

Safe Kids Charlotte Mecklenburg and the Safe Routes to Schools Coalitions

Complete a Successful International Walk to School Day at Cotswold School

-Walking Event Results -

(Charlotte, NC) Cotswold School along with three other Charlotte-Mecklenburg Elementary Schools successfully walked to school today in honor of International Walk to School Day on October 3, 2007. Approximately 150 children and 65 adult volunteers from 8 different organizations walked to Cotswold School from four locations, arriving at school healthier and safer!

Safe Kids Charlotte Mecklenburg and Fed Ex conducted a pedestrian safety presentation to the entire school, over 515 children, on Tuesday in preparation for the walk. Children learned to wear light colored clothing, retro reflective materials, and follow all traffic safety rules.

Walking with this Cotswold students were siblings, parents, Kozmo from K104.7, the Chick-Fil-A cows, CMS PTA, area residents, Charlotte Fire Department, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, Mecklenburg County Health Department, Carolinas Center for Injury Prevention, Presbyterian Hospital Childlife, Slow Down 4 Families volunteers, and local media.

Area motorists were encouraged to slow down in the vicinity and be more aware of pedestrian and bike travel, in the community and near the school, with signs placed on the route from the Slow Down 4 Families project, with a speed trailer, and with visible police presence during the walk itself. The event was organized by the Cotswold School community and PTA, the Safe Routes to School Coalition, and Safe Kids Charlotte Mecklenburg.

Walk to School and Safe Routes to Schools events work to create safer routes for walking and bicycling and emphasize the importance of issues such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, concern for the environment, and building connections between families, schools and the broader community.

Other Safe Routes to School events will take place during the year, such as the production of walking maps, a student incentive program, safety audits,, and educational outreach in the Cotswold school and community to raise awareness and make it more feasible to lead a SAFE active lifestyle in that area.

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Background of groups and the national projects this effort highlights:

Safe Kids Charlotte Mecklenburg is a coalition of agencies and community members led by the Charlotte fire department that works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids Charlotte Mecklenburg is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury.

Safe Kids Walk This Way, a grassroots pedestrian safety initiative in more than 250 schools nationwide, is made possible through support from program sponsor FedEx Express. Through this year-round program, children learn safe pedestrian behaviors; school communities identify the pedestrian hazards surrounding their schools; and school pedestrian safety committees and task forces lead efforts to educate pedestrians and drivers about safe behaviors, enforce traffic laws and improve environments for child pedestrians. [www.fedex.com](http://www.fedex.com)

Safe Routes to School Charlotte Mecklenburg is a coalition of agency and community members led by the Mecklenburg County Health department and Carolinas Medical Center designed to support the development of a Safe Routes to School program in the local community.

Slow Down 4 Families is a public awareness campaign started by one Charlotte family to increase awareness of and reduce speeding in local communities. [www.slowdown4families.com](http://www.slowdown4families.com)

International Walk to School Day is dedicated to walking to school with a purpose — to promote physical activity, safety, health and concern for the environment. International Walk to School Day is promoted nationally by The Partnership for a Walkable America. [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)

Safe Routes to school was started through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congress designated a total of

\$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. Walk to School events work to create safer routes for walking and bicycling and emphasize the importance of issues such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, concern for the environment and building connections between families, schools and the broader community. “Never Leave Your Child Alone”

Local safety advocates request caregivers to “Never Leave Your Child Alone” to preventing child deaths as local heat increases

(Charlotte, NC) Nationwide, between 1998 and 2006, more than 320 children – most of them age three and younger – died from heat stroke while trapped in a vehicle. Since 2001 in North Carolina, 6 children all under the age of five have died from excessive exposure to heat.(NCSHS) Locally, no deaths have occurred, however an average of 35-50 children are seen each summer in local emergency rooms from injuries due to heat exposure from being abandoned in vehicles and homes.

Small children and infants are more sensitive to heat, and this sensitivity causes their body temperature to increase three to five times faster than adults. This, combined with temperature increases that occur inside a car when the temperature outside is as low as 70 degrees Fahrenheit can cause dangerous conditions for children in minutes.

Studies show of the deaths in cars that have occurred, more than a third of these children were accidentally left in a closed, parked vehicle by parents or caregivers, and another third were trapped while playing unattended in a vehicle. Sadly, one in five children who died were intentionally left in the vehicle by an adult to run a quick errand or to serve as a babysitter for a short time.

With temperatures in the Charlotte region hitting the mid 90’s this weekend, and the recent child deaths in Tennessee and South Carolina. Local safety advocates want to remind parents, caregivers, and those out and about this weekend of the increased danger children face when left alone in a car. To this end, the Mecklenburg County Child Fatality Protection and Prevention team and its member agencies, the Mecklenburg County Health Department, Mecklenburg Safe Communities, Charlotte Mecklenburg Safe Kids and the Charlotte Fire Department have developed a downloadable flyer that local agencies, businesses, child care centers, and home owners associations are invited to download, print, and post on their doors or neighborhood event signs reminding caregivers not to leave children alone in vehicles, near unlocked vehicles, and that if a child is spotted alone in a vehicle to call 911 immediately. To download the flyer [click here](#).

Never Leave Your Child Alone

Prevention tips for parents and caregivers:

Teach children never to play in, on or around vehicles.

Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, not even for a minute or with the window slightly open.

Always lock a vehicle's doors and trunk – especially at home. Keep keys and remote entry devices out of children's reach.

Ensure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination. Don't overlook sleeping infants.

Be especially careful if you're dropping off infants or children at day care and it is not part of your normal routine.

Place your purse, lunch bag or briefcase – something you always carry – on the floor of the back seat where your child is sitting. This simple act could help prevent you from forgetting a child.

If your child gets locked inside a car, get him out and dial 9-1-1 or your local emergency number immediately.

Make sure you check the temperature of the car seat surface and safety belt buckles before restraining your children in the car.

Use a light covering to shade the seat of your parked car. Consider using windshield shades in front and back windows.

Be careful with child-resistant locks. Teach older children how to disable the driver's door locks if they unintentionally become entrapped in a motor vehicle.

Contact your automobile dealership about getting your vehicle retrofitted with a trunk release mechanism.

If you see young children in a car unattended, please try to find the parents immediately or call police for help. Taking action immediately could save a child from serious harm, or even death.

\*\* As a reminder in this hot weather, advocates encourage caregivers to have children drink water often not just when they are thirsty and limit the amount of time spent outdoors at one time during hot weather. \*\*