



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 10, 2006

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**COLORADO WALKS
GOLDEN FOOTPRINT AWARDS**

WHO: Colorado Walks, the statewide nonprofit organization that promotes and encourages walking for health, fitness, and transportation and envisions more walkable communities in Colorado and more people walking.

WHAT: Golden Footprint Award Ceremony and Press Conference

The Golden Footprint Awards are presented to individuals, groups, or organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to walking for health, fitness, and transportation in Colorado. They exemplify the dedication the award recipients have to maintaining and improving our Colorado lifestyle.

WHEN: Thursday, October 12, 2006
9:30 – 10:00 AM

WHERE: West steps of the State Capitol (or Senate Committee Room 353 in inclement weather) – Denver, Colorado

AGENDA:	9:30	Welcome	Gay Page President, Colorado Walks
	9:35	Comments	Tom Selders Mayor, City of Greeley
	9:45	Awards Presentation Landon Hilliard Denise Retzlaff Kelly Ann Tracer	Jack Pommer State Representative Colorado General Assembly
	10:00	Conclusion	Gay Page

ABOUT COLORADO WALKS – GOLDEN FOOTPRINT AWARDS

Colorado Walks is proud to announce the recipients of the 2006 Golden Footprint Awards. The individuals selected to receive the awards have demonstrated exemplary accomplishments in providing opportunities for community members to improve their health and fitness through walking. The integration of walking into contemporary community life, and the combination of innovative, creative, and responsible approaches taken by this year's award winners will be recognized at the award ceremony on Thursday, October 12, 2006, 9:30 AM, at the State Capitol in Denver.

Awarded annually to individuals, groups, or organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to walking for health, fitness, and transportation in Colorado, the Golden Footprint Awards symbolize the dedication these award recipients have to maintaining and improving our Colorado lifestyle. The 2006 award winners are:

- ♦ **Landon Hilliard**, School Transportation Coordinator, Boulder Valley School District

Landon was selected because of his commitment to providing children in the Boulder Valley School District with the opportunity to safely walk and bicycle to school on a daily basis. He is responsible for system wide implementation of International Walk to School Day for the last six years.

- ♦ **Denise Retzlaff**, Project Coordinator, Steps to a Healthier Weld County, Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment

Denise was selected for her vision in founding Weld Walks. Denise is responsible for bringing together a countywide coalition of partners to develop programs for Weld County residents that promote walking for health, fitness, and transportation.

- ♦ **Kelly Ann Tracer**, Managing Editor, The Greeley Tribune

Kelly is an outstanding example of how one person can make a difference. Through collaboration with Weld Walks, she established the Weld County "Around the World Walking Challenge," giving community members the opportunity to join together to virtually walk around the world in 92 days between October 1 and December 31, 2006. Kelly has already announced her next challenge will be walking one million miles!

AWARD RECIPIENT BIOS

Landon Hilliard grew up in New York City and learned early about the practicality of walking. By fourth grade, having proved his "street smarts," his parents granted him the freedom to walk to school alone with its seven street crossings. Walking to and from school everyday, even with a heavy briefcase and trumpet, would prepare him well for his work life. In the fall of 2001, he stepped into a school-based outreach and educational position formed by a partnership between the Boulder Valley School District and the City of Boulder. Landing this federally funded job was a fortunate twist. As a cycling advocate in the late 1990s, Landon had led a letter writing campaign to members of the U.S. Congress who eventually approved the Federal Transportation Act that would fund the grant under which he was now working. Since 2001, one might say that Landon has developed professionally right along with the growth of International Walk to School Day. Each year, more students and parents in the Boulder Valley School District join the movement to see for themselves the benefits of walking and cycling to school. The school community increasingly supports "active transportation" and Landon aims to keep the momentum rolling. In his spare time, Landon likes to walk with his wife and young daughters and lay flat on the sofa after a hard day's work.

Denise Retzlaff is Project Coordinator for Steps to a Healthier Weld County, which focuses on asthma, diabetes and obesity prevention through the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment in Greeley, Colorado. A Registered Nurse with over 32 years of nursing, health care, and management experience, Denise went to nursing school in Sharon Pennsylvania and has a Masters in Public Health degree from the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). In her spare time, Denise is walked by her dog Zoey. According to Denise, "Dogs instinctually know more about walking than humans will ever comprehend. Their tails wag with excitement if you even touch their leash and they are always eager to enjoy the outdoors no matter what the weather. Walking with my dog is a healthy habit and it brings simple pleasure by allowing me to have quiet moments of reflection and gratitude for this beautiful world we live in. If we could bottle up a dog's enthusiasm about walking and market it, we would have a healthier community. Walking is a near perfect form of exercise – just ask any dog." Denise and her family have lived in Greeley since 1989 and she has three children, Brittany, a recent UNC graduate working in Denver; Brendan, a Senior Airman with the USAF; and Nikolai a freshman at University Schools in Greeley. Denise also enjoys quilting and reading.

Kelly Ann Tracer joined the Greeley (Colo.) Tribune in March 1998 as a copy editor. In her first five years at the Tribune, she was promoted to assistant news editor and later sports editor. Now serving as managing editor, she supervises the day-to-day operations of the newsroom. A native of Omaha, Neb., she received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1994. She is currently coordinating the "Around the World in 92 Days" challenge in which the Tribune is challenging the people of Weld County to walk and log enough miles to circle the globe. She and her husband, Matt Tracer, have two children and live in Greeley.

TALKING POINTS

Walking contributes to improved health, safer streets, stronger communities, and a cleaner natural environment. It is the original and innate mode of transportation for human beings, and unfortunately, due to the conveniences of modern society, we have engineered walking out of our daily lives and the lack of physical activity is taking a toll on our bodies.

Thirty percent of U.S. adults 20 years of age and older—over 60 million people—are obese and the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled since 1980. Among children and teens aged 6–19 years, 16 percent (over 9 million young people) are considered overweight (National Center for Health Statistics).

The Women's Heart Foundation reports that cardiovascular disease affects nearly 5 million Americans, but the good news is that according to the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research, walking at least half an hour, six days a week, can cut mortality rates from heart disease in half.

Walking is an ideal low impact exercise that has multiple health benefits such as the ability to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, lower total cholesterol, raise healthy HDL cholesterol, lower blood pressure, maintain healthy bones and muscles, stabilize blood sugar, improve immunity, and relieve stress (Women's Heart Foundation). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American College of Sports Medicine recommend that adults engage in moderate intensity physical activities for at least 30 minutes on five or more days of the week and children and adolescents participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily.

Trends in School Travel

Fewer children walk or bicycle to school than did so a generation ago

- In 2001, 16 percent of students between the ages of 5 and 15 walked or bicycled to or from school.
- In 1969, 42 percent of students walked or bicycled to school.ⁱ
- This is an opportunity lost. Walking or bicycling to school gives children time for physical activity and a sense of responsibility and independence; allows them to enjoy being outside; and provides them with time to socialize with their parents and friends and to get to know their neighborhoods. The entire community benefits when there is less traffic congestion and improved air quality as a result of fewer vehicles on the road
- As much as twenty-five percent of morning rush hour traffic can be school-related.^{ii iii}
- Traffic can lead to even less walking or bicycling. As more children are driven, more parents become convinced that traffic conditions make it unsafe for walking or bicycling and they join the line of cars at the school.
- If more children walked or bicycled to school, it would reduce the number of cars near the school at pick-up and drop-off times making it safer for walkers and bicyclists and reducing traffic congestion.

It takes about five to ten minutes for children to walk a quarter of a mile or bicycle an entire mile.

- Walking or bicycling to and from school is an easy way for children to get some physical activity each day, which all children need.

School districts across the country are feeling the strain on school transportation budgets because of increased fuel prices.

- Walking and bicycling to school offers a no-cost or low-cost alternative to bus and passenger vehicle transportation.

Safety

Walking and bicycling need to be safe transportation options, which means creating safe environments and teaching safety skills to walkers, bicyclists and motor vehicle drivers. Each year in the United States, an estimated 5,700 pedestrians are killed, including more than 800 children. Children are most vulnerable, because they walk to and from neighborhood schools during the busiest times of the day when motorists are rushing to and from work. Hundreds of children and adults could be saved each year if every community made pedestrian safety a priority.

Safe walking and bicycling environments include:

- Neighborhood schools that are within walking and bicycling distance from homes
- Sidewalks or bicycle-paths that connect homes with schools, community centers, and other neighborhood destinations
- Improved opportunities to cross streets (such as the presence of adult crossing guards, raised medians or traffic and pedestrian signals)
- Slow vehicle speeds accomplished through roadway safety measures (traffic calming) and/or police enforcement where needed

Vehicle speed is a key element in safety. Driving slower saves lives.

A pedestrian hit by a car traveling 40 mph has a mere 15 percent chance of survival. At 30 mph, those odds increase to 45 percent. By contrast, a pedestrian has an 85 percent chance of survival if hit by a car moving at 20 mph.^{iv}

Safety education includes working with:

- Children - to provide them with basic safety education, such as how to choose where to walk and cross streets, obey crossing guards, and be visible to drivers.
- Parents - to create awareness of the need for pedestrian and bicyclist safety education and opportunities to walk and bicycle and the importance of practicing safety skills with their children.
- Drivers - to alert all drivers to the presence of walkers and bicyclists and the need to slow down.
- Law enforcement - to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety with school zone enforcement.

- Local officials - to identify changes needed to improve walking and bicycling conditions around schools.

Teaching children walking and bicycling safety skills can help create lifelong traffic skills.

Physical Activity

Most kids are not getting the exercise they need.

- Among 9 to 13 year-old children, 61.5 percent do not engage in organized physical activity during non-school hours; 22.6 percent do not participate in any free-time physical activity.^v
- As age or grade in school increases, physical activity participation drastically declines.^{vi}
- Experts recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.^{vii}

Less active children are more likely to be overweight.^{viii}

The percentage of overweight children aged 6 to 11 years old has approximately tripled over the past 30 years.

- According to 2003 - 2004 data, 19 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years old are overweight.^{ix}

Walking to school is associated with higher overall physical activity throughout the day.^x

^{xi}

Teens aged 15 – 17 in low income households are 50 percent more likely to be overweight than other teens.^{xii}

Research shows that overweight children are at increased risk of becoming overweight adults.^{xiii}

Potential benefits of physical activity for youth include:^{xiv,xv}

- Weight and blood pressure control
- Bone, muscle, and joint health and maintenance
- Reduction in the risk of diabetes
- Improved psychological welfare
- Better academic performance^{xvi}

Environment and Air Quality

Each year, automobiles emit millions of tons of pollutants into the air.

- Auto emissions have risen in many parts of the country because of the doubling of miles traveled over the past two decades.^{xvii}

Air pollutants can be especially harmful to children because their respiratory systems are still developing.

- Air pollution can exacerbate chronic respiratory conditions, such as asthma.^{xviii}
- The increases in rates of asthma in this country are alarming: Over the last 25 years, among children ages 5 to 14, there has been a 74 percent increase, and a 160 percent increase in children up to age 4.^{xix}
- In addition, 14 million days of school are missed every year due to asthma.^{xx}

Schools placed in neighborhoods near residential areas with a good street and sidewalk network have more students arriving by bicycle and on foot. Air quality is measurably better at such locations.^{xxi}

Schools today are often built on the edges of communities, making them too far for more kids to walk and bicycle compared to neighborhood schools.

- The U.S. Department of Education estimates that the U.S. student enrollment will grow by over 1.7 million between 2000 and 2006.^{xxii}
- As a result, many new schools will be constructed and the location of these schools can dictate whether students are able to walk or bicycle.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are sustained efforts by parents, other community members, community leaders and local, state, and federal governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school.

- In July 2005, Congress passed federal legislation that established a national Safe Routes to School program. The program dedicates a total of \$612 million towards SRTS from 2005 to 2009.
- In May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School was established to assist communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The National Center for Safe Routes to School is maintained by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.
- Many communities launch Safe Routes to School programs because of Walk to School events.

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