

Walking for the fun of it

BY ROB SADOWSKY
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

The Willamette Pedestrian Coalition has been busy this October celebrating a new festival called

Walktober.

Modeled after the popular bicycle festival, Pedalpalooza, Walktober seeks to "promote walking as a fun, healthy, ubiquitous activity in the Portland

metro region. This is an open calendar, which means that anyone can create, post, and lead a walk." Events go through the end of the month culminating in the Bus Project's Trick or Vote on Halloween.

Folks at the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition (WPC) are trying hard to put the fun in pedestrian advocacy. Just consider the nature of the word "pedestrian." Look up the word in the dictionary and you might find the first definition as an adjective: "commonplace, unimaginative". Or look farther down and you might find the following usage example: "He lived a pedestrian life, working at the paper mill and living in his trailer."

But wait, it gets worse. Under the usage for the noun, you find "The car slid off the road and almost hit a group of pedestrians". Seriously. All thanks to Merriam-Webster.

Newspapers use the word pedestrian only when there is a crash like this recent September Oregonian headline: "Pedestrian struck, killed by car in Cowlitz County." Doesn't make you want to even admit to being a pedestrian. Yet, we all are at sometime each day, whether we drive, bike, take transit or roll along in wheelchairs.

I personally believe that walking is an absolutely fantastic activity. There may be no finer form of transportation. According

to a recent post in Portland Transport, "employees who walk to work arrive less stressed and more alert than those who drive alone. Happier employees tend to stay with their employers longer than stressed workers."

Walking in groups is an incredible powerful moment, holding a special place in history in many political movements. Walking demonstrated power in the suffragette movement, the civil rights movement and the more recent Occupy movement.

We occasionally hold walking meetings at the Bicycle Transportation Alliance. I find walking meetings as a perfect tool for reflection; for engaging in the creative process. Study after study shows sitting at a desk all day is simply unhealthy. Get up, get out and get walking.

Walking with friends, with lovers, with children are intimate experiences. I moved close to Laurelhurst Park simply because strolling amongst large trees recharges me.

Hats off and socks on to the WPC for working hard every day to make your pedestrian activities safer and for doing their best to celebrate the walk. Join them in celebrating Walktober.

You can do one of the remaining formal activities on the calendar at <http://walktoberpdx.org> or simply go out on your own.



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HEALTHY STREETBEAT

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Healthy Streetbeat is a monthly column for Street Roots written by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA). Rob Sadowsky is the executive director of BTA.

Ode to October

By Kareem Ali

Stray birds
Cannot take this wind

They scratch their eyes
Against the necks of clouds

The final sea-green leaves
Are spun into a cycle of sun

The tribe of pigeons are
Dispelled and troubled,
Tormented with things that are
And things that are not



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