

Article published May 12, 2006

Pedestrian safety program to hold walk

Special to the Times-News

The Walk Wise, Drive Smart program will hold a community walk Saturday at Jackson Park to raise awareness of the need for improved walking conditions for senior pedestrians, and to encourage walking.

Open to the public, the event features three walks of varying lengths and for people of all ages and walking levels. Each walk begins at Shelter 2. The event begins at 9 a.m. "The goal for the year-long Walk Wise, Drive Smart program is to improve the walking environment in Hendersonville to enable residents, especially senior adults, to enjoy physically and mentally healthy activities, to be better connected to the community and to choose to be less dependent upon an automobile," said Bill Hunter, program director for Walk Wise, Drive Smart.

Hendersonville City Manager Chris Carter will speak about ways community residents and officials are helping shape plans for creating a safer and more inviting walking environment.

All attendees will receive a choice of walk-friendly giveaways, such as T-shirts, hats and retro-reflective wrist bands, as well as a pedometer from the AARP. There will also be drawings for gift certificates to both Piggy's and Sinbad restaurants, gift certificates to R.C. Fisher Goldsmith Jewelers and Bella Diva's Day Retreat and tickets for two to the Biltmore Estate.

Walk Wise, Drive Smart is part of Henderson County's Livable and Senior Friendly Communities Initiative, a project of the Henderson County Council on Aging.

The Walk Wise, Drive Smart program plans to implement the "four E's" over the upcoming year -- environment, education, enforcement and encouragement. These consist of improving the walking environment, educating the public about the benefits of walking, advocating the enforcement of laws that will improve pedestrian safety and encouraging walking within the community.

Walk Wise, Drive Smart also will target smart drivers at upcoming events.

"The City of Hendersonville Police Department will provide support and encouragement for this older pedestrian safety program," said Hendersonville Police Chief Donnie Parks.

The kickoff event follows a series of workshops that took place this spring. The initial workshop, Safe Routes for Seniors, gathered residents and leaders to identify barriers and stimulate action plans for teaching pedestrian safety, constructing wider sidewalks, working with law enforcement to slow traffic and initiating walking clubs and contests.

Improving the pedestrian environment in Hendersonville will benefit not only senior adults but also all residents and visitors. The success of the Walk Wise, Drive Smart program depends on the involvement of the entire community and the support of our partners at a state and local level, Hunter said.

For more information, visit www.walk-wise.org for further information.