

Take a walk on the safe side



Tiffany DeMasters / The Spectrum & Daily News

Parents and students walk to Sunset Elementary, on Wednesday, during a statewide safe walking and biking challenge that promotes safety.

■ SNAP ensures routes to schools are children friendly

BY TIFFANY DE MASTERS
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ST. GEORGE — In an effort to improve health and encourage safety, Utah Department of

Transportation representatives met with children at Sunset Elementary to introduce its state-wide initiative.

Nathan Lee, director of Region 4 for UDOT, said UDOT's Student Neighborhood Access Program is a cooperative effort to ensure schools have safe walking routes.

SNAP came up with "Walk

more in (region) four" initiative, which begins Monday and ends Sept. 25. Winners will receive prizes donated by businesses.

Lee said all elementary, intermediate and junior high schools are required to have a safe routing plan for walking to and from school.

"One of the reasons parents say

they don't want their kids walking is because of the increased traffic, but driving their kids to school increases the traffic — it's a catch 22," he said.

Nathan Esplin, Sunset Elementary principal, said the more students walk to school

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Patrick Cummings / The Spectrum & Daily News

Students are led by parents across the road at a crosswalk by South Elementary School after school in Cedar City, on Wednesday.

UDOT promotes caution, health

BY SAMANTHA ARNOLD
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CEDAR CITY — Safety and health for all elementary students throughout Utah was the message behind the Utah Department of Transportation's back-to-school walking and biking initiative, SNAP.

Parents, students, teachers and UDOT representatives joined Cedar City Mayor Gerald R. Sherratt Wednesday at South Elementary for the

event kickoff encouraging the students to safely utilize the crosswalks and rules of the road while walking and biking to school.

Principal Jerry Oldroyd encouraged students and their parents to take advantage of the health benefits of walking to school, but to do so safely.

"We are excited to participate and help the children create responsible and

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the healthier they'll be — and that is reflected in the classroom.

"We have a high majority that walk and enjoy it," he said. "It's nice because the weather is good all year long."

Esplin said parents take a lot of pride in supporting

their children.

Shaunna Durante, PTA president, has a second- and third-grader at Sunset Elementary. She attended the UDOT presentation.

"I think this is really important," she said. "We're one of the schools where the majority of us walk to school."

Esplin said about 10 students are bused in.

"For kids who ride a

bus, we encourage them to walk or exercise outside the school day," he said. "We just want to keep our kids safe, healthy and in turn that reflects on student performance."

Lee said as a parent he realizes the challenges it can be to be safe.

"Our goal is zero fatalities and zero road incidents," he said.

UDOT

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healthy habits," he said.

Sherratt spoke to the students about an experience he had as a young boy of almost getting a hit by a car while walking to school, and as a result, is excited about UDOT's promotion of safety for children walking and rid-

ing their bikes to school.

"I really commend UDOT and the schools in this program," he said. "We need to think about the dangers if you don't walk safely."

Eight schools throughout Utah were chosen to lead the UDOT initiative, which also offers students the opportunity to win prizes donated by local merchants for walking

and biking to school.

The students have the chance to keep track of the days they bike or walk to school instead of riding the bus or having their parents drive them. The students with the highest number of days before Oct. 5 receive a prize.

Oldroyd said he is excited that South Elementary was chosen to lead the initiative for Cedar City and Iron County schools.

"It is an honor to be chosen as one of the eight schools," he said. "About 20 to 25 percent of our students walk or bike to school, and hopefully with this program, more students and their parents will start doing it too."

Safety is not the only important aspect of the program, but it also promotes an active and healthy lifestyle for the students, said UDOT Region Four Director Nathan Lee.

"SNAP is meant to facilitate fitness and safe routes to school for students," he said.

Sherratt said he was glad to take part in the program to benefit the students.

"Walking is good exercise," he said. "By spending more time walking, you will also be able to live healthier and life will be much more beautiful."