

# Local

## Walk to School Day



Samantha O'Conner/ The Baker County Press

Students from across Baker City met at the Geiser-Pollman Park Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. for the area's first Walk to School Day. Bottom left: School Resource Officer Lance Woodward (who is likely going ice cream shopping soon.)

**BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR**  
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On Thursday, Baker City held its first Bike/Walk to School event that encourages student safety when walking or biking to school. Students, parents, and volunteers met between Geiser-Pollman Park and the Museum before school to join in the international event.

Jodi Tool, Transportation Options Coordinator for the Baker, Wallowa, and Union area, organized the event.

"I got up this morning at 5:30 and it was raining. I expected it to be small the first year, and hopefully it will build up for next year and maybe we can get the bus coordinated in here somehow next year, but I'm happy with how it is so far," said Tool.

Students walked down Grove Street to Washington then to Brooklyn Elementary. Sorbenots donated coffee for the event and students were given grapes and muffins. When signing in for the event, students were able to sign a banner for the event that

will be given to Brooklyn. Volunteering for the event were high school National Honor Society students and the Baker Bulldog. Tool also explained the Lions Club and Baker City Rotary helped with the event.

"The National Honor Society is coming to help," said High School science teacher Sharon Defrees. "They're coming out to support safe schools and safe kids, and walking to school to encourage movement and activity. I'm really excited about the turnout with Honor Society kids."

Officer Lance Woodward and Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash also volunteered at the event to escort students.

"I became involved because Jodi from Community Connections is organizing this and it's important for kids to be safe as they're commuting to school and this encourages kids, not just to take the bus, but to walk or to bike, to get some exercise, and so I think that is valuable for kids," said Woodward.

"I think it's a great turnout," said Ash at the event.

"As far as the number of kids here, there's a lot of kids here, for its first year. I think it's a very positive experience, positive for the kids, positive for the young adult helpers, and for the parents as well..."

Kassandra West-Nichols, the President of the local 96 SEIU Childcare, brought the daycare kids who go to school with her. "I think it's coming together pretty good, we have a lot of people who are still showing up and I think it's a good eye awakener for the kids to know they can go to school safely without being in a car—you just need to take appropriate actions and be aware so this is a good learning tool for them and I think it's going to be really good," said West-Nichols.

Students who brought bikes were the first group followed by the students on foot and on scooters. Leading the kids was Billie Jo Deal with the Oregon Department of Transportation. "I work with Jodi Tool and a lot of the Safe Kids North East Oregon activity, so I was really excited to be here today," said Deal.

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