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## Open Streets Event Seeks To Unite Families In Healthy Fun

Bicycles, basketballs, building blocks and heaps of happy children lined C Avenue Saturday afternoon during the Lawton's first Open Streets event of 2016.

The health-based initiative temporarily closes down streets to promote walking, dancing, cycling and other types of active play. Coordinated by Fit Kids of Southwest Oklahoma, the Comanche County Health Department and the City of Lawton, Open Streets is a multi-layered community effort with more than 100 documented initiatives in North America alone.



Two-year-old Georgia Jeffrey tries to catch bubbles on C Avenue.

"We have sectioned off this street into different zones," said Tanner Wade Jr., City of Lawton Ward 5 councilman and Open Streets volunteer. "There's the chill zone you can kind of go down there and hang out and get something to eat. We'll have live music there later today. There's the play zone kids come in and have some games to play, booths to visit and then there's the active zone to the east, with more of a focus on activeness and fitness. It's an event that's really fun and it's totally free to the public."

Wade said several thousand people attended the event Saturday. He and other coordinators believe it was the greatest Open Streets turnout yet. Nearly 70 vendors and organizations signed up to take part and, for the first time, the event extended by blocking off the intersection of C Avenue and Fifth Street. Green said a team of 20 coordinators partnered with community business and the Sports and Exercise Science Department of Cameron University to make the event possible. Financial Sponsors included Academy Sports and Outdoors, MedExpress, City National Bank, GNC, Muscle-Tech and Nissan of Lawton.

"I think Open Streets is gaining a lot of momentum in the community and it will hopefully be sustainable over time," said coordinator Ashley Green, wellness coordinator for the Comanche County Health Department. "This time it looks like people are really getting the hang of it and learning to come out here and really play and enjoy themselves. The plan is to have an Open Streets event once a quarter so we will see where it goes from there."