

★ School News ★

Statewide fitness program is a SNAP for Dilworth students



Kindergartener Benjamin Carter won a bike and helmet through UDOT's "Walk More in Four" program for walking to school. From left: UDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator Cherissa Wood, Principal Kenneth Limb, Benjamin and his mother.

By Sara Weikel

Students at Dilworth Elementary were recently rewarded for taking care of themselves and their environment by walking to school.

The new statewide program "Walk More in Four" encourages students to spend four weeks in September walking or biking to and from school instead of being driven. The program is part of the Utah Department of Transportation's Student Neighborhood Access Program, also known as SNAP.

"Our society is focused more and more on activities where we're sitting down," Principal Kenneth Limb said. But this program helps students to take advantage of more opportunities to get up and move and get more exercise, he said.

"We all need to be moving, so that's a great thing," Limb said.

During September, Utah students living within half a mile of their schools filled out charts documenting the time they spent walking or biking to school. Those who walked or biked at least 60 percent of the time were entered into a drawing for prizes. Over 1,200 charts statewide were submitted to UDOT with about 110 of them coming from Dilworth, making Dilworth the school

with the highest participation in the state.

When names were drawn on "International Walk to School Day," Oct. 7, eight Dilworth students received prizes. Kindergartener Benjamin Carter received a bike and a helmet and second grader Dalya Dangerfield received a scooter and helmet. Water bottles were given to kindergartener Lochlan Rockwood, first graders Madison Sneath and Andrew Jorgensen, second grader Henry Theurer and sixth grader Allie Berg.

"I think it was a positive incentive for them," said UDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator Cherissa Wood, who gave out the prizes at Dilworth.

Since "Walk More in Four," UDOT has received a lot of feedback from parents saying that their children continued walking more after those four weeks, Wood said.

Limb is not so convinced that the prizes made a difference in his students' walking habits or participation in the program.

"It wasn't a contest about who can do the most," he said. While Dilworth students hoped they might win a prize, they didn't actually expect to, he said.

They walked because they understand that walking is important, and because their parents and teachers supported them in it. Many of the students and parents were already in the habit of walking to school before the program and are strong believers in green living, he said.

An added benefit of walking or biking to school, besides exercise, is a safer school environment due to lower traffic and cleaner air, Wood said.

Walking also builds a sense of community in students as they form friendships while traveling in groups, Limb said.