



MAY 2011



Coordinator's Corner

May is the perfect time to begin planning for next school year's SRTS program activities. Looking for an easy way to start? Sign up for the October 5, 2011 International Walk to School Day. Registration is free and gives you access to a variety of downloadable materials, including templates for printing stickers, certificates, and puzzles. Fifty-four schools registered their events last year, and I'm hoping even more schools will participate this year. Schools in Berryville, Falls Church, Henrico, McLean, Midlothian, Springfield, Stanardsville, Virginia Beach, and Waynesboro have already signed up. Click here to register, and then use the rest of the spring and summer to get organized.



Registering for Walk to School Day is one of many things you can do this spring to energize your SRTS program and get ready for next school year. Here are some other ideas:

- ✓ Apply for mini-grants to help fund your school's walking and biking activities. Here are a couple to consider:
 - The Prevention Connections mini-grant program is now extended to September 30, 2011. Apply now for a \$2,000 mini-grant to fund a SRTS activity this fall at Prevention Connections. This newsletter has two articles (see below) that feature other Virginia schools that have successfully used this funding source for SRTS activities.
 - The National Center for SRTS is offering \$1,000 mini-grants that can help start or boost your SRTS program. Applications are due Wednesday, May 18, 2011.
- ✓ Organize a weekly walking school bus or bicycle train.* You can start simple - set a goal to walk or bike one day a week. Work with other families in your neighborhood to plan a route, and make some practice runs.
- ✓ Join with another organization to hold a SRTS event or outreach activity. If all goes well, consider co-hosting future events. For example, share an information table with your local YMCA at a summer festival. Your local YMCA may be interested in helping out with your International Walk to School Day event this fall.
- ✓ Recruit volunteers for an adult school crossing guard program. Requirements for adult school crossing guards vary by community, so check

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CALENDAR

*Dates specific to VDOT SRTS Program are indicated with **

MAY

18: TS Mini-grant applications due to the National Center for SRTS

National Bike Month Sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists

JUNE

3: SRTS infrastructure grant applications due to VDOT*

JULY

10-13: Health for Success Training (Farmville, VA), sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education (register by June 1). Download brochure for more details.

SEPTEMBER

30: New Date!! SRTS mini-grant applications due to Prevention Connections

OCTOBER

5: International Walk to School Day

with your school district or your local police or sheriff's department. AAA also offers training materials.

- ✓ Use an existing fitness or healthy lifestyle program to energize students and parents. This newsletter includes information on several ready-made programs available within the Commonwealth and nationally that offer incentives and awards. See our article below, "Fitness and Healthy Lifestyle Programs."

Thanks for reading!
-Rob Williams
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

*Walking school buses and bicycle trains are parent-supervised walks or bicycle rides. They operate like school buses, following a defined route and picking up kids along the way to school.

Friends and Faces, Virginia SRTS Network Coordinator

Bob Wall has been in the business of safety and education for years - through a career in law enforcement and traffic safety - and is excited to be working with SRTS programs in Virginia as the Virginia SRTS Network Coordinator. He became the Virginia Network Coordinator in October 2010.



The Virginia SRTS Network brings together advocacy groups, government agencies and other leaders to ensure that the SRTS federal program succeeds and to leverage additional resources, remove barriers to walking and bicycling to schools, and to create an institutional framework for generating long-term policy changes. The Virginia Network is part of the State Network Project created by the SRTS National Partnership in 2007.

Recently, we talked with Bob about SRTS in Virginia.

What do you think is most important for SRTS in Virginia during the next few years? What's most needed is a concerted effort to make sure people know what

SRTS is, then to get people thinking about walking and biking as a real alternative to driving.

What is your primary goal as the SRTS Network Coordinator? I am a conduit and clearinghouse for information. I also network with people from around the state.

How can the SRTS Network and VDOT best work together to support local SRTS programs in getting started and staying active? I encourage VDOT to continue its focus on infrastructure programs and to increase its support to local SRTS programs for education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation activities. I believe that by working together the Virginia SRTS Network and VDOT can help spread the word about the benefits of walking and biking.

What are some of the changes you feel will help foster more walking and biking to school in Virginia? I encourage more schools and local governments to apply for SRTS grants. Schools have sometimes felt the amount of work needed to get a SRTS grant was greater than the benefit. This perspective is changing, as local government and school budgets are being reduced. I also hope to see a change in school siting policies and decisions that often place schools in areas where the closest house is several miles away. I'm hoping that over time, we begin to see siting policies that require locations closer to neighborhoods where students live and can walk and bike to school.

Fitness and Healthy Lifestyle Programs

SRTS can be part of a broader effort to encourage healthy lifestyles. See below for information on a few programs with complementary goals to SRTS that can be easily integrated with your SRTS program:

Virginia Governor's Nutrition and Physical Activity Scorecard recognizes and rewards schools for implementing best practices that support proper nutrition and increased physical activity to promote student health and improved academic performance. All public elementary, middle and secondary schools are eligible for this designation.



More information is available at: <http://www.virginia.gov/doi/login.html>.

The President's Challenge is the premier program of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition administered through a co-sponsorship agreement with the Amateur Athletic Union. The President's Challenge (<http://www.presidentschallenge.org/challenge/active/index.shtml>) people of all ages and abilities increase their



physical activity and improve their fitness through research-based information, easy-to-use tools, and friendly motivation. Children ages 6 through 17 can sign up for the Presidential Active Lifestyle award, which can be earned

within 6 weeks. Consider a classroom challenge between now and the end of school.

BAM! (Body and Mind) is an interactive website (<http://www.bam.gov/>) for kids created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The site is designed for kids 9-13 years old and focuses on topics that are important to kids - such as stress and physical fitness - using kid-friendly lingo, games, quizzes, and other interactive features. The aim of the site is to help kids make healthy lifestyle choices.

The Healthy Schools Program National Recognition Award is an honor given nationally to schools that have created healthier school environments. To earn an award, schools must meet best practice criteria established by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program Expert Panel. Any school participating in the Healthy Schools Program is eligible to earn a bronze, silver, gold or platinum award based on their range of healthy eating and physical activity programs and policies. More information on this program and others by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation is available at: <http://healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=3408>.

Mini-Grants Get Kids Walking and Biking to School

Over two dozen schools in Virginia have received a \$2,000 grant to hold a SRTS event, thanks to the Prevention Connections mini-grant program. Events at several schools have already taken place; more events are planned in the future. The grants are being used to host bike rodeos and Walk to School Day events, provide biking and walking education programs, and to conduct broader community outreach events. Communities that have received mini-grants to date include Arlington, Richmond, Portsmouth, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Manassas, Norton, Radford, Springfield, Sterling, Waynesboro, and York.

Contact Ashley Johnson for more information about the Prevention Connection mini-grant program, or click here to apply: <http://www.PreventionConnections.org/funding>.

Family Fitness Night at Weems Elementary School

Weems Elementary School in Manassas hosted a Family Fitness Night on Monday, April 11. The event was funded by a Prevention Connections mini-grant. Parents, students and staff began the evening with a "Pedestrian Safety Walk" around the school. During the walk, participants learned about pedestrian safety rules displayed on posters along the walking path, such as:

- Walk with a buddy or an adult.
- Always cross the street at a designated cross walk.
- Look left, right, and left again before you cross the street.
- Stop, look, and listen for traffic as you cross.
- Do not stop to talk to anyone you do not know.
- Always walk on the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side, facing oncoming traffic

After the Pedestrian Safety Walk, participants moved into the school building where they participated in a variety of fitness stations. The school was decorated with posters and bulletin boards displaying bicycle and pedestrian safety information. Family Fitness Night also emphasized the school division's wellness messages:

- Get nine hours of sleep
- Eat five fruits and vegetables
- Limit screen time to two hours
- Get one hour of fitness
- And no sugary drinks!



Many members of the Weems Elementary School community contributed to Family Fitness Night, including the school nurse and physical education teachers, and the Manassas City Police's Bicycle Unit which promoted bike safety.

The \$2,000 grant covered costs associated with the event, including the purchase of sports bags for students in Kindergarten, First and Second grades; and bicycle helmets for Third and Fourth grade students. For further information about this grant, please contact Sandy Thompson at 571-377-6043.

WANTED: Local SRTS Program News

We want to hear about the SRTS program at your school! Use the Contact Us (robertj.williams@vdot.virginia.gov) feature on our updated website to send us your SRTS success story and pictures to illustrate it.

Did you know?

Ensuring your child wears a bike helmet when riding their bike is an important safety habit. 75% of child bicycle-related fatalities could have been prevented by wearing a bicycle helmet. When worn properly, bicycle helmets reduce the risk of a serious brain injury in children by almost 90%. Virginia does not have a state bicycle helmet law. However, Virginia Code §46.2-906.1 enables localities to pass ordinances requiring the use of bicycle helmets by children fourteen and younger. [Click here](#) to see if your community has a bike helmet law and learn about other Virginia bicycle laws.

Adapted from the Virginia Department of Health website.