Local students are encouraged to walk to school as part of IWALK

International Walk to School Week to begin this Monday

It's time to get those walking shoes ready.

Monday marks the start of the seventh annual International Walk to School Week (IWALK), and the Region and both local school boards are encouraging schools, students, teachers, parents and community leaders to take part.

"Walking is one of the easiest ways to build physical activity into a child's life," said Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health.

"In Ontario, over 50 per cent of children are not active enough to achieve health benefits. This lack of physical activity has contributed to the startling increases in obesity and type 2 diabetes among our children and youth."

Last year, over three million people worldwide participated in IWALK, including students from 58 Halton elementary schools.

Every school in Halton can get involved, including those located in urban and rural communities. For example, in areas where the majority of students can't walk to school because of distance, schools can initiate organized walking groups at recess or lunch.

During the week, the Region is also collaborating with local municipalities to support its anti-idling blitz, challenging motorists to turn off their engines.

IWALK is organized provincially by Green Communities Canada. It's considered the starting point for schools to implement the Active and Safe Routes to Schools (ASRTS) program, which includes several other initiatives such as noidling zones, bus drop-off zones and mapping activities and exercises.

Schools that participate in IWALK 2006 are eligible to apply for small grants to support the implementation of an additional ASRTS initiative.

Details about the grant opportunity were included in the IWALK package sent to each public, Catholic, private and French school in Halton and can also be obtained by visiting www.halton.ca.

For further information about IWALK call (905) 825-6000.



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