

Walking and Rolling to School

Tuesday, 02 October 2012

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

October is International Walk to School Month and Island Trails Network has teamed up with the Kodiak School District to promote a "Walk and Roll" program for various schools. Michelle LeBeau is the lead consultant for safe routes to school for ITN and said the program is a way to get kids and their parents engaged in alternative transportation methods.

-- (Walk and Roll 1 :44 "And the program is simple, on October 15 students can go to their teacher and ask for their own punch card. They'll get their own punch card that they can keep themselves or leave in their classroom if their teacher allows it and each time they walk or bike to school they can go up to the greeting teacher and either ask them to circle or punch a hole in their card to indicate that they walked or biked to school. And if they completed all five of their punches they can return that same card back to their teacher, even if they don't complete all five punches they can still return that card back to their teachers, and all of those punches get tallied up for the schools. And we're wanting to reward all the students that make the effort and walk and bike to school and also the classroom that can tally up the most bike trip or walking adventures to school.")

LeBeau said there are a variety of prizes for students with the most punch cards and the hope is to plan a party for the class with the most punches. She said the program is a stepping stone for a larger goal of making Kodiak a safer place to bike or walk.

-- (Walk and Roll 2 :48 "Island Trails Network applied for some grant funding about a year ago from the state of Alaska safe routes to school program. And they were awarded a competitive grant, we partnered with the school district at the time, healthy tomorrows and a couple of other community groups as well. The essence of the grant is a planning grant so we're spending the first year focusing on figuring out what are some of the barriers or challenges students within Kodiak find if they want to bike or walk to school. So we're really focusing on feedback from the community, really getting an idea of what some of those challenges are. And the final product will be a planning document that will really outline recommendations for improvements, ways that we can maybe increase lighting, do a better job clearing sidewalks with snow, do a better job making kids feel comfortable or parents feel comfortable with their students walking to school.")

She said the hope is that the "walk and roll" program will generate those needed comments so ITN and the school district will know what should be done and what funding they should look for in months and years to come to make Kodiak safer for bikers and walkers.

Lucy Murdock is the health and wellness coordinator for the district and said "walk and roll" will begin October 15 and run until October 26. Majority of the schools that participate

in the safe routes to school program, a statewide program for elementary and middle schools, will participate in the punch card incentive.

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(Walk and Roll 3 : 24 “Unfortunately one of the schools is not going to be a part of it just because one of the big barriers to that school is that they don’t have a lot of options, safe routes to school. So that’s a huge insight for us and safe routes to school is to realize what some of those barriers are, just the simple fact that they don’t have sidewalks going to their school.”)

That school is North Star Elementary. Murdock said those barriers are already being taken into account, but still encourages those that can participate to do so.

-- (Walk and Roll 4 : 44 “It’s so important to promote these programs because it provides incentives for parents and families and children to get in that extra exercise and needed exercise for kids. Every child has so much energy and this just provides a way for them to move before school and studies show that getting that energy up before the start of a school day provides kids with lasting energy it gets their brain going. So it’s really important that kids get the opportunity to get their heart going for concentration and productivity and an all around healthy heart.”)

As the event approaches posters will be hung at schools and throughout the community. Both women said community members should be aware that more kids may be on the roads and please exercise caution.

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