safe, alternative routes.”

– Joni Stellar, Science and Nutrition Instructor, Calistoga Elementary School, Calistoga, California

Things to look for in ’05

Expanded resource section on the Web site
Express registration for 2004 participants
Expanded media materials to promote the event
New Safe Routes to School materials
Call for applications for second IWALK award
Coordinators and event supporters provide their motivations for participating and their successes with the 2004 Walk to School Day event. The following information was gathered from event registration, a survey of Walk to School coordinators, event reports and press releases.

Events evolve to be more inclusive

As in years past, kids walked and bicycled from their homes, but this year saw major growth in the number of schools that customized the event to include activities at other times of day and at a variety of locations so that more children could participate.

In addition, 45 percent of events offered off-site parking so that parents and children, even those that live too far, could walk together.

“My Walk to School took place after school to allow more students to participate as well as allow parents the opportunity to be involved.”
– Carlyn Bailey, PE Teacher, Milton Elementary, Milton, DE

“Some (children) live fairly far from school and some parents have safety concerns, so we had three remote drop-off points, in addition to letting children walk their usual routes to school… We even had some parents that liked the supervised remote drop-off so much that they would like to see that put in place permanently.”
– Donna Stewart, PE Teacher, Bryan Elementary, Lexington, NE

Walking for physical activity gains in popularity

A survey of Walk to School coordinators revealed that physical activity and obesity prevention was the most common reason for holding an event. This is a shift from past years, when participation was most often motivated by interest in pedestrian safety. The most common reasons cited for holding an event included:

1. Physical activity / obesity prevention
2. Pedestrian safety
3. Building a sense of neighborhood
4. Time for families to be together
5. Air pollution or general concern for the environment

“[Kids] learn to think about being healthy in the mornings, getting their exercise everyday and getting to be with the community and be with their friends.”
– Cindy Wright, Principal, Murchison Elementary School, Pflugerville, TX

“Parents are concerned with safety. Once parents organized and led walking school buses on the day, they realized how easy and safe it can be.”
– St. John's Lutheran, Chicago, IL

While most often held before school, events are also happening during the school day and after school on school grounds and at local parks.

“Walking to school as a community and sitting together as families for a free breakfast encouraged a community atmosphere for a culturally diverse neighborhood with many spoken languages. Families really enjoyed the nutritious breakfast and health fair that followed.”
– Westwood Elementary, Stockton, CA

Children chart their progress with pedometers while walking during PE class so that all could be included.
Events mature to become sustained programs that aim to change lifestyles

Walk to School events are being used to inspire and motivate students to walk and bike on a regular basis. In fact, 51 percent of this year’s registered events were part of ongoing promotional programs. Twenty-nine percent of surveyed Walk to School coordinators planned to hold additional walk to school events before next year and 28 percent planned to use contests and incentives to increase routine walking to school.

Individual schools and agencies are not trying to “go it alone” when it comes to rallying for changes to make it safer to walk and bike.

“I have a seven year trek across America program that we run all fall and spring during recess. Business and community partnerships provide incentives for children.”
– Downes Elementary School, Newark, DE

“The school site council [established] a mileage club at the lunch recess a couple days a week for each grade level. Students can run or walk the perimeter of our large field. They carry mileage cards…students are recognized at Monday morning assemblies with foot tokens.”
– Ocean View Elementary, Whittier, CA

“Parents formed a neighborhood association…there is a dog problem and representatives from animal control and the Humane Society were called to discuss what community members can do as well as what agencies can do to alleviate the problem.”
– Monterey Elementary, San Bernardino, CA

“Marshfield has a Healthy Lifestyle Initiative which was started by the Marshfield Clinic a couple of years ago and which promotes walking and good health. Schools have changed their menus and taken pop machines from their premises. There is an organized effort throughout all of the community and periodic community seminars are held.”
– Marshfield Middle School, Marshfield, WI

Environmental and policy changes take hold

Walk to School coordinators reported that permanent changes have been made, or are planned, as a result of Walk to School events. These efforts will have lasting impact, opening opportunities for children to safely walk and bike for years to come.

How one week in October impacts every week of the year

26% reported increased traffic enforcement near school
21% indicated the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards
15% noted changes to drop off and pick up procedures
12% reported required safety education

“Using a pedestrian safety committee made up of the state highway department, representatives from both county executive offices, and police…all parties have been involved in the effort to make our six-lane wide streets and intersections safer for pedestrians by educating them on the use of crosswalks, [adding] engineering improvements, and stepping up crosswalk and speed enforcement.”
– Langley Park-McCormick Elementary, Hyattsville, MD

“We have partnered with Columbus Police Department to provide school zone speed enforcement at high-risk schools.”
– Linden Elementary, Columbus OH

“City rights of ways [have been] turned into walking/bike paths to avoid busy streets. Neighbors maintain [them]. Parents network so kids meet up with each other.”
– Smith Elementary, Portland, OR

“We got a crosswalk in front of our school. We worked with the neighborhood associations, city officials, the school and parents. It took four years but it was installed this summer and we could use it (for) this (year’s) Walk to School Day. We still need sidewalks and are currently working on that project.”
– Jackson Elementary, Portland, OR

We are “reorganizing drop off and pick up places separate from pedestrian traffic.”
– Grahamwood Elementary, Memphis, TN

“We had the 5th graders make posters showing the rules for parents when they drop off the students and we had them lining the sidewalk for all to see.”
– Stephen Foster Elementary, Pittsburgh, PA

“As part of our continual, year-round outreach to schoolchildren throughout the City, we maintain six Safety City facilities, where children in all five Boroughs receive hands-on experience and practical lessons on how to make safe choices when walking to and from school, riding a car, or driving a bicycle.”
– Iris Weinshall, Commissioner, New York Department of Transportation
Media coverage from this year’s event not only informed community members and leaders about International Walk to School events, but it also brought attention to the broader issues of physical activity, pedestrian safety and concern for the environment. Some coordinators customized template media materials provided on the Walk to School web site to alert the news media to the exciting Walk to School events happening in their community.

Walk to School activities were featured in at least 205 media outlets in the United States, reaching over 21.5 million people. Major media outlets in the U.S. that covered the 2004 Walk to School activities included:

- Albuquerque Journal
- Arizona Republic
- Associated Press
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Baltimore Sun
- Boston Globe
- Charleston Post & Courier
- Christian Science Monitor
- Cincinnati Enquirer
- Dallas Morning News
- Houston Chronicle
- Kansas City Star
- Newsday
- NY1 New York City
- Portland Oregonian
- Prevention Magazine
- Raleigh News & Observer
- Sacramento Bee
- San Francisco Chronicle
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- St. Petersburg Times
- Tampa Tribune
- Tennesseean
- The State
- Tucson Citizen
- USA Today
- Washington Post
- Wichita Eagle

Prevention Magazine featured the event in their October 2004 edition, highlighting the “three noble purposes” of Walk to School. 1- To increase physical activity among school children. 2- To raise awareness of the need for safer routes to school; and 3- To promote a cleaner environment by reducing traffic and pollution.

Over 95 local television stations across the country televised kids walking to school, resulting in 105 minutes of airtime devoted solely to Walk to School Day activities.
Snapshots of International Walk to School 2004 around the world

The USA is one of many countries that care about this issue 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.

Communities from the following 37 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

**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)

Let it rain

Less than perfect conditions did not stop walkers in Hawthorne, CA.

“Even with light rain, we had 61.5% of our students walk to school.”
– Donna Stewart, Lexington, NE

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.