

PA Around the Bay

Special Walk Month Issue

October/2007



Physical Activity (PA) Around the Bay is the Bay Area Region's quarterly physical activity newsletter for public health providers and community partners serving food stamp eligible clients. If you have information you would like to share about local resources, trainings or model programs, contact Carmen Bogan, Bay Area Region Physical Activity Coordinator, at (510) 482-8827 or carmenbo@pacbell.net. Together we can make our vision of a healthy, fit Bay Area a reality.

In celebrating Walk to School Day or even Walk to School Week (W2S), we often overlook one very important point—October is Walk Month. So if you didn't design a plan to be implemented on October 7th, Walk to School Day, there's still time to participate in Walk Month.

This Special Issue of PA Around the Bay is designed to give you solid ideas about how you can work with schools, communities and individuals to integrate physical activity into nutrition program at the perfect time, Walk Month. So what's it all about? It all started in 1998 in the first week of October as Walk to School Week.

At that time, just a few schools participated. Today throughout California, thousands of individuals look forward to walk and bike activities. In fact, few of us know that millions take part in International Walk to School Week each year. In neighborhoods around the world, the U.S. and 30 other countries including Mexico, South Korea and Great Britain, people are walking and biking to their destinations.



Walk Month - What's It All About?



This month of celebration is designed to raise awareness about the positive ways walking to school helps children and communities. Whether you're destination is school, work or simply points around the neighborhood, walking or biking can be the way to go. The added benefit is that walking to school and other destinations provides all of us a very concrete and cost effective way to integrate physical activity into nutrition programming for the whole family. It also gives us opportunities to

- Learn ways to integrate physical activity into nutrition lessons so that everyone is more aware of total health.

- Discuss the importance of teaching children safe walking behaviors, such as how to cross streets and find safe routes to school.
- Create and maintain safer places for everyone to walk and bike within their neighborhoods.
- Encourage individuals of all fitness levels to eat healthy foods and be more physically active.

More Than Just a Walk in the Park

Children expending extra energy need to be hydrated and take in energy to perform at optimal levels during the day.

Walk month presents a great opportunity for parents, teachers and others to work with school food services to present a special breakfast treat for children and walking school bus "drivers" arriving at school.

A festive atmosphere in celebration of nutrition, physical activity and safety is also the perfect time to share messages about food stamp availability and free and reduced-priced lunches for eligible families. Before you know it, what started as a celebration of walk month has become a transformative journey for the whole community.

So, What *Exactly* Is a Walking School Bus?



It's like a carpool—without the car—with the added benefits of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors. Add healthy fruit and veggie snacks under the welcome sign at school and you have the perfect recipe for a lesson on healthy habits.



A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. If that sounds simple, it is, and that's part of the beauty of the walking school bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers. The flexibility of the walking school bus

makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs.

Starting simple

When beginning a walking school bus, remember that the program can always grow. It often makes sense to start with a small bus and see how it works. Pick a single neighborhood that has a group of parents and children who are interested.

1. **Invite families who live nearby to walk.**
2. **Pick a route and take a test walk.**
3. **Decide how often the group will walk together.**
4. **Have fun!**



Pointing Your School in the Right Direction - Bay Area Wide

Want the word on ideas to integrate nutrition programming with activity messages that children and families can relate to? The key is to connect with Bay Area Children's Power Partnership Coordinator, Zetta Reicker or your Regional Physical Activity Coordinator, Carmen Bogan. "There is a wide range of Walk to School Month activities and programs throughout the Bay Area's Schools and School Districts," says Zetta Reicker.

"Activities can be carried out at the classroom level, as a school-wide project, or even a community wide-event."

According to Reicker who works with schools and qualified community partners throughout the Bay Area, the range in activities depends on several factors. Following are some tips for pointing your school in the right direction.

An important factor for a school's success in the month's activities is whether a staff person, parent, or community member is available to be the "point person" to coordinate W2S activities. Having that point person for

activities helps to ensure that the seemingly tiny but important details are covered. Reicker adds that one important but many times overlooked success factor in integrating the nutrition and physical activity messages is having samples of healthy breakfast items and fruits available for children and parents upon arriving to campus.

Bogan points out that another factor is that many schools are located in communities where walking to school is considered to be unsafe. In those cases, programming can be adapted to take place on school campuses or communities may organize a "walking school bus" where adults commit to walking designated blocks with groups of children until



they are all shepherded safely to school. "The activities may vary, but the overall objective remains the same," she says, "we want to send the message that being more active and eating more fruits and veggies helps to build lifelong healthy habits."

Contact Zetta Reicker at (510) 639-1272. mzwells@ucdavis.edu.

Resource Page

To learn more about coordinating Walk Month Activities, check out the following resources:

Web Sites:

- **School Bus: Walking Guidelines for Organizers, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center**, <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/organizers.pdf>
- **How to organize a walking/cycling school bus, Go for Green Canada**, <http://www.goforgreen.ca/asrts>. Pick “English”, then “Tools and Resources.”
- **Walking School Bus: Guidelines for Organizers, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center**, <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/organizers.pdf>
- **KidsWalk-to-School Guide, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/resources.htm>
- **California Walk to School Headquarters**, <http://www.cawalktoschool.com>
- **Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools Partnership**
www.transcoalition.org
- **Walk there: A guide to your walking school bus, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality**, <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aq/Education/walkthere>.



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