



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Kane County schools participating in International Walk to School Day**

The Making Kane County Fit for Kids Funders Consortium and Kane County schools are teaming up again this year to promote International Walk to School Day on Oct. 5. There are plenty of great reasons to walk to school — less traffic, safer streets, cleaner air — but one of the best is that children and parents will be healthier.

This year 49 schools in Kane County have signed up to participate in Walk to School festivities. As of Friday, 164 schools in the state of Illinois had signed up, meaning that nearly one-third of the state's total will be in Kane. Last year, 45 schools in nine Kane County school districts participated in the Walk to School festivities, representing one-fourth of the total number (180) in the state of Illinois.

“In 1969, 89 percent of students in grades K through eight who lived a mile from school usually walked or rode their bikes to school. In 2009, that number had dropped to 35 percent,” said Kane County Health Department Executive Director Paul Kuehnert. “There are many valid reasons for the drop, but our goal is to make it as safe and easy as possible to walk to school. We know that physical activity makes kids healthier, gives them a sense of responsibility and independence. It also creates an opportunity to be outdoors and provides time to connect with parents, friends and neighbors. The entire community benefits when there is less traffic congestion. By encouraging the simple act of walking to school, we may be able to change some habits, increase physical activity and reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

This year, Freeman Elementary School, 153 S. Randall, in Aurora will be featured. Mayor Tom Weisner, D129 Superintendent Dr. James Ryland, Paul Kuehnert will be among those who participate. New this year will be corporate sponsors. The Funders Consortium will provide \$300 to each participating school's PTO.

International Walk to School Day started in Chicago in 1997 and now is marked in all 50 states. In 2009, people from 40 different countries around the world participated.

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One of the goals of the Fit for Kids initiative is to develop policies of land use and planning to support physical activity for all in our community. These would include designing more pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and identifying safe routes to our schools. IWSD events are designed to raise awareness of the implications of these policy decisions.

To learn more about the Making Kane County Fit for Kids initiative, please visit the Kane County Health Department's Web site at [www.kanehealth.com/fitforkids.htm](http://www.kanehealth.com/fitforkids.htm), or call Michael Isaacson at (630) 208-3140. More information about the International Walk to School Day is available by visiting [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)

Participating sponsors are Gold Level: Reflejos; Silver Level, United Health Care, City of Aurora, and Aunt Martha's; Bronze Level, Dreyer Medical Clinic. The Fit For Kids Funders Consortium is the United Way of Elgin, the Community Foundation of the Fox Valley, Kane County Development Department, Kane County Regional Office of Education, Kane County Forest Preserve District and Kane County Health Department.

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