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## WALK YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL MONTH STRESSES SAFETY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Eleven-year-old Kiersten Ellis enjoys walking with her parents each morning to Gulf Breeze Elementary School.

"It gives you good exercise, and it's fun," she said.

More than 100 Gulf Breeze Elementary students and parents walked or rode a bicycle Friday for National Walk Your Child to School Month.

"It's a really good idea," said Chris Stersic, who rode his bicycle with his first- and fourth-grade sons, Luke and Matthew. "I don't get to ride my bike as much as I'd like, but I'm glad I got to ride with them today."

The Escambia-Santa Rosa Community Traffic Safety Team has been promoting safety for young walkers and bicycle riders with events at Sherwood, West Pensacola, Gulf Breeze and W.H. Rhodes elementary schools and West Navarre Intermediate School. Team members gave incentives like flashing strobes and bracelets and shoestring tabs that light up in the dark.

"I'm really glad we have this event before Halloween because I want the kids to also use these reflectors on that night," said Ginny Hinton, health education supervisor for the Santa Rosa County Health Department.

Walking to school promotes health, identifies safer routes and improves air quality, officials said.



"National Walk To School Month also encourages physical activity that can help children and parents make a commitment to being healthier and fighting the obesity epidemic," Hinton said.