

# Turtle Bay School Avoids the Loop



Turtle Bay School in the City of Redding serves 720 students from kindergarten through eighth grade, sixty-two percent of whom live outside the school's attendance area. This means that by 7:40 am, there is a snarl of traffic on the school's one-way driveway during school drop-off.

A Turtle Bay School parent had been participating in the school's Parent Faculty Club when she heard about Shasta County Public Health Department's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. Pure frustration with traffic, a can-do attitude, the assistance of the SRTS program, and the ability to commit a morning each week propelled this parent champion to launch *Avoid the Loop*, a campaign to promote more walking and, therefore, less driving to school every Friday of the school year.

When the principal introduced *Avoid the Loop* to faculty, the art teacher offered to invite her students to make posters to promote the campaign. Other teachers offered extra credit for walkers. The school secretary included Walk to School Fridays in the weekly newsletter, posted *Avoid the Loop* reminders on the school's reader-board, and hung up posters with a band of students each Thursday.

Every Friday at 7:15 am, come rain or shine, fall, winter, and spring, this parent champion met eager walkers at the nearby Caldwell Park. "Its huge parking lot made it easy for parents to drive through. Even children at the nearby apartment complex who were eligible to use the district school bus often met us at the park." Back at the school, the principal recruited whichever teachers were available that day. Teachers hopped in the principal's car and headed to the park. "We had different teachers each week," the parent champion remarked. "Parents don't know me, but they knew the principal and the teachers. That made them trust the program. The children thought it was fun to walk with their teachers."

On nice days, the group swelled from 30 to 60 students and they chose the scenic one-mile river trail. On dark rainy mornings, they donned rain gear, popped open umbrellas, and took a shorter sidewalk route. "We were a walking advertisement when we took to the road. Parents and students would drive by and we'd wave. The children in the cars saw they were missing the fun."

*Avoid the Loop* has been a team effort. With strong support from the principal, staff, students, and one dedicated parent volunteer, there is a little less traffic congestion on Friday mornings at Turtle Bay School.

## **KEYS TO TURTLE BAY'S SUCCESS:**

- Having a parent champion
- Getting principal's buy-in early and using the principal to encourage teacher participation. Children love it when their teachers walk with them
- Promoting the program through a variety of approaches (e.g. involving students, making posters, doing announcements, etc.)