



## Safe Routes to School Woodland: Encouraging youth to be safe, be seen, and be active

### Safe Routes to School

Elementary school youth in Woodland learn to have fun and be safe while walking and biking to school

### Intervention Summary

The Woodland Joint Unified School District (WJUSD), in Woodland CA is the largest district in Yolo County, and also one of the least fit districts in the County, based on 2013 Fitnessgram data. There was no Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 2014, despite many beneficial infrastructure improvements to surface streets near schools, and proximity of many family residences to their schools. The Yolo County NEOP program set out to help the elementary schools in the district become savvy at promoting walking and biking to their schools and also to help students learn to be safe and be seen when doing so. First, NEOP coordinated a Walk to School day at Tafoya Elementary school on October 8, 2014, National Walk to School day. Over 175 youth participated and the schools' PTA and local law enforcement were present as well. Non-NEOP funds purchased walking school bus banners and high visibility vests for volunteers or staff to continue supporting a walk to school initiative. Also, talks with the Woodland Prairie Elementary school principal during bi-monthly wellness committee meetings resulted in his decision to close the entrance of his school to cars on Wednesdays to promote "Walking Wednesday". The initiative was a success and continues in this current school year. NEOP staff also collaborated with a local non-profit, The Bike Campaign, to provide nutrition education at a bike rodeo May 7<sup>th</sup> (National Bike to School day) at Woodland Prairie Elementary school. Finally, a key barrier for parents/students in walking and biking to school is safety. NEOP wanted to address the safety aspects of walking and biking for Woodland youth and did so by promoting pedestrian and walking safety through games and educational flyers at three large community events. These events were attended by over 500 residents. At these events NEOP staff also gave away and properly fitted over 50 helmets for youth and provide bike helmet fitting education to many more parents and youth.

## Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

One major challenge in working with the WJUSD is getting time on school administrators' and staff schedules. Schools are busy places, particularly this past school year with the introduction of Common Core standards. Tafoya Elementary school did not continue promoting walking to school as hoped after Walk to School day, mostly because of competing interests and lack of a school champion who wanted to take it on at that time. Also, the NEOP team initially set out to do walking and biking audits at 4 schools, but did not achieve this goal. The primary reason for this was because the audit process was more extensive than originally anticipated and staff did not have the experience with audits to do them in a timely fashion and lead the process. Further, schools did not express interest in that activity when asked. Instead NEOP sought to do a transportation mode survey with at least 4 schools because baseline data on how youth travel to school was lacking. NEOP staff tried to do the surveys with schools in Spring 2015 with no luck. However, with an increase in staff time dedicated to the surveys in Fall 2015 (August/September), five schools participated and one school decided to also collaborate with NEOP on Walk to School day 2015 as well. The survey data will be used in an upcoming Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant project that will start in the WJUSD in January 2016. Two NEOP staff will also be partially funded through the ATP project and can apply the lessons learning in FFY15 with NEOP SRTS activities to the ATP activities.

## Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Through the ATP funding Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency staff will be able to develop a robust SRTS program with the elementary and middle schools in the WJUSD, starting in January 2016. The relationships built in FFY15 will be very helpful in paving the way for this project. NEOP staff will help provide nutrition messages major events, such as Walk and Bike to School days. Further, a sub-group of the Yolo CNAP, called the ATP collaborative, was formed in 2015. The goal of the collaborative to strengthen all agencies' capacity to seek funding to help promote walking and biking, to share data, and to integrate the public health perspectives to a field that was primarily focused on solely the transportation element of active transportation for so long.

## Contact information about this Narrative

**Local Health Department Grant Name:** Yolo County

**Grant #:** 13-20495

**Author's Name:** Rebecca Tryon, MS

**Phone:** 530-666-8640

**Email:** [rebecca.tryon@yolocounty.org](mailto:rebecca.tryon@yolocounty.org)

This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit [www.CaChampionsForChange.net](http://www.CaChampionsForChange.net).