



February 2014

**Coordinator's Corner**

The Virginia Safe Routes to School program is off to a great start in 2014. Crossing Guard Appreciation Day is here and we've received lots of great nominations from parents and schools for Virginia's Outstanding Guard. Read more about Crossing Guard Appreciation Day below, and be sure to check the VDOT SRTS website for more ways to say, "Thank You" to our schools' crossing guards this February, or anytime during the school year.



We are continuing to support local Safe Routes to School projects through our successful QuickStart Mini-grant program. So if you have a great idea for a near-term Safe Routes to School project, be sure to apply by each month's due date. Remember, there'll be three grant rounds this spring and another three rounds in the fall. More details are on the website under QuickStart Mini-grants.

This year, we're also expanding our Walkabout Mini-grant Program. School Walkabouts are led by SRTS Local Technical Assistance Coordinators (LTACs) and are a great opportunity for a school community to assess the existing walking and bicycling conditions around their school and to build consensus with local stakeholders. This spring and fall we'll be offering walkabouts for schools that are applying for specific infrastructure funding opportunities and for schools who want to get a better sense of the walking and bicycling conditions.

Two new Safe Routes to School Area Coordinators started in Lynchburg and Fairfax in January, joining a third Area Coordinator in Galax who started late last year. All three coordinators are motivated, enthusiastic and eager to promote safe walking and bicycling to and from school in their cities. You will learn more about their plans in this issue's Friends and Faces column.

Finally, while it's only February it's not too early to start planning for the May 7 Bike to School Day. Over the next month or so, we'll have some new Bike to School Day materials in the Marketing Toolkit page on the website.

Read on!

-Rob Williams  
VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator

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**CALENDAR**

**FEBRUARY**

- 7: VDOT completes all SRTS APP reviews and approvals
- 12: Crossing Guard appreciation day
- 14: SRTS Non-Infrastructure grant applications due
- 20: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due

**MARCH**

- 7: Saris Bicycling Poster Contest
- 20: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due

**APRIL**

- 9: Bike Train and Walking School Bus Webinar
- 17: QuickStart Mini-grant applications due

**MAY**

- 7: National Bike to School Day

## Friends and Faces

Three new Virginia Safe Routes to School Area Coordinators began working recently with the goal of connecting with local stakeholders, schools, parents, and students to promote Safe Routes to School in their community. An area coordinator's work focuses on building sustainable Safe Routes to School programs by ensuring that schools have the most up-to-date information, supporting school-led SRTS projects, and encouraging safe walking and biking in the community particularly going to and from school. Sally Smallwood, a retired PE teacher, is the coordinator in Fairfax County; Nina Polley, a community volunteer, is the area coordinator in Lynchburg; and Linda Mock, a community planner and former news anchor, is the area coordinator in Galax Virginia.

### Why was the SRTS Area Coordinator Position of Interest to you?



**Sally:** I retired from teaching in Fairfax County Schools in November 2012 and I still wanted to work, especially if I could make a difference in children's health and physical fitness. While substitute teaching in both Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, I learned of the Safe Routes to School coordinator position. SRTS is a natural fit! I would be able to reach out to students and communities, empowering them to walk and bike to school.

**Nina:** In a Gallup and Healthways study released in March 2010, Lynchburg was ranked 7th among the "Most Obesity Metro Areas in the US". Seventh! It seems like little 'ole Lynchburg isn't so little after all. This puts us at risk for serious heart and health illnesses. So, I started to change my own habits, and my family followed



suit. Naturally, the next step was to be a positive influence within my community. My family walks a lot. We started walking as a form of exercise, but it eventually became a habit. We'd walk to the park, the store, downtown, to visit friends, the list goes on. So, when I saw the SRTS Area Coordinator position available, it was perfect for me!



**Linda:** Before living in Galax, I lived in a small beach community south of Myrtle Beach, SC. The area, while slow and relaxing in its daily pace, offers much activity that helps keep the population healthy. After moving to Galax, I was pleased to find out that the city had received a non-infrastructure grant to initiate and grow the

Safe Routes to School program; an opportunity to encourage students to move, protect the environment and safely navigate the community. I had to be a part of that vision!

### What in your past work will you draw on for SRTS?

**Sally:** As a passionate elementary school Physical Educator for 33 years, I loved to watch students grow and learn new skills. In particular, I will draw on my experience sponsoring student safety patrols and leading safety patrols through lessons on crossing streets safely and riding a bus safely. As a retiree, I volunteered for a program through the recreation department called Lose the Training Wheels (now called iCan Shine), a program that teaches students with disabilities to ride a bike. It was great seeing students learn to ride for the first time and developing a sense of independence.

**Nina:** Along with the Lynchburg Titans, a local semi-professional basketball team, we have volunteered over 600 hours of community service in the past few years. The majority of those community service hours have been in the local schools, after school programs, and youth events. We're able to be a positive influence within

the community promoting good health. That's the energy that I'll be drawing from, being able to show that living a healthy, active lifestyle is fun and exciting!

**Linda:** Prior to working in Galax, I directed a 10-year strategic plan for an economically challenged community, which created the following projects: bike paths, a mile-long wooden walkway along the marsh, two parks, tourism promotion and creation of an image of a vibrant region on the upswing with deep roots in its heritage. The goals of the SRTS program seemed to meld with my abilities, knowledge, life experiences and love of small communities. Also, my experience as a news anchor and member of the chamber of commerce allows me to easily meet people, showcase the Safe Routes program, and build support and partnerships among the local businesses.

#### **What are your goals for this school year?**

**Sally:** Fairfax is the largest school system in Virginia. I will work with schools that have already been participating in SRTS to sustain their programs. I also want to develop a Tool Kit for other schools that are interested in implementing SRTS. My ultimate goal is to generate interest in all 138 of our elementary schools!

**Nina:** My goals are to give students the opportunity to safely walk and bike to school, to have students and families increase their health and physical activity, and to have parents take the time to walk and bike with their children to school as a family. I hope that I am able to build a strong program foundation that each school will be able to maintain for years to come.

**Linda:** Since becoming the SRTS Coordinator for Galax, I've been walking the neighborhoods, explaining the program, describing the events and soliciting volunteers to assist with the Walking School Bus Program. I'm learning all about the city - its citizens and its policies in order to encourage and create a long lasting and safe pedestrian and bicycling community. In addition, I am drafting the

specifications for the School Zone Plan to be completed this year. We're also doing everything we can to team up with businesses, health care providers, local farmers and athletes to bring together good health and nutrition advocates with SRTS. Finally, we're turning a spotlight on "fun" exercise to help encourage students and their families walk and bike to school.

#### **Have you planned any activities for the spring semester?**

**Sally:** We will host several bike rodeos throughout the county this spring. We will be piloting the Child Pedestrian Safety curriculum at several schools as well as gearing up for Bike/Walk to School day in May.

**Nina:** My activities through the end of this school year will include participation in Bike to School Day, training PE teachers and students on pedestrian and bicycling safety, monthly walk to school days, beginning the Mileage Club and Travel Diary program, developing Walking School Buses, and encouraging drivers to be cautious and safe while driving around the school areas.

**Linda:** We will host a pedestrian safety class in concert with the Galax Police Department and Galax Parks and Recreation for all anyone who wishes to volunteer for Walking School Buses or Walking Wednesdays this spring. We'll also hold our second bike rodeo in March, again partnering with law enforcement and Parks and Rec all in preparation for a Bike Library, which will be open to all students to "check out" a bike and helmet. We're also looking forward to holding bike trains and walking school buses in April and May before participating in National Bike to School Day. We're doing all we can to make sure that students, their parents, and the community walk the walk, and roll the roll.

#### ***National Bike to School Day is May 7th***

It's never too early to start thinking about Bike to School Day! Be sure to plan ahead to get your school, students,

parents, and community members ready to safely bike to school. Use this time to plan a bicycle rodeo, find parents to help lead bicycle trains, and connect with community members to find the safest bicycle routes to and from school.

Similar to Walk to School Day, National Bike to School Day gives students and their families across the country the opportunity to learn about bike safety, the benefits of an active lifestyle, and to have fun traveling to and from school.



Students at Lake Anne Elementary School's Bike to School Week in Reston.

In 2012, over 1,000 schools participated in Bike to School Day nationwide, with 40 schools in Virginia participating. In 2013, there were over 1,700 schools involved in Bike to School Day and Virginia's participation rate more than doubled. Is your school planning to participate this year?

If so, be sure to check the National Bike to School Day website in the coming weeks to register your event with the National Center. This website is also a great resource to find out what other schools in your area doing for Bike to School Day as well as get ideas for bike to school projects and tools to build support within your community.

***And remember -- all of May is Bike to School Month.***



Students ride their bicycles during National Bike to School Day last year in Harrisonburg.

## QuickStart Mini-grants

The first round of 2014 QuickStart Mini-grants are due February 20, 2014. Up to eight QuickStart Mini-grants will be awarded to schools to support small SRTS projects or activities that encourage walking and bicycling to school. These grants are great for purchasing incentive items for students, promotional and materials, even bicycle racks for your school. Don't forget to apply online for your school to receive a QuickStart Mini-Grant.

### ***New Walkabout Mini-grants Available!***

This year, Virginia Safe Routes to School is offering Walkabout Mini-grants to schools and communities who are interested in learning about the bicycle and pedestrian network around their school. Walkabouts are led by the Local Technical Assistance Coordinator and are an excellent opportunity for community stakeholders to experience pedestrian and bicycle conditions, share perspectives, and build consensus around potential solutions. Walkabout reports will include a description of conditions observed during the walkabout and photos documenting the area. Also, the report may include recommended infrastructure improvements if your school intends to apply

for a specific funding opportunity. An example walkabout report is available on the VDOT SRTS website.

In the past, schools have used Walkabouts to assess the existing pedestrian and bicycling facilities around the school to focus potential improvements. Additionally, schools have used the Walkabout to gather additional information to prepare infrastructure grant applications. Walkabouts will be offered during the spring and fall this year on a rolling basis. If interested, apply online to receive a walkabout.

***National Bike to School Day 2014  
Registration Now Open***



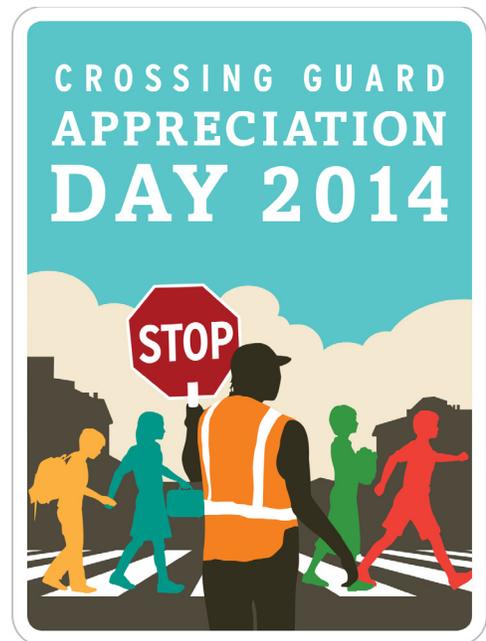
Join tens of thousands of children, parents, school officials, and many other supporters for the third annual Bike to School Day on May 7, 2014

Eighty-four (84) schools registered events in 2013. Help make this year's event even bigger! Register now at [WalkBiketoSchool.Org](http://WalkBiketoSchool.Org). Learn more about National Bike to School Day below.

***Crossing Guard Appreciation Day is  
February 12, 2014***

February 12 is Virginia Crossing Guard Appreciation Day and all of February is Virginia Crossing Guard Appreciation Month. Across the state, parents, students, schools and communities will take time to show their appreciation for the women and men who help students cross the street on their way to and from school on a daily basis. Crossing

guards often arrive at their posts before sun rise, before students are walking and biking, and stay until the first bell rings and help students. They protect students as they cross in front of all vehicles - cars, buses, trucks, and bikes.



February can be one of toughest times for Crossing Guards. Shorter daylight hours, cold weather and fewer students walking and bicycling can make their jobs a bit lonely. Crossing Guard Appreciation Month and Day is a way to remind them that we value their service. "We know that without Crossing Guards, many students would not be able to walk or bike to school safely," remarked Rob Williams, Virginia SRTS Coordinator, "February 12 is a great opportunity to let your school's crossing guard know how much you appreciate what they do."

The Virginia Safe Routes to School program is excited to celebrate Crossing Guard Appreciation Day, and has put together template flyers and posters to spread the word, as well as thank you cards to be given to crossing guards from students, parents, and school. Over the past few weeks, parents and staff have nominated their local school crossing guards to become Virginia's Most Out-

standing Crossing Guard. The winners will be announced February 12.

### **Virginia Safe Routes uses the NHTSA Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)'s Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum, released in 2011, provides teachers with a comprehensive set of materials to teach the pedestrian safety skills to children ages K-5. The curriculum is a ready-made tool for SRTS programs, schools and teachers to encourage safe pedestrian behavior and help prepare schools and students for Safe Routes to School Events. The curriculum is organized into five lessons and has individual lessons tailored to the



Safe Routes to School Coordinators participate in a practice lesson of the NHTSA Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum.

different age groups in elementary school. The lessons are: walking near traffic, crossing streets, crossing Intersections, parking lot safety, and school bus safety. At the recent Virginia SRTS training, SRTS Coordinators learned the core concepts of the curriculum and how to teach the pedestrian safety lessons. Christy Slone, the SRTS Coordinator from Loudoun County said, "This curriculum is student friendly and contains fun activities that instill the importance of pedestrian safety."

Additionally, the SRTS coordinators from all over the state plan to incorporate the curriculum into their outreach efforts to promote Safe Routes to School and pedestrian safety. "I plan on presenting the curriculum to all Elementary PE teachers, so they can incorporate it as they see fit, especially before Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day," said Rebecca Short, the SRTS Coordinator for Prince William County Schools. "I also plan on using this curriculum at our PWPCS Health and Fitness Fair in May." Harrisonburg schools SRTS coordinator Nathan Barges plans to share the curriculum with the local Safe Kids organization who also advocate for child safety. "I look forward to meeting with the Safe Kids coordinator in Harrisonburg to see how the curriculum might strengthen their pedestrian safety program."

The curriculum is a free resource developed by NHTSA and can be downloaded in its entirety online. Check it out and see how it can fit into your school's Safe Routes to School program.

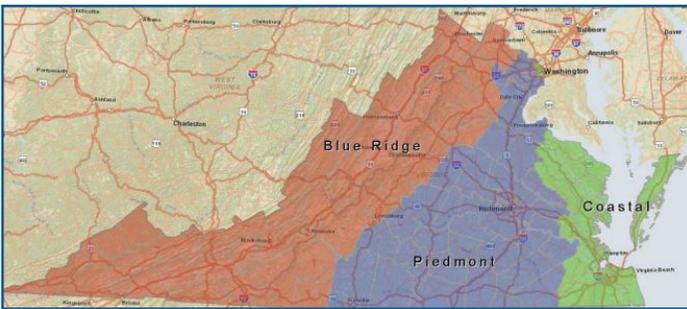
### **Bicycle Safety Webinar**

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is hosting a bicycle safety webinar on February 20, 2014 at 2:00pm. The webinar is a great way to learn about the important components of bicycle safety curricula and think through what might be best for individual programs. The webinar will also include a chat with Safe Routes to School Education experts on the various types of bicycle safety that can be taught in the classroom and the tips and tricks for programmatic success. As a bonus, attendees can ask questions about their bicycle safety programming and related issues during the webinar. Send your questions in ahead of time to [dave@saferoutespartnership.org](mailto:dave@saferoutespartnership.org).

And don't forget to register online!

### ***New LTAC Regions!***

If you've noticed a change in our local technical assistance map, you're not seeing things! We've rearranged the LTAC regions to provide better support for your SRTS program. Based on Virginia's geography, the new regions are the Coastal Region, the Piedmont Region, and the Blue Ridge Region. See who your LTAC is and give them a shout to say hello.



**Coastal Region - Katie Mencarini**  
**[Katie@VirginiaSRTS.org](mailto:Katie@VirginiaSRTS.org)**

**Piedmont Region - Jim Elliot**  
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**Blue Ridge Region - Bryan Barnett-Woods**  
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