



MARCH-APRIL 2013



Coordinator's Corner

I hope you all have had a great winter and are looking forward to celebrating the return of warm weather with an energetic Bike to School Day event. This issue of the Virginia SRTS newsletter includes the 'cliffs notes' version of a recent National Center webinar on planning a Bike to School Day event, as well as a link to the webinar itself. And, take a look at a recent National Wildlife Federation blog about the work Jeff Anderson is doing with students at Wolftrap Elementary School in Vienna (blog.nwf.org/2013/03). In Jeff's own words, "I'm trying to show it can be done...I think it's working. Other Jeff's are coming out of the woodwork."



This issue also includes information on the last three spring workshops in Norfolk, Radford, and Fishersville. If you've been considering attending one of the workshops, now's the time to register.

We are continuing to award QuickStart Mini-grants for some exciting and innovative activities. There are two more opportunities to apply for one of these \$1,000 grants. More information is available below.

The Friends and Faces column of this issue of our Virginia SRTS newsletter profiles Penny Everline, a travel trainer who works with school children with disabilities. Penny's work is a good reminder that all children can participate in Safe Routes to School. If you have an example of a school that successfully includes students with disabilities in their SRTS program, please let us know. We will share this 'best practice' with other. Write to use at info@VirginiaSRTS.org.

Read on!

-Rob Williams
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Friends and Faces

Safe Routes to School programs encourage and enable children, including children with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. We spoke with Penny Everline, a travel trainer for MTM, Inc. an accessible transportation consultant, to learn more about travel training and how to involve children with disabilities in Safe Routes to School.



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CALENDAR

April 2013

- 1: Last day to submit Bikes Make Life Better poster
- 10: SRTS Workshop, Front Royal (Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission)
- 11 - 12: Weight of the State Conference, Richmond
- 16: SRTS Workshop, Norfolk (Norview Community Center)
- 17: SRTS Workshop, Radford (New River Valley PDC)
- 24: SRTS Workshop, Fishersville (Virginia Regional Transit Center)

May 2013

- 8: Bike to School Day

September 2013

- 16-20: Student Travel Tally Week

What does a travel trainer do?

Travel trainers teach people with disabilities of all ages how to safely and independently use public transit.

What is the connection between travel training and Safe Routes to School?

Learning how to safely walk to a public transit stop or station is a key part of learning how to ride transit. Many of the students I work with lack knowledge and experience with pedestrian safety. I've actually met high school students with disabilities who have never walked or biked within their own neighborhood. As a result, I spend a lot of time teaching the basics of pedestrian safety, like how to safely cross a street, how to use the sidewalk, etc. The Safe Routes to School program is an excellent opportunity to teach students of all abilities good pedestrian and bicycling habits. These good habits follow the student for life.

Why is it important to include children with disabilities in SRTS activities?

Being able to walk in one's community is an essential component of mobility and independent living. For students with disabilities who might not be able to drive later in life, it is very important that they learn how to safely walk within their communities.

What should local SRTS programs know about children with disabilities?

All children, including those with disabilities like to do fun things. Walking and biking are fun. Being outside in the fresh air is fun. Learning how to safely walk and bike is important and a key to independence later in life. It can really build confidence, too.

What are some strategies for creating inclusive SRTS programs?

Reach out to staff that work with students with disabilities. They can provide information and resources specific to the mobility needs of these students. In high schools, I do a lot of work with transition specialists. These staff members work with students, parents and teachers to ensure the best educational environment for students with disabilities. Transition specialists also help connect their students with resources and services that will prepare them for life after high school. So, they are

natural advocates for the teaching of independent travel skills. In elementary and middle schools, Directors of Special Education and specific teachers will likely provide the best advice on how to include younger students with disabilities in your activities. Teachers want their students to be included and they can also provide guidance on how to appropriately adapt SRTS activities so that they are more inclusive.

Breaking Story: Participants of Spring Workshops Recommend You Attend!

I never realized how much support there was for helping children bike and walk to school. I want to present these ideas to our principal.

Have these workshops once a year. Keep SRTS going!

Safe Routes to School
2013 Spring Workshop

March 20, 2013

Learn it. Do it. Live it!

Hearing success stories re-energized me to make our program better!!

Register now for the workshop near you:

Norfolk, Tuesday April 16
Radford, Wednesday April 17
Fishersville, Wednesday April 24

These four-hour workshops offer information for both new and existing programs and include details on how to apply for either a QuickStart Mini-grant or develop a SRTS Plan to use for a larger non-infrastructure grant application in the fall 2013. By taking part in one of two work sessions at the end of the workshop, participants can either begin a SRTS Activities and Programs Plan or begin an online QuickStart Mini-grant application.

As a bonus, two participants at each workshop will be selected to have a walking or biking event organized by VDOT at their schools!

More information is on the Virginia SRTS program website or call our hotline: 1-855-601-7787

Ready to register? Click here.

Bike to School Day Countdown

Last year 40 Virginia schools participated in the first National Bike to School Day event. With less than a month to go before this year's event on **Wednesday, May 8**, we're hoping to match or increase last year's number of participating schools. Here's the math:

Participating schools in 2012 40
Registered so far for 2013 18
Needed to best last year 23



If you're hesitant to start a Bike to School event because you aren't quite sure how to pull it off, here are some take-aways from the March 29 National Center for Safe Routes to School Bike to School Day webinar. Be sure to check out the list of Virginia Schools registered (near the end of this newsletter) to see how many of these tips are included in planned events.

Don't go it alone. Gather a team to plan and implement your event that includes everyone.

Recruit parents, teachers, local council members, law enforcement, and students! Have students make posters promoting the event. Ask them for ideas on how to include all students. And, make sure your principal is on-board. S/he can help reach out to parents and teachers by promoting the event in the school newsletter.

Include everyone in the event.

This means students who walk, bike, ride the bus, ride in a family vehicle and students with disabilities. Find activities where students can practice their walking and biking skills on school grounds. Get creative! Take a look at a tip sheet with general ideas for Ways to Participate, , and one specifically with ideas for including students with disabilities.

Note: While your event should include all students, think about whether or not younger kids (ages eight and under) should participate on a bike or be encouraged to walk instead.

Combine events with other schools in your area.

Combining your events can help make the most of your contacts and resources.

Organize a Park and Bike location.

If you decide to organize a park and bike (designated starting point) for your bike ride, make sure you have a designated leader, preferably an adult or responsible teenage students.

Offer incentives to encourage participation.

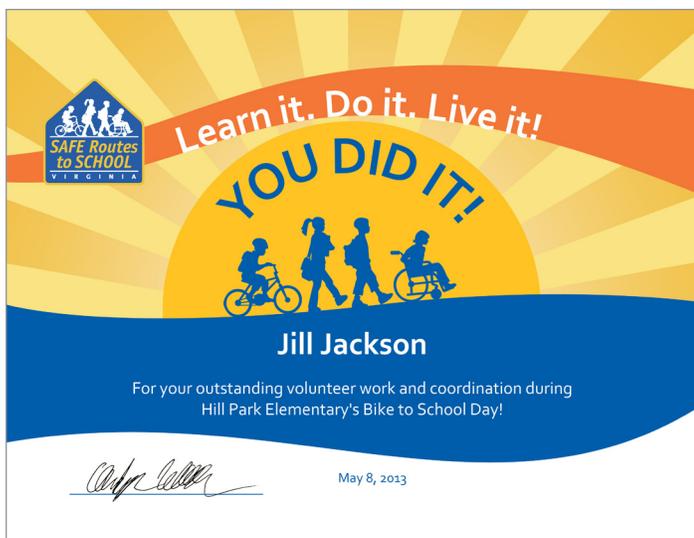
Send the giveaways home the night before as a reminder or on the day-of as a way to congratulate participants. A simple incentive can make a difference. The VaSRTS

Marketing toolkit page includes stickers and frequent walker/ biker punch cards you can download and print.



Thank volunteers.

The day of your event provide refreshments for adults who volunteer their time to help. Present them with a You Did It! certificate for a more tangible way to say thanks.



Don't forget about safety.

Review bicycle safety skills and equipment tips a day or two before the event. Here are a few resources:

- Bike Safety Tips
- Bicycling Skills Clinic Resources
- Pedestrian Safety Tips

Note: If you decide to require safety equipment such as helmets or bright clothing to participate in the event, deliver this message frequently in advance of your event.

Make sure everyone that rides has a helmet.

Consider organizing donations, if needed. AAA (Mid-Atlantic Division) or your local SafeKids may be good resources.

You can listen to the whole webinar at this page. Look for more resources and tip sheets on the VDOT Safe Routes to School website and the Walk and Bike to School Day website. If you have questions or get stuck, contact the hotline to talk with your Local Technical Assistance Coordinator at 855-601-7787.

Ever wonder... if it's too early to plan for Student Tally Week?



Now is a great time to start planning for Student Travel Tally Week, September 16-20

Check off these three things to get your school ready:

- ✓ Put it on your school calendar
- ✓ Identify a travel tally coordinator
- ✓ Set up an account to submit the data automatically

QuickStart Mini-grants Are Back!

The following seven school communities just received QuickStart Mini-grants:

Ashburn Elementary School (Ashburn), Bike Safety Rodeo

Belleview Elementary School (Fairfax), Bike racks and Bike Safety Assembly

Buzz Aldrin Elementary School PTA (Reston), Bike to School Day event

Chesterbrook Elementary School PTA (McLean), Walk to School Day material and bike rack

Peak View Elementary School (Penn Laird), Bike Rodeo/ Bike Club

Salem Church Elementary School (North Chesterfield), Bike Safety Unit for 4th and 5th grades

Town of Herndon, Bike Rodeo with frequent biker program

Take advantage of two more opportunities this spring to apply -- April 18 and May 16.

Need more information? Check out QuickStart Mini-grants on the website.

Ready to apply? It's easy with the online application.

Bike to School Day in Virginia

Add your school's name to the list of schools planning an event by registering your event today! The following Virginia schools have already registered Bike to School Day events.

Belle View Elementary School
Bike safety assembly

Buzz Aldrin Elementary School
Bike/Walk to School Day event

Flint Hill Elementary School

Bike trains and walking school buses, recognizing the largest of each; reception for parents who walk or bike with their kids; appearance by school mascot.

Glebe Elementary School
Encouraging all students to participate; bike corrals for parking bikes; safety information; helmet give-aways; Wall of Fame for participants to sign!

Hoffman-Boston Elementary School
Walk/ bike to school day event

Hollin Meadows Science and Math Focus School

Kent Gardens Elementary School
Event to celebrate new bike racks

Kilmer Middle School
Promote event with posters and on KTV (school TV show); snacks and drinks for participants; banner in main hallway with participants' names; coverage from local press

KW Barrett Elementary School
Share safe biking tips with all staff and families before the event.

Luther Jackson Middle School
Encourage students to walk or bike to their bus stops, rather than being driven to school or to the bus because of the challenging walking and biking environment around the school

Marshall Road Elementary School
"Bike/Walk Challenge" with other area schools



Spring Hill Elementary School

Bike safety rally the weekend; organize "bike buses" and walking school buses; encourage other students to take the bus instead of a family car to raise awareness of the many cars that come to school in the kiss and ride lanes

Thomas Harrison Middle School

Vienna Elementary School

A week-long walking and biking challenge with area schools

Westbriar Elementary School

Distribute bicycle tokens/charms to participating students to wear them on a bracelet, letting everyone know they biked to school

Westhampton Day School

Set up variety of stations that day that students will rotate through and complete their "license" to drive safely: songs, crafts, road signs, big wheel course

William Ramsay Elementary School

Bike to School Day event

Wolftrap Elementary School

Vienna Bike/Walk Challenge Week

QuickStart Mini-grants Gallery

Bike Safety Education in Harrisonburg

