



September 2009

International Walk to School Day Attracts Millions Across the Planet

The new school year can mean a break from traditions as millions of school children across the planet celebrate International Walk to School Day on Wednesday, October 7, 2009. In Pima County, thousands of parents and children will leave their cars at home and walk or bike to school to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety and improve air quality throughout our community. Walking and bicycling also improve health through physical activity, reduce obesity, reduce traffic congestion and provide family members with an opportunity to spend additional time with each other and connect with neighbors. The Pima County Department of Transportation, Safe Kids Tucson, and the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Air Program are working together to encourage children, parents, guardians, and local officials to participate in the "International Walk to School Day."

According to the Safe Kids Worldwide, pedestrian injuries are the second leading cause of accidental death among children ages 5 to 14 in the United States. The importance of learning to walk and bike safely is stressed at participating schools during the International Walk to School Day. In 2008, at least 35 schools participated in the Walk to School Day event and several of those schools received special training from a local agency focused on enhancing child safety. "Safe Kids Tucson was embraced by 7 community schools dedicated to improving the wellness of students and the environment they live in," said Yomaira Diaz, of Tucson Medical Center and the Coordinator of Safe Kids Tucson. "Our instructor team specifically targeted 2nd and 4th graders, teaching them the importance of safety, exercising, and having fun, too," she continued. "As kids are back in school, Safe Kids Tucson wants to remind the public to be aware of pedestrians and students that are on our streets and sidewalks," said Anne-Marie Braswell of Rural/Metro Fire Department and Safe Kids Tucson. "Walking to school should be something fun and energizing kids can share with their families and friends," Braswell said.

If you would like additional information or to register your school, please contact Donna at (520) 243-BIKE or donna.lewandowski@dot.pima.gov. To get additional information visit www.walktoschool.org.

Why Children are Different in Traffic

(Excerpts from the Partnership for a Walkable America information)

- Children don't think about getting hurt.
- Kids are impulsive and impatient. They are prone to dart into traffic on a whim.
- Children have trouble judging traffic speed, gaps in traffic, or whether a car is coming, going, or standing still.
- Kids have a limited ability to detect traffic in their side vision.
- Children have trouble understanding that a car can't stop as quickly as they can.
- Kids are smaller than adults, and have trouble seeing traffic and being seen by drivers.
- Children often think that if they can see a car, then the driver sees them, even if they are standing behind a shrub or a parked car.

Amazing Facts About Awesome Air!

- Air is made up of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen and 1% carbon dioxide and other gases.
- On average, people take 30,000 breaths each day!
- People breathe about 2 gallons of air every minute!
- Tucsonans drive over 27,000,000 miles each day.
- Every 30 miles you drive puts 1 pound of air pollution into the air you breathe.
- Approximately 60% of our air pollution is caused by motor vehicle use.
- Skip those short trips to school and back home! A cold engine emits more pollution and can reduce efficiency by up to 50%.