

Success Stories

Safe Routes to School a Success at Green Tree

Christine Glaszcz

Summary

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs and improvements at Green Tree Elementary are the first steps in supporting and encouraging more students to walk or bike to school. Students get the added benefit of more physical activity built into their day, a huge bonus as screen time and sedentary lifestyles are on the rise. The support of parents, students, and staff at our pilot site have led the way for improvements at Green Tree and with further community support we hope to spread SRTS throughout the West Bend School District.

Challenge

Biking to school is a great way to add physical activity into a child's day. Kids love to bike and what better way to get them moving than biking to school. Once they arrive at school, students need a safe, well maintained area to park their bikes. The grassy bike rack area at Green Tree was less than ideal. It functioned adequately most of the time, except when it rained causing the bike racks to sit in a huge puddle of mud. Due to a lack of space, the bike racks were pushed up against the side of the school. This eliminated one whole side of the rack to be used for bike parking. Furthermore, it placed the racks directly under the roof overhang which contributed to the mud problem. Students also had to walk along a grassy/mud area to get from the front of the school to the back driveway which connects to a walking path that adjoins a bordering street.

Solution

The Healthy People Project of Washington County (HPP) along with Injury Prevention Coalition of Washington County (IPC) worked with the school principal and facilities director to come up with a solution for walkers and bikers. A portion of a \$20,000 grant from HPP and Pioneering Healthier Communities (Y-USA) led to the installment of a new concrete pad/walkway in the fall of 2012. The bike racks are now able to be placed on concrete which increases the ease of use and eliminates problems caused by mud puddles. This concrete area also provides enough space for the racks to be pulled away from the building allowing twice as many bikes to be placed in the racks. In addition, walkers have easy access to the walking path behind school.



Your Involvement is Key

If you are interested in learning more about Safe Routes to School or HPP or if you would like to volunteer please contact Christine Glaszcz at 262-247-1057 or hppwc@kmymca.org

Results

These environmental improvements at Green Tree compliment other Safe Routes to School initiatives at the school. In fall of 2012 Green Tree hosted its 3rd Annual Walk Your Child to School Day with over 160 participants. A Get Fit Pledge Event will be introduced at Green Tree after meeting with huge success at Decorah Elementary, the district's SRTS pilot site. This incentive based event is held in the fall and spring and encourages students to walk/bike to school 4-5 times a week for 4 weeks. IPC along with the West Bend Police Department will be holding a Bike Safety Jamboree at the school to teach students about bike safety and proper bike storage. The efforts at Green Tree and Decorah are helping to foster culture change within the school district by encouraging more students to use an active mode of transportation to get to school knowing that they will be safe while doing so.

Contact

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"The new concrete pad/walkway is fabulous! We are excited to be able to provide a clean, safe area for walkers and bikers. We hope more students will now be encouraged to bike to school."

- Katie Weyer, Green Tree Principal

Future Directions

HPP will continue to partner with IPC, the police department, and other Washington County school districts to get our students moving by providing a safe way of doing so. As a community coalition HPP welcomes support from local foundations and donors as well as volunteer support to help coordinate SRTS programs and events. If you have a passion for this type of work we encourage you to get involved.

