



SPECIAL EDITION!

International Walk to School Day - October 5, 2011

Coordinator's Corner

Welcome to our first Virginia Safe Routes to School (SRTS) newsletter for the 2011-2012 school year. This year promises to be an exciting one for SRTS, beginning with Walk to School Day on October 5. In past years, this family-friendly event has been popular with Virginia schools and a great way to get a SRTS program started. Fifty-four Virginia schools registered their events at www.walktoschool.org in 2010; this year promises to be just as active with 43 schools registered as of September 14th.



"Hike it. Bike it. I like it!" is this year's International Walk to School Day theme from the National Center for SRTS, and the winner of a national slogan contest. Submitted by students from Horace Mann Elementary School in Oak Park, Illinois, the slogan really captures how kids feel about walking and biking to school: it's very cool.

In Virginia, we know Walk to School Day is cool - and that it is much, much more! We know a successful Walk to School event can be the spring board for creating an on-going SRTS program, leading to changes in how children live and move within their community. Walk to School events are also great opportunities to raise awareness, especially when they invite the media and community leaders to join in and support your efforts.

That's why we encourage schools across the state to host a Walk to School Day event this October. Beginning with this newsletter, we'll be providing information to help schools plan, organize and promote Walk to School events. This issue highlights four steps to planning an event; a second issue we will send out at the end of September will help you finish planning for your event with a checklist of things to do in the days before your event, such as contacting the media, and sending reminders home with students. We'll also let you know about new downloadable Virginia-specific materials to help you promote your events in your community.

In keeping with the Walk to School Day focus, the Friends & Faces column in this newsletter features Kelly Hitchcock, a planner with Region 2000 Partnership. Kelly is working with six schools in Lynchburg to plan International Walk to School Day events and help start SRTS programs. She has a great story to tell -- one that we hope will inspire you and others to Hike it, Bike it... and Like it.

Regards,

Rob Williams
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

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CALENDAR

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

SEPTEMBER

- 20: Webinar: Creating Buzz Around your SRTS Event
- 30: New Date! SRTS mini-grant applications due to Prevention Connections

OCTOBER

- 4 & 5: Weight of the State Conference, sponsored by Prevention Connections
- 5: International Walk to School Day
- 19: Mini-grant applications due to the National Center for Safe Routes to School

Let us know about SRTS events in your community! Email robertj.williams@vdot.virginia.gov



Friends and Faces

Kelly Hitchcock is a Senior Planner with the Local Government Council at the Region 2000 Partnership in the Lynchburg area. From the moment she learned about Safe Routes to School, Kelly was determined to get programs started at schools in Lynchburg. We recently talked with Kelly about her SRTS work and what she's planning for International Walk to School Day.



Q: Where did you first learn about Safe Routes to School?

A: I first learned about SRTS in 2008 in a session at a BikeWalk Virginia conference in Lynchburg. I immediately saw the value of SRTS and the opportunities the program offers.

Q: How did you find a way to incorporate SRTS in your work?

A: At that time, I was working with the towns of Appomattox and Amherst to develop their pedestrian and bicycle plans. Getting to school safely was a natural fit with the planning processes for these plans. In Lynchburg, we recognized the value of a SRTS program and worked with others to incorporate SRTS into other bicycle and pedestrian programs and projects. We found that several ground-level planning initiatives can be coordinated with the SRTS program. For example, SRTS played a role in our efforts to expand Lynchburg's pedestrian network and develop on-street bicycle facilities, and in getting the James River Heritage Trail recognized as a transportation corridor.

Q: So what was the next step?

A: With assistance from our contact at the Lynchburg VDOT District office, Virginia's SRTS Coordinator held a SRTS workshop in August 2009. Using the information and resources gained at the workshop, the Local Government Council and the Region 2000 Partnership successfully engaged Lynchburg City Schools in a SRTS planning effort. Last year, our Planning Development Council completed a feasibility study to learn which Lynchburg schools offered the greatest probability of starting a SRTS program. After looking at factors such as school attendance zones, the percentage of students that already walk, existing walking and bicycling infrastructure, and results from SRTS parent surveys at the schools, we identified six elementary

schools: Dearington, Linkhorne, Perrymont, R. S. Payne, T. C. Miller, and W. M. Bass.

Q: That sounds like a school travel plan. Did you create city-wide travel plan or one for each school?

A: We did a little of both. We started a city-wide travel planning effort in November 2010 that focused in the near-term on five of the schools identified in our feasibility study, adding a sixth school in response to a request from the superintendent. In order to better coordinate our efforts with the updated VDOT SRTS program guidelines, we later changed our focus and developed detailed SRTS Travel Plans for three of our six pilot elementary schools.

Q: Have the schools applied for infrastructure funds?

A: Yes. The three schools with the greatest potential for increasing the number of students who walk and bike to school applied for infrastructure funding. The neighborhoods around each school have sidewalks, but lack some key safety features. The school travel plans served as the basis for the applications. If funded, the projects will improve the walking network for students.

Q: Are the six schools holding events for International Walk to School Day?

A: They all are, thanks to mini-grant awards (www.preventionconnections.org/funding.shtml#SRTS) from Prevention Connections. As you can tell from what's planned for Walk to School Day, we are very fortunate to have a lot of support in the Lynchburg area and around the state to make SRTS a reality. Plans for the day include some great activities aimed at creating excitement and ensuring safety:

- Kids will create a logo related to walking and biking for the school mascot to brand.
- Each school will have a banner for kids to carry to the school.
- All schools will have park and walk site.
- Lynchburg police officers will help control parking at park and walk locations and help students cross at some intersections.
- Walking school bus drivers will wear orange vests.
- Once at school, students will be offered breakfast to eat during a safety assembly.
- A School Resource Officer will talk about safety after the kids arrive at school.
- Lynchburg City Schools videographer will document the day.

Plan Your Walk to School Day Event Now!

Wednesday, October 5 is the “official” Walk to School Day, but events held anytime in the fall are recognized by the International Walk to School Day organizers. If you haven’t yet scheduled an event or started planning for one now’s the time begin. To get things rolling, check out the following four steps to plan an event from the International Walk to school in the USA website (www.walktoschool.org/getstarted/index.cfm):

Step 1: Get Partners

Successful events have the support and participation of the principal, police and parents. Ask them to be partners. The school principal can give the school’s commitment, while the local police department is a valuable resource and will ensure that safety is a priority. Parents add energy and enthusiasm and make the walk work. Also be sure to invite public officials and other community leaders, such as mayors and city council members. Walk to School celebrations give leaders the opportunity to publicly support health, environment and safety initiatives, so consider finding ways to involve them.

The International Walk to School Website has additional suggestions on how to involve public officials and even a sample proclamation.

Step 2: Plan

Work with partners to plan the celebration. Together, decide what type of event fits your school and community, and plan for all abilities. Then choose a focus for the walk, such as promoting physical activity or pedestrian safety, and determine whether the event will last one day or a week. Local businesses may be willing to sponsor the walk by providing refreshments or small gifts for participants.

ALEXANDRIA

Charles Barrett Elementary School
George Mason Elementary School
Matthew Maury Elementary School
Mount Vernon Elementary School
Patrick Henry Elementary School
James K. Polk Elementary School
William Ramsay Elementary School
Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School
Francis C. Hammond Middle School

ARLINGTON

McKinley Elementary School
Nottingham Elementary School
Ashlawn Elementary School
Glebe Elementary School

BERRYVILLE

Berryville Primary School

BURKE

Terra Center Elementary School

FALLS CHURCH

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
Mount Daniel School

HENRICO

Ridge Elementary School

LYNCHBURG

Dearington Elementary School for Innovation
Perrymont Elementary School

Check out event ideas (www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/index.cfm) to help you decide what type of event will work best for you. This page also has information on planning an event in less than seven days, including children with disabilities and tips for contacting potential sponsors. The resources page (www.walktoschool.org/resources/index.cfm) has graphics , logos and pre-made flyers to promote your event.

Step 3: Register Your Event

Registering (www.walktoschool.org/register/index.cfm) an event is a great way to announcement it to media, the community and other participants, not only in your community, but statewide! Once you create a free account to register your event, you will have access to special templates for stickers, media lists and certificates that are not on the rest of the website. You will also automatically be signed up for a weekly newsletter that includes updates on national participation and tips for your event. Newsletters are already going out, so if you missed one, log into your account and check out the last three archived issues, located with the sticker templates.

The on-line registration form includes an option to describe unique aspects of your event, which will be posted on the Who’s Walking page with your school name. This is an additional way to promote your event. Write about how you are encouraging kids and their families to walk. If you’re involving community figures and elected officials, don’t leave that out!

It only takes a minute - add your school’s name to the list of Virginia schools that have already registered!

T.C. Miller Elementary School for Innovation
Linkhorne Elementary School
R.S. Payne Elementary School
W.M. Bass Elementary School

McLEAN
Spring Hill Elementary School

MIDLOTHIAN
Robious Middle School
Bettie Weaver Elementary School
Bettie Weaver Elementary School
Clover Hill Elementary School

PORTSMOUTH
Churchland Primary and Intermediate School

RICHMOND
Chimborazo Elementary School
Tuckahoe Elementary School

SPRINGFIELD
Lynbrook Elementary School
Crestwood Elementary School

STANARDSVILLE
William Monroe Middle School

VIENNA
Wolftrap Elementary School
Vienna Elementary School

VIRGINIA BEACH
Trantwood Elementary School

WAYNESBORO
Berkeley Glenn Elementary School
Wenonah Elementary School

WINDSOR
Windsor Middle School

WOODBIDGE
Forest Park High School
Lake Ridge Elementary School

Step 4: Promote It

Tell students, parents and others how to participate in your Walk to School event. Making announcements at school, publishing school newsletter articles and sending flyers home are just a few ways to get the word out. Posting signs along the route a few days ahead will help the community know. Business sponsors may want to hang signs in their stores.

For schools that have an active SRTS program, media coverage of the event brings visibility and can help spread the word about the many health, safety, environmental and social benefits children walking and biking to school. Colorful signs held by smiling, walking children and adults creates a perfect photo opportunity.

In addition to the templates and other materials you will find on the International Walk to School Day website (www.virginiadot.org/programs/ted_Rt2_school_pro.asp), check out Virginia's SRTS Program website next week for customizable planning materials, including flyers to assist in asking for volunteers to help plan the event, scripts for PA announcements at the school, and materials to help you advertise your event.

Media Event for International Walk to School Day

This year's October 5 Walk to School Day will be celebrated with a flagship event in Richmond featuring several state officials, including the First Lady, Maureen McDonnell. VDOT and Prevention Connections are working together to plan and promote this event to various media outlets. We'll have more information in our next Walk to School Day Special Edition newsletter.

Opportunities:

National SRTS Conference Presentation

Presentations from the 3rd SRTS National Conference are now available online at. All presentations are in PDF format: <http://www.saferoutesconference.org/>

Weight of the State Conference

The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth and Prevention Connections are pleased to invite you to Virginia's second annual Weight of the State conference on childhood obesity prevention, to be held October 4-5, 2011 at the Richmond Marriott.

Virginia's 2011 Weight of the State conference showcases national, state and local experts sharing cutting-edge

tactics for reducing and preventing obesity, including community-based approaches and policy changes.

For more information and to register visit: <http://weightofthestateva.com/>

Mini Grants for SRTS Programs

The National Center for Safe Routes to School is now accepting applications for 25 mini-grants of \$1,000 each to support local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs in their efforts to enable and encourage children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The mini-grant activities should occur between January 1, 2012 and the end of the spring 2012 semester.

Applications are due Wednesday, October 19, 2011. For more information visit the National Center's mini-grant program at <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding-portal/mini-grants>

Host a SRTS National Course

Interested in creating interest in SRTS in your community? The National Center for Safe Routes to School offers the SRTS National Course, a one-day course designed to help communities establish a common understanding of the comprehensive nature of SRTS that will enable them to create sound programs based on community conditions, best practices and responsible use of resources.

For more information, for details on how to request the course go to: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/national-course>