



Bike/Walk to Work and School Proves to be a Success



Reinertsen Elementary (Moorhead) bike racks during Bike to School week (Left. Perham Bike Rodeo (right).

PS4H Communities get Moving

One of the best activities you can do in Minnesota is to get outside and get moving. Whether you bike or walk, both hold great health benefits, and even better, it's free. With the beautiful north woods terrain for your view, walking and biking can hold significance in recreation as well as a healthy mode of transportation.

In 14 cities across Becker, Otter Tail, Wilkin and Clay counties, each city held an official Bike or Walk to Work and School Week from Saturday, May 4 through Sunday, May 12. Participants were encouraged to choose one day during the week to bike or walk to school and work. They could also choose to take a walking or biking break during the week. The promotion was an initiative of PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) to promote physical activity during a regular day.

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one third of adults in Minnesota do not meet the national recommendations of 150 minutes of physical activity per week. One of the simplest ways to meet the exercise recommendations and reduce obesity is to walk and bike as part of a daily routine. Walking or biking has many health benefits such as: increased energy, maintaining a healthy weight, and reducing your risk of chronic disease.

Cities and schools participating in the event were: Lake Park, Audubon, Detroit Lakes, Frazee, Perham, Battle Lake, Fergus Falls, Pelican Rapids, Breckenridge, Rothsay, Barnesville, Moorhead, Dilworth, and Hawley, Minnesota.

Keely Ihry, PS4H Tobacco Prevention and School Coordinator said, "We have built strong partnerships with our cities to promote the event. We worked with city commissioners and city councils for participating cities to adopt a proclamation of Bike or Walk to Work and School Week. We promoted the week through each city's Chamber of Commerce as well as Facebook, news releases and school communication."

PS4H also planned bike rodeos in each community to help to encourage biking to school safely. "The bike rodeos exemplified how communities can really work together. For example, in Perham, we connected with the Boys and Girls Club in partnership with the Police Chief and our event has grown each year.

14 bikes were given away at this year's rodeo in Perham. This is due to the community support from organizations like KLN Enterprises and the Lions Club, just to name a few," said Karen Nitzkowski, Worksite Wellness and School Coordinator. "We know it's about the kids, but the entire community comes together in an effort to get people moving," she added.

At each bike rodeo held across the four counties, participants learned bike safety as well as how to wear a bike helmet properly. In partnership with organizations like Sanford Health and Mike Helmets, participants without bike helmets received one free as part of the events. Children also received a bike safety check as well as completed an obstacle course.

In conjunction with PS4H, Detroit Lakes school district used funding they received from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Safe Routes to School grant to promote the benefits of walking and biking. The purpose of the grant was for education, promotion and encouragement for Safe Routes to School. The group worked with Lakes TV3, a public access channel to create a promotional video that includes information about Bike or Walk to Work and School Week, bike rodeos and information on bike safety. The video can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/gKOrhJ6jagE>.

"The community partnerships built is the foundation for our efforts, states Patrick Hollister, PS4H Active Living Planner. This year's event was held at Fergus Falls YMCA during the National YMCA Family Health Day but sponsored by many community organizations. 138 kids participated and with such great success we expect to have the bike rodeo that day each year, states Hollister,"

PS4H is planning to expand their efforts next year. "With the continued funding from SHIP, we can now work with more communities. We look to communities with readiness, leadership, and a group of people who simply want to make a difference. PS4H is there to support their efforts to get families biking and moving," says Nitzkowski.

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