

**Contact:** George Diepenbrock  
Health Department  
Office: (785) 856-7360  
gdiepenbrock@ldchealth.org

**Contact:** Porter Arneill  
City of Lawrence  
Office: (785) 832-3402  
parneill@lawrenceks.org

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

## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 1, 2019

### **Families encouraged to participate in Bike to School Day on May 8**

**Lawrence, Kan.** — The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department encourages students to walk or bike to school May 8 in celebration of National Bike 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, Eudora Schools, the Baldwin City School District, the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization and LiveWell Douglas County, is working to encourage families to walk or bike as part of “Be Active Safe Routes,” a community initiative to make it easier for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and socioeconomic groups to be more active.

“Research shows that when children build healthy habits during childhood and adolescence, they are more likely to continue these activities into adulthood,” said Sarah Hartsig, Health Promotion Specialist. “By setting aside a day to celebrate biking to school, we hope to emphasize the importance of forming healthy habits for students and their families.” In addition to events like Bike to School Day, partners are working on strategies within each of the six “E’s” of Safe Routes to School: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, Evaluation and Equity. All of these work together in making the community safer and more convenient for people of all ages to walk and bike to everyday destinations.

Lawrence, Eudora and Baldwin City middle and elementary school students, families and staff plan to participate in Bike to School Day. Schools also will be hosting special events like park-and-rides and bicycle rodeos. City leaders are encouraged to participate in activities throughout Lawrence in order to set a positive example for the students. Helmets should be worn at all times when riding a bike. Bicyclists should ride safely by following the rules of the road and obeying traffic laws. Children should be accompanied by an adult.

#### **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.