

PRESS RELEASE

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Bluffton students to gather at Beachwood Park for “safe walk”

MUSKEGON: On Friday, May 22, 2009, at 8:15 a.m. nearly 200 students, parents, staff, and volunteers from Bluffton Elementary School in Muskegon will participate in a walk to school event. The walk will begin at Beachwood Park located just below the Lake Michigan sand dunes on the corner of Beach Street and Resort Avenue. The students will start walking at the park and be met by their teachers. School staff members are asking others from the community to join them on their walk. To drive to the park, travel to the west end of Sherman, stay to the right, and turn onto Dune Beach Drive toward Lake Michigan.

Bluffton Elementary School, through a partnership with Public Health Muskegon County, participates in the Michigan Safe Routes to School program. The program is an effort to raise awareness and make changes to create a safe, convenient and fun environment for children to bicycle and walk to school and get the regular physical activity they need for good health.

Michigan’s Safe Routes to School program includes developing a school-based Safe Routes to School Team. This team works together to develop an action plan that recommends changes that will lead to a safer environment for walking and bicycling to school. Schools that complete this process can apply for federal funding to assist with infrastructure changes such as sidewalks, paths, signage, plan design, bike lanes, and non-infrastructure programs such as bike rodeos, walking clubs, and class safety curriculum, through the Department of Transportation.

Through the Michigan Department of Community Health, Public Health – Muskegon County has been awarded funding to support Safe Routes to School activities in four elementary school buildings in Muskegon County. This year Public Health – Muskegon County is working with Bluffton Elementary and Nelson Elementary in the Muskegon Public School District, and Martin Luther King Elementary in Muskegon Heights. Each of these elementary schools have developed teams and are planning events throughout the spring and summer to raise awareness as well as assess existing hazards that prevent children from walking or bicycling to school.

Public Health – Muskegon County is providing technical assistance to the schools as requested and will also help the schools apply to the Department of Transportation to support any changes in infrastructure and development of programs listed in action plans.

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