

Safe Routes Nebraska sponsors day to promote safe walking and biking.

Safe Routes Nebraska encourages parents, educators and community leaders to celebrate Nebraska's third annual Spring Walk to School Day, Wednesday, April 21.

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 Kelly Morgan, program coordinator for Safe Routes Nebraska, the events highlight safety in walking and biking to school and the importance of increasing physical activity in the lives of children.

"Walk to School Day events demonstrate an easy, fun way to integrate extra activity into the day," Morgan said. "They also emphasize the importance of safety while addressing environmental and traffic congestion issues. In addition, the events are valuable in building rapport between families, schools and the community as a whole."

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

The Safe Routes Nebraska Web site—www.saferoutesne.com—offers 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 receive a link 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 get involved in the event.

Walk to School Day events are organized nationally to emphasize the importance of increasing physical activity among children, creating safer routes for children who walk and bike and improving pedestrian safety.

In addition, traffic congestion and environmental concerns are addressed while building connections between families, schools and the greater community.

Parents are encouraged to actively participate in Spring Walk to School Day as well by walking with their children. In addition to kick-starting a healthier lifestyle, it's a great way to start the day!

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 of Users, Congress designated \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program.

Money is distributed to 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 Kelly Morgan, Safe Routes Nebraska program coordinator, at (402) 476-7331 or kmorgan@sinclairhille.com.

