

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Events Encourage Healthy, Active Lifestyles During Nebraska Spring Walk to School Day, April 20

Safe Routes Nebraska Sponsors Day to Promote Safe Walking and Biking

LINCOLN, Neb. (March 21, 2011) — Safe Routes Nebraska encourages parents, educators and community leaders to celebrate Nebraska's fourth-annual Spring Walk to School Day, Wednesday, April 20. The goal of the day is to promote healthy, active lifestyles for children through safer routes to walk and bike to school.

Schools and groups across the state are planning Walk to School Day events in their communities where youth can meet and walk together along safe routes.

According to Angela Barry, program coordinator for Safe Routes Nebraska, the events emphasize safety in walking and biking to school and the health benefits children receive by increasing physical activity. "Childhood obesity rates have tripled in the last 30 years according to the Centers for Disease Control. That's a startling statistic, but families can fight that trend by getting kids to walk or bike to school," said Barry. "And fewer cars mean less traffic congestion around schools, creating a safer environment for everyone."

Barry said there is still plenty of time for parents, educators and community groups interested in organizing and registering an event in their community to participate.

Natalie Kingston of Public Health Solutions District Health Department in southeast Nebraska, organized Walk to School Day events in several communities in 2009 and 2010, with more planned for this year.

"More schools and communities are seeing the benefits of Walk to School Day. Safe Routes Nebraska helps by giving groups the tools they'll need to be able to host great events," Kingston said.

The Safe Routes Nebraska website — saferoutesne.com — has useful tips and ideas for groups wanting to host a Walk to School Day event. Once a Walk to School Day event has been registered on the Safe Routes Nebraska site, organizers will have access to the Spring Walk to School Day toolkit, which includes posters, printable brochures for parents and ideas for promoting the event in the community. The kit also includes a certificate of participation for children who take part in the event.

"Anyone can get involved in the Safe Routes Nebraska program. The only requirement is a commitment to helping children become more healthy and active by walking or biking to school," Barry said.

The statewide Spring Walk to School Day is conducted through Safe Routes Nebraska, a state affiliate of the National Safe Routes to School program. Through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act (SAFETEA-LU), Housed in the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Safety, the SRTS program is funded at \$612 million over five federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009). Congress has extended the program at \$183 million per year starting in FY2010 until a long-term transportation reauthorization is complete. Money is distributed to the DOT's across the nation including the Nebraska Department of Roads to fund education, planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School plans and programs.

For more information about how to organize or promote a Spring Walk to School Day event, contact Angela Barry, Safe Routes Nebraska program coordinator, at (402) 476-7331 or abarry@sinclairhille.com.

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