



News Release

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Taking the “Green Ribbon” Pledge

Utahns Promise to Stay Safe Near Schools and Neighborhoods

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Students and parents across Utah are taking the Green Ribbon pledge this month, promising to walk and drive safely in school zones and neighborhoods.

September is Green Ribbon Month, an annual safety initiative launched in Davis County and designed to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries in Utah. Utah Department of Health (UDOH) data show that every year, an average of 1,100 Utah pedestrians are struck by motor vehicles and 40 are killed.

The Salt Lake-Ogden metro area has been ranked among the 20 most dangerous in the country for pedestrians in recent years. And Utah’s pedestrian fatality rate is the 20th highest in the U.S. In response to those numbers, the Davis County SAFE KIDS Coalition and Utah Highway Safety launched the Green Ribbon Month project in 1998. Since then it has spread statewide.

“We have to get a handle on this important safety issue,” said Theron Jeppson, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP), UDOH. “Green Ribbon Month is a great way to remind us of the dangers on our streets, and to get us thinking about how to reduce the risk,” he said.

The Green Ribbon program features pledge forms for both walkers and drivers. Students sign forms promising to walk only on sidewalks whenever they’re available, and to cross only at crosswalks and intersections. Drivers sign pledges and tie green ribbons on their cars, promising to drive five miles *under* posted speed limits in school zones and neighborhoods.

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Over the past decade, 141 pedestrians and bicyclists ages 14 and under have been hit and killed by motor vehicles. Another 7,347 children, or two every day, have been injured.

“Getting to school shouldn’t be like navigating a war zone,” said Jeppson. “Speed limits and crosswalks exist for a reason—to keep us alive,” he said.

In addition to Green Ribbon month, the UDOH is taking other steps to make getting to school safer and easier. On Sept. 27, several health, safety and transportation experts will attend a Safe Routes to School (SR2S) training in West Valley City. SR2S aims to get more kids walking and biking to school, using routes that are known to be safe. Using the 4 Es—education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering—SR2S helps communities identify barriers to walking and engineer safer streets. Utah was one of only 10 states to be awarded the training course.

Also as part of Green Ribbon month, children in some neighborhoods will be getting to school via “walking school buses.” As a way to get more kids walking to and from school, students walk in a group led by two adult supervisors – a “walking school bus.” Just like a regular school bus the walking school bus follows a designated route and picks up children at designated stops along that route to and from school. The walking school bus operates rain or shine and maintains a schedule.

“Walking school buses promote health by getting families walking, and reduce traffic congestion because fewer kids are being driven to school,” said Jane Lambert, Physical Activity Coordinator, Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, UDOH.

For more information on Green Ribbon Month, Safe Routes to School and Walking School Buses, please call Cyndi Bemis at (801) 538-6348 or (801) 550-4228, or visit www.health.utah.gov/vipp.

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