



A Fun Way to Get to School: Cypress Students Use the New Walking School Bus

Anderson Partnership for Healthy Children/South County HEAC

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Shasta County RTPA

Shasta Family YMCA

Shasta Head Start

Simpson University

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University of California Cooperative Extension

Viva Downtown

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

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Cypress School started a walking school bus program in October of this year and has been going strong, despite the rainy, chilly weather. A walking school bus is a supervised group of students walking to school. Students participating in the Cypress walking school bus start at the First United Methodist Church (FUMC) at the corner of South and East Streets, about ¾ of a mile from the school. Along the way, they pick up students that live in Redding's Garden Tract Neighborhood. "The students love the walking school bus; it's fun for them and many of them like to be "the driver" holding the walking school bus sign," says Bobbie Wion, Cypress School walking school bus coordinator.

The FUMC and the Garden Tract Neighborhood Association have been extremely supportive of the walking school bus program. The walking bus was first announced in the Garden Tract's newsletter and at their regular association meeting. Some of the neighbors even come out to wave to the students as they walk by. The FUMC offers use of their parking lot for the walking school bus so that students who do not live in the Garden Tract neighborhood can still participate in the program. Two Cypress School staff members meet the students in the parking lot every school day and walk the route to school picking up students along the way. As many as 27 passengers make up the walking school bus.

"The Cypress walking school bus provides many benefits: not only are more eyes on the street for safety of the students and the entire neighborhood, but it builds a sense of community with local students," reports Monique Gaido, co-chair of the Garden Tract Association. Other benefits include decreasing traffic in the neighborhood and in front of the school which helps improve air quality and makes it safer for other students to want to walk and bike. "It's also a great way for students to get exercise in the morning before school, which prepares students to learn and have better concentration when they start their classes," states Sherrie Brookes, coordinator of the Safe Routes to School Program.

The walking school bus is a collaborative program between the Shasta Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program and the Healthy Students Initiative (HSI), both of which are programs under Healthy Shasta. The SRTS program works with schools in Shasta County to encourage and promote walking and biking to school. The HSI develops and implements solutions to address and prevent childhood obesity to improve the health and academic success of Shasta County students.

For more information about starting a walking school bus, visit www.healthyshasta.org/saferoutes.htm or call Sherrie Brookes at 229-8456.

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