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Walk-to-School Works on Many Levels

The 400 Perris elementary school students who used muscle power to walk to campus Wednesday said the endeavor accomplished several goals.

It provided exercise, allowed them to chat with friends and meet new schoolmates, saved gasoline costs, reduced noise and pollution and, perhaps most importantly, it was fun.

City officials joined students at Avalon Elementary and Perris Elementary schools as part of the "International Walk to School Day." Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough walked with about 200 Avalon students, parents and staffers while City Councilman Al Landers joined about 200 Perris Elementary School pupils.

Yarbrough said he was delighted with the turnout at Avalon, which is right around the corner from his home. The walk-to-school event is part of the City's ongoing "Live Well Perris" healthy-eating, active-living initiative, Yarbrough said, and it contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

"It's easy and simple and great for you," Yarbrough said as he strolled from Frank Eaton Park to the Avalon campus. "Our Live Well Perris message is getting out and the whole community is benefitting from it. I see a lot of people walking their dogs, walking themselves and riding their bikes. It's great to see a program that was put together by our City staff reaching our constituents."

Landers said it is important for City leaders to set an example by showing students that walking can be great exercise and exhilarating at the same time.

"This is a good way to spend quality time with them and show that we care for them," he said. "This City Council, staff and City cares for the children of Perris and it is important that we show that commitment with action. I think walking to school with family and friends promotes the idea of good citizenship."

Jayden Anderson, 9, said the morning walk provided a burst of energy before classes.

"You're not walking by yourself, you're walking with friends," Jayden said.

Eric Otis, 10, offered another benefit from walking.

"You get to meet new people you haven't met before," he said.

Jaliya Brooks, 10, liked that many of her teachers at Avalon Elementary made the walk along with their students.

"It's good exercise, you get to work your muscles and it's fun," she said.

April Carr dropped off her two children, Lanaya Wilson, 10, and Aiden Wilson, 9, off before going to work. She praised the City for creating the Live Well Perris program, which encourages residents of all ages to exercise and eat healthy. Carr grew up in Perris and believes youngsters will benefit from taking part in activities like the International Walk to School Day.

"Good job Perris!" Carr said. "It makes me feel good that our City is promoting health-especially for our youth."

Addy Ellis, 8, is a member of the Avalon elementary "100 mile club, an extracurricular activity that encourages students to get out and walk and provides incentives like t-shirts, bracelets, pencils and backpacks when they reach target milestones.

"Today was a fun day," Addy said.

A school assembly followed the walk to school at Avalon. An easel held the school's winning entry in a poster contest held to celebrate walk-to-school day. Winner Alexa Garcia, 9, took part in the walk and stopped long enough to pose for a photo with her teacher and another in front of a fire engine that escorted the walkers to the campus.

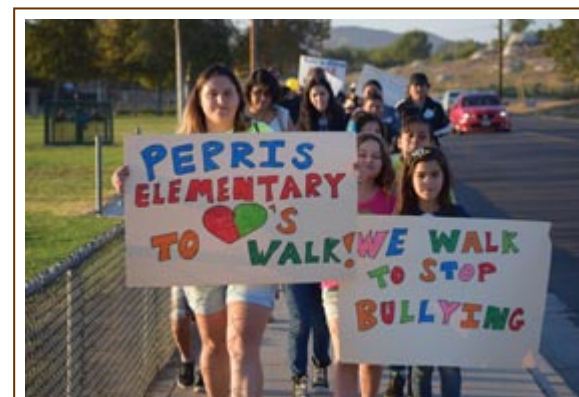
"It was good to walk with my friends," said Alexa, an aspiring animator. "I feel good."

Comments like that pleased Shelly Yarbrough, a member of the Val Verde Unified School District.

"It's wonderful to see so many kids walking to school," she said. "We built schools in neighborhoods to encourage kids to walk. We built schools to become part of the community, and want kids and parents to understand the schools belong to them."



Perris City Councilman Al Landers walks to Perris Elementary School Wednesday as part of the "International Walk to School Day," which drew 400 participants.



Perris Elementary School students show their support for the International Walk to School Day by carrying signs and placards.



Perris mom April Carr with her children, Aiden Wilson, 9, and Lanayah Wilson, 10, prior to the walk to school from Frank Eaton Park to Avalon Elementary School.



Alexa Garcia, 9, who won the Avalon Elementary School's contest for best-event poster design, stands in front of the winning entry.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and his wife, Val Verde Unified School District trustee Shelly Yarbrough, lead a group of students to Avalon Elementary School.