

Blue Zones

‘When you eat a meal in a hurry or with pent-up worry, stress hormones like cortisol interfere with the digestive process.’— Dan Buettner, Blue Zones founder

Support International School Walking Day on Oct. 2



On Oct. 2, Blue Zones Project and Safe Routes to School will support International Walking to School Day in Collier and Lee Counties. Since 1997, this day has worked to provide schoolchildren with the opportunity to walk or bike to school safely with the help of organizations in the community. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



By Joseph Stoner
Special to Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK —
FLORIDA

“Anachronism”: A thing belonging to another period other than that in which it exists; conspicuously old fashioned.

Such is the fate of students walking to Southwest Florida schools in 2019. Despite our idyllic visions of our kids waking up in the morning, grabbing their lunch bags and walking off to school, there are legitimate reasons why fewer kids are getting in those extra steps to class.

A few of these are: heavily trafficked roadways, a lack of sidewalks, earlier starting times for schools, both parents working, and a conscientious attitude toward children’s safety. Due to all these reasons and more, the sight of children walking to school in the

morning has become a scene from the distant past.

On Oct. 2, Blue Zones Project and Safe Routes to School will support International Walking to School Day in Collier and Lee counties. Since 1997, this day has worked to provide school children with the opportunity to walk or bike to school safely with the help of organizations in the community.

Last year, according to Safe Routes to School Director, Jodi Walborn, 3,000 backpacks were stuffed with reflectors and safety information. These were provided to elementary and middle school students throughout Southwest Florida, with the support of Blue Zones Project staff and volunteers.

We hope that International Walk to School Day encourages students to walk to school, but if that just isn’t possible, they can also try to get to school earlier. Even a bit more active time before or after school can positively im-

pact childhood obesity rates and increase the odds that healthy children become healthy adults.

Many schools provide opportunities for students to walk on campus before or after school, typically taking between 15 to 20 minutes to do so. Often, parents and guardians are invited to walk with them. Some schools even offer volunteer hours to parents or other guests who walk with students.

Make it a special day on Oct. 2 for school children who walk to school or walk on school campus. If your child’s school is observing National Walk to School Day, please volunteer and join in on the fun.

Do your part to carry the meaning of this day throughout the year, to help make it the safest and healthiest school year yet.

Joseph Stoner is schools coordinator for Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida.