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Kids walk to school, then around it

When Mayor Bob Coburn visited Irving Elementary on Wednesday for Walk to School Day, many students already had done it.

“I like walking to school,” said sixth-grader Nicole Jones, who lives a few blocks north of the school. “I like the fresh air and I don’t like the smell of cars.”

Nicole joined Coburn and about 270 Irving students for a walk around the school Wednesday morning. The Walk to School Day event was held to encourage healthy habits. It was organized by Action in Muskogee, the City of Muskogee Wellness Initiative and Muskogee County Turning Point.

“I came out here to get some exercise,” Coburn said. “I want to show that there are a lot of opportunities for walkers, for runners and for bicyclists. The students can learn habits that will carry them in future years, maybe into their adult life.”

Doug Walton, Turning Point’s food and fitness coordinator, said five Muskogee elementary schools participated in Walk to School Day—Irving, Whittier, Tony Goetz, Cherokee and Hilldale.

“Last year we only had one site in Muskogee Public Schools, so we’re growing it,” he said.

Hilldale reported 200 walkers, he said.

The Irving walkers made up most of the student body. Principal Kim Fleak said the school has 382 students.

About 175 Irving students walk to school regularly, she said.

“We are one of the mostly neighborhood schools in the district,” Fleak said.

Students who walked to school Wednesday received stickers and glow-in-the-dark zipper pulls.

Fleak said the school surveyed parents about the walking potential of their neighborhoods.

“The survey showed we need more sidewalks,” she said. “We need volunteers within our neighborhoods to help watch our kids, help out with the safety issues.”

Walton said the city of Muskogee also is studying “walkability” in the neighborhoods of Irving, Cherokee and Whittier elementary schools. The study involved a survey of parents about the safety and condition of the neighborhoods.

“We’re getting our surveys back,” he said. “We asked our parents if their kids walk to school. If they don’t allow their kids to walk to school, why not?”



Irving Elementary Principal Kim Fleak and Mayor Bob Coburn lead nearly 270 Irving students, plus teachers and visitors, on a walk around the school Wednesday. Irving was one of five Muskogee schools that participated in Walk to School Day on Wednesday.

Walton had said earlier that the city wants to determine any barriers to walking safely to school. Barriers could be a lack of sidewalks or the presence of bullies or mean dogs, he said.

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