

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 6, 2010

Walking School Buses Catch on During Walk to School Month

This week Westmount Elementary School in Halifax and MacDonald Elementary in Dominion witnessed more students walking to school. They joined thousands of Canadian schools, including over 90 across Nova Scotia, to celebrate International Walk to School Month, which began this week.

"Walking is a great way to keep active," says MacDonald Elementary Principal Brian Doue. "Our lifestyles and our children's lifestyles are getting less active, so building walking into our daily school routine, like walking to school, is really important."

MacDonald Elementary plans to have a different theme every week for Walk to School Month and will run one Walking School Bus per week. A Walking School Bus is an adult-led group of students who walk to school together.

"We're seeing our children suffering from illnesses that were once considered to be just for adults," Doue says. "We're becoming less healthy as a country. It is so upsetting to see that obesity, heart attack, diabetes, stroke incidences, cancer and premature death are all on the rise. These have been proven to be preventable through becoming just a little more active, such as a little more walking."

Westmount Elementary in Halifax is running a Walking School Bus every day this week to celebrate Walk to School Month as well.

On Monday, Westmount Elementary parent Ian Horton reported on the successful launch of the school's first Walking School Bus. "The 'Ardmore Arrow' travelled from Ardmore Park to school carrying a full complement of 10 passengers, and replacing three or four car journeys."

In addition to the health, physical activity and safety benefits of more students walking to school, there are environmental benefits. Many parents end up driving their children to school over short, walkable distances. Fewer greenhouse gases are emitted when the family car is left at home and students walk or cycle instead. It is estimated that one Walking School Bus involving nine families can reduce emissions by 1,000 kg (Green Communities Canada).

International Walk to School Month is organized by Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS), coordinated in Nova Scotia by the Ecology Action Centre in partnership with Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection, as part of the Active Kids Healthy Kids initiative.

Schools registered for International Walk to School Month qualify for prize draws including: a classroom pedometer kit donated by Heart&Stroke Walkabout; a bike donated by Cyclesmith of Halifax to give away to a lucky bike-minded student; a set of four helmets to give away to more lucky bike-minded students; and enough I Walk to School stickers for all the students in the school. Schools may still register at www.saferoutesns.ca (click IWALK).

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For photos and more information, contact:

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