

# 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



Baltimore, MD

as maintaining an event Web site where schools can register their events. The Web site [www.walktoschool.org](http://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*



Orange, 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.



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

# Walk to School Day 2004 activities around the USA



Portland, OR



Durham, NC



Baltimore, MD

Organizing walking school buses →

← Meeting and walking as a group

Holding a poster or essay contest →

Tracking children's walking progress across the globe

← Providing materials in additional languages spoken in the community

Walking with community leaders, high school students and school mascots →



Ellicott City, MD



Eau Claire, WI



Olathe, KS

"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



# Trends and Transitions

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.



Apex, NC

## 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

"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

## 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

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



Naperville, IL



Trumansburg, NY

Children chart their progress with pedometers while walking during PE class so that all could be included.



Eau Claire, WI

## 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

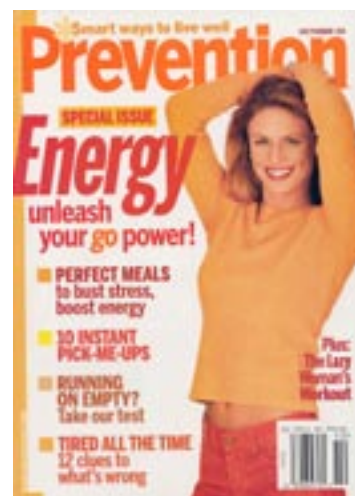
Media coverage from this year's event not only informed community members and leaders about International Walk to School events, but it also brought attention to the broader issues of physical activity, pedestrian safety and concern for the environment. Some coordinators customized template media materials 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  
 Tennessean  
 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.



Sacramento, CA



WALK TO SCHOOL -- Youngsters gather for "Walk to School"



## Youngsters Walk to School for Fun, Good Exercise

Local schools in Monterey Park and Alhambra joined schools from around the world to celebrate International Walk to School Week, October 4-8, 2004.

Approximately 1,000 students from Ramona, Margarita, Yocaz, Repetto, and Northrup Schools walked to school on the same week. Students carrying bright orange colored balloons were escorted by local law enforcement to their school as they formed a walking school bus. Alhambra Unified School District Board of Education member Robert Gin, Dr. Julie Hadden, AUSD Superintendent, Alhambra Mayor Paul Talbot, and Monterey Park Mayor Mike Eng joined the students in their march.

Now in its eighth year, International Walk to School Day is expected to include 3,000 schools from all 50 states. The idea is to walk to school together with a purpose — to promote health, safety, physical activity and concern for the environment. Walkers from the U.S. will join children and adults in 36 countries around the world.

Walk To School Week was a fun, educational event to raise the awareness of the Monterey Park and Alhambra communities about pedestrian



Olympia, WA



# 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](http://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

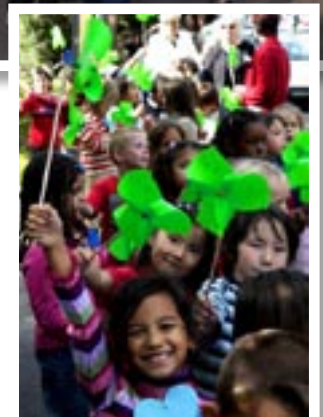
Belgium  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Liechtenstein  
Norway  
Spain  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom  
(Scotland, England, Wales)



West Lulworth, Dorset, England



Keifar Kasem, Israel



Geisendorf, Geneva, Switzerland

## 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**



Bournville, Birmingham, England



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).