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Families Enjoy Events Friday At Open Streets

Fit Kids of Southwest Oklahoma, in collaboration with the Comanche County Health Department and the City of Lawton, hosted its second Open Streets, an event that temporarily closes down streets to promote walking, dancing, cycling and other types of active play, in downtown Lawton on Friday afternoon.

Blockades were placed at various intersections along C Avenue near Central Mall creating a way for 74 organizations to set up contests and activities, most of which carried a fitness theme, for four hours. Lawtonians of all ages lined the street to participate in competitions like corn hole, football throwing and four-square, and to learn more about the services of various nonprofits and businesses in the Lawton area.



Ashley Lazzerini of the Comanche County Health Department, left, challenges youngster Kaitelyn Alexander to 10 sit-ups during Friday's Open Streets event.

After the walking and workout sessions, Open Street goers could venture toward the west end of the avenue where food trucks were parked. The community celebration had a little something for everyone.

"We have had great feedback from the community on Open Streets," said coordinator Ashley Green, of the healthy living program at the Comanche County Health Department. "Last time we had about 40 organizations and businesses be a part of Open Streets, so we have nearly doubled with 74 today. It's exciting. It gives kids and families a chance to get out and play some games or do some things they normally wouldn't do at home or in their own neighborhoods."

Much of the game playing was complemented by an element of education, as well. Volunteer Sandra Copley, who stood beneath the Comanche County Humane Society tent on Friday, expressed her motivation for setting up at the event.

"I think it's important for us to be out here because we want kids and families to know who we are and what we are about," Copley said. "We have coloring pages and games set up for kids to help them learn about us. I think kids are the future of animals. They need to learn that animals are not disposable. That's why we are out here, to help teach them that."

Attendees such as Brittany Burrison saw the benefits of both learning and playing at Open Streets. She ventured to Open Streets with her children, mother and husband and said she hopes Lawton will be able to host similar events in the future.

"I would definitely come again," Burrison said, watching her daughter play. "I brought my daughter out so she can run around and be a part of everything. I like bringing (my kids) to stuff like this so they get to meet new people and try different things. It means a lot to me to watch them smile and have fun like this."

Lawton Police Chief James T. Smith also made an appearance, mingling with the crowd and exploring a mix of booths, tents and trucks. He said Open Streets provides a safe and welcoming environment for Lawton families to come together and enjoy the downtown Lawton atmosphere.