

Farmington students take part in National Bike to School Day

By Joshua Kellogg *The Daily Times Farmington Daily Times*

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FARMINGTON — Elementary school students took to the streets Wednesday morning, walking or riding their bikes to school as part of a national effort to generate safety awareness and the importance of physical activity.

Four Farmington elementary schools took part in National Bike to School Day, where students walked or biked to school along with their parents and teachers.

Anngela Wakan, Safe Routes to School coordinator for Farmington, said she included walking along with biking to broaden the event so all students could participate.

The goal of National Bike to School Day is to create safer routes for students walking or biking to school.

Wakan has been teaching biking and walking safety as part of "Safety Day" events throughout the Farmington Municipal School District during the lead up to Wednesday's events.

"On days like today, (the students) might not normally get to walk and enjoy the fresh air," Wakan said. "They can enjoy being with parents and friends outside and getting exercise before school starts."

Along with teaching about safety, Wakan said she also enjoys talking to the students about healthy living habits.

Animas, Ladera, Mesa Verde, McKinley, and Apache elementary schools held events for students who walked or biked to class. Mascots from Farmington and Piedra Vista high schools and the Navajo Preparatory School cheered on the students during their walk.

Students who ride the bus to Mesa Verde were dropped off at San Juan College and walked south along College Boulevard on the sidewalk, accompanied by school officials and teachers.

Seven-year-old Vivianna Tucson walked with her great-grandfather Ray Gonzalez. Tucson said she was excited to walk with her classmates.

"I just wanted to do this because I like to walk," Tucson said, "because we could get exercis(e) while walking."

The Piedra Vista panther mascot gave passing children and parents high-fives as they approached the school. Flashlights with reflectors were passed out to students along the route back to the school building.

Jeff Treat, physical education teacher at Mesa Verde, said he was interested in highlighting healthy habits.

"I wanted to make parents aware of the possibility of having their kids walk or ride (to school)," Treat said. "It definitely sets ... some life patterns in place, that the idea of health is important and they can address that each day (if) they want to."

Treat said Mesa Verde is investigating a route to enable interested students to walk to school with the help of parental volunteers.

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