

Contact: Karrey Britt
Health Department
Office: (785) 856-7362
kbritt@ldchealth.org

Contact: Megan Gilliland
City of Lawrence
Office: (785) 832-3406
mgilliland@lawrenceks.org

Contact: Julie Boyle
Lawrence Public Schools
Office: (785) 832-5000
jboyle@usd497.org

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 2, 2015

Health Department encourages students, parents to participate in Walk to School Day on Oct. 7

Lawrence, Kan. — The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department encourages students to walk or bike to school Oct. 7 in celebration of International Walk to School Day. Walking and bicycling to school enables children to incorporate the regular physical activity they need each day while also forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

The Health Department, in collaboration with the City of Lawrence, Lawrence Public Schools, the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization and LiveWell Lawrence, is working to encourage families to walk or bike as part “Be Active Safe Routes,” a community initiative with the goal to reverse the growing rate of childhood inactivity.

“Kids are wired for physical activity and outdoor time,” said Marilyn Hull, member of the City of Lawrence Pedestrian-Bicycle Issues Task Force and LiveWell Lawrence. “Their brains and body work best when they are in motion and enjoying nature throughout the day. If we want kids to do well academically, we’ve got to give them every opportunity to move.”

All Lawrence elementary and middle schools are participating in Walk to School Day by encouraging students, families and staff to walk or bike school, leading walking school buses or hosting other special events. Health Department staff will be on hand at Liberty Memorial Central Middle School that morning, and Lawrence school board members, city commissioners, police officers and firefighters have been invited to join in the activities throughout Lawrence.

Benefits of walking or biking include:

- Students who walk or bike to school are healthier.
- Research has shown exercise before school helps children arrive focused and ready to learn.
- Students who walk and bike frequently when they are young are more likely to continue these activities into adulthood.
- When walking or biking, parents and children get an opportunity to bond and appreciate things they don’t notice while driving — listening to the sounds of the neighborhood, seeing friends and neighbors and feeling connected with their community.
- Fewer cars on the road means less traffic and congestion and cleaner air.

Other efforts of Be Active Safe Routes include:

- Elementary and middle schools in the Lawrence school district are working on implementing classroom lessons and activities.
- Woodlawn School fifth-graders did a walkability assessment of their neighborhood in September, and then wrote letters to the City Commission explaining the needs of their neighborhood.
- Agencies are providing safety education for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- The City of Lawrence adopted a Complete Streets policy. A complete street is designed to promote safety and convenience for all users. City engineers are incorporating complete street design elements such as roundabouts, bike lanes and lane reductions into projects.
- Other community events are being held to encourage students to bike and walk to school, such as Bike to School Day, the Lawrence Community Bike Ride and Bicycle Rodeos.

To learn more, contact your neighborhood school or visit BeActiveSafeRoutes.com.

About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

- 30 -

Together, day by day, building a healthy community
www.ldchealth.org