



Press Release:

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Kentucky Schools to Celebrate International Walk to School Day

Eleven Schools in Six Kentucky Communities to Participate

Jeffersontown, KY - Eleven schools across Kentucky will join over 2,500 schools across the nation to celebrate International Walk to School Day, this week, by teaching safe walking and biking skills, encouraging kids to walk or bike to school and promoting walking and biking throughout the year. Schools in Bowling Green, Fort Knox, Lexington, Louisville, Murray and Southgate will be among those participating.

“What was once a typical way for a student to get to school is now, sadly, the exception,” said Andrea Plummer, Kentucky Safe Routes to School Network Organizer. “Inaccessibility to sidewalks or crosswalks and remote school locations make walking and biking to school either unsafe or inconvenient for many Kentucky children and families. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children walk or bike to school, compared to 50 percent in 1969.”

Despite the decline in walking and biking rates, the safe routes to school movement across the nation is working to increase children walking or biking to and from school by improving safety and encouraging physical activity in children. Since 2005, federal safe routes to schools dollars have been available for schools to make walking and biking safer and more convenient for children and families. Safe routes to school projects may include bicycle and pedestrian safety educational programs, the construction of new bike lanes, pathways, sidewalks, and/or crosswalks to increase the safety of the roadway, or programs such as “walking school buses,” where parents walk with a group of children to decrease fears of stranger danger or bullying while children are on their way to school.

“National Walk to School Day has been an outstanding event for Murray Middle School students, city and community. We are diligently working on raising physical fitness awareness among our student body,” said Ted Booth, Health and P.E. teacher at Murray Middle School. “We are always looking for new and fun ideas to get our students involved in everyday fitness. As our principal Lou Carter always says, ‘An increase in fitness levels equals an increase in academic levels.’”

The safe routes to school movement not only creates safer and accessible means for children to walk or bike to school, it also can decrease traffic congestion, reduce bicycle and pedestrian collision injuries, improve air quality, and improve the health of children overall.

Research shows that children who walk or bike to school are more physically active throughout the day, and physically active children are less likely to be overweight or obese. Kentucky currently has the 3rd highest rate of childhood obesity in the nation and children in Kentucky are less likely to be active four days per week than their counterparts nationwide. In addition, only 43 percent of children in Kentucky live in neighborhoods that have sidewalks or walking paths, which shows the need for additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities in communities across Kentucky.

“International Walk to School Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about the need for kids to be physically active and to have safe routes to walk and bike to school,” said Plummer. “We must all become involved in educating our children on the importance of keeping their bodies and their communities healthy.”

Schools currently registered to participate include:

- **Bowling Green**
Wm. H. Natcher Elementary School

- **Fort Knox**
Van Voorhis Elementary School

- **Lexington**
Athens-Chilesburg Elementary School
Fayette County Public Schools
Maxwell Escuela De Inmersión En Español
Seton Catholic School

- **Louisville**
Crosby Middle School
Crums Lane Elementary School
Martin Luther King Elementary School

- **Murray**
Murray Middle School

- **Southgate**
Southgate Public School

For more information and contact information for the communities participating in International Walk to School Day in Kentucky, visit <http://www.walktoschool.org/who/seestate.cfm?st=KY>.

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[Kentucky Youth Advocates](#) organizes the [Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\) Kentucky State Network](#) which is connected to the [Safe Routes to School National Partnership \(SRTSNP\)](#). The Kentucky network works with stakeholders from diverse fields to increase physical activity in schools, to make the best use of available federal SRTS funds, and to remove policy barriers to walking and bicycling to schools.

[Kentucky Youth Advocates](#) is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.