

Walk 'n' Roll: Safe Routes to School in Urban Vancouver

Issue

Endeavour Elementary School in Vancouver, Washington has about 600 children in kindergarten through fifth grade. It's located in an urban area on a busy street. It can be a challenge for students to walk to school safely. Many parents drive their kids to school, so the area gets very congested, which is even more of a barrier to walking.

Clark County Public Health received a grant from "Communities Putting Prevention to Work" (CPPW) to support their "Safe Routes to School" effort. CPPW provides federal stimulus dollars for towns and cities to make changes that encourage healthy eating, more physical activity, and reduced tobacco use. Projects that receive funding focus on policies and neighborhood changes that are shown to be effective in reducing obesity and smoking.

Public health staff, working with Evergreen and Vancouver school districts, selected Endeavour Elementary to participate in grant activities. Selection criteria included the percentage of students living within a half mile of school and the need for neighborhood safety improvements.

Intervention

Endeavour wanted to motivate students to walk and bike to school. They enlisted community organizations and volunteers to create a community-wide "walking school bus." Walk 'n' Roll, as this event was known, identified a neighborhood route to school. Teachers volunteered to stand at intersections along the route 30 minutes before school started. Then they accompanied students the rest of the way. The school partnered with local police as time allowed to station patrol cars at the busiest intersections. This reminds drivers to slow down when children are walking. Toni Johnson, one of the key organizers, is a teacher at Endeavour. She was amazed at how many other teachers were willing to donate their time to stand at "walking stations."

As a kick off and awareness raising event in the spring of 2011, the school held a bike rodeo. The local Lions Club donated bike helmets to the third graders who participated.

Impact

Walk 'n' Roll strengthened relationships between parents, teachers, students, the health department, and local police. Students enthusiastically participated. They were proud to show their teachers where they lived as they passed by homes and apartments. Parents walked with the students and got to know more of their neighbors.

The school repeated Walk 'n' Roll in fall 2011, with the same positive results. Evergreen School District is interested in exploring how walking school buses can help reduce transportation costs. They recently had a conversation with physical education instructors throughout the district to gauge interest in expanding Endeavour's efforts to other schools. Several are now preparing "Safe Routes to School" grants. CPPW funding has helped to make these opportunities possible.

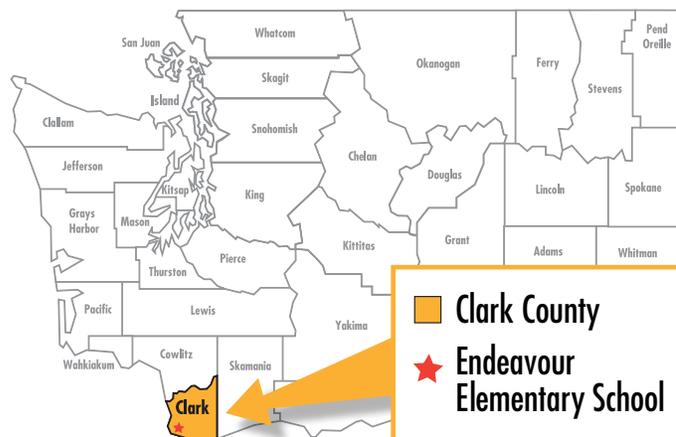
Clark County population: 425,363
Vancouver population: 161,791

Clark County Public Health
1601 East Fourth Plain Boulevard
Vancouver, WA 98661

Clark



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON



For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats.
To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 1-800-833-6388).