

FootNotes

Promoting Walkable Communities



WSD Project Coordinator Kristin Mueller poses in front of Harborside Elementary in Chula Vista, site of her most recent work.

Kristin Mueller joins WSD team

WalkSanDiego is excited to welcome Kristin Mueller as our new Project Coordinator in the South Bay.

Kristin's impressive resume includes a Biology degree from UCSD, a Masters in Public Health, and a stint as a Fulbright Scholar conducting community outreach on HIV education and prevention in Oaxaca, Mexico.

She has traveled throughout Guatemala and Nicaragua and served as a volunteer interpreter for a free health clinic in Managua, Nicaragua. Kristin has quickly immersed herself in a walkability improvement effort in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood in West Chula Vista.

Welcome aboard Kristin!

Big grants enable WSD to add staff, office space

Nationwide search underway for new executive director

In February, WalkSanDiego received large grants from The California Endowment (TCE) and Kaiser Permanente – funds that greatly expand our capacity. As a result, WalkSanDiego will soon open its first office and hire a full-time executive director.

Current Executive Director Tina Zenzola will be moving on to other projects as she wraps up her contract with WalkSanDiego. A nationwide search is now underway to find her replacement.

WalkSanDiego President Andy Pendoley said that both grants are from health-based philanthropies investing in WalkSanDiego's capacity to work with neighborhoods.

"The health community really understands the critical need for walkability," Pendoley said. "The Kaiser grant continues and expands our work with the City of Chula Vista and Latino neighborhoods in the South Bay. The TCE grant allows us to expand our executive director position to full-time, increase our fundraising capability, conduct strategic planning, and systematically evaluate our strategies."

The grants will also enable WalkSanDiego to expand its successful intervention model in low income communities to more neighborhoods around the region.



Would European traffic safety approach work here?



The human and financial toll of traffic fatalities annually in the United States – 43,000 deaths and 2.7 million injuries at a cost of about \$230 billion – is a staggering price to pay for driver “freedom”.

WalkSanDiego and its parent coalition, America Walks, have joined the growing call for more effective traffic safety.

The U. S.’s traditional approach is to tinker with vehicle technology – seat belts, air bags, bumpers, and soon, crash warning systems. But European countries have been far more successful by targeting human behaviors that trigger collisions in the first place.

For example, in the Netherlands, the annual number of traffic fatalities has declined over 30 years by 75%. Today that country has one of the lowest per capita traffic fatality rates in the world.

Dutch safety measures include changing road design to limit vehicle speeds, prohibiting the use of electronic devices while driving, and extensive pedestrian and bicycling facilities. A strict police enforcement program, including random sobriety



Traffic-calmed La Jolla Boulevard allows drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians to safely share the street.

checks and cameras that automatically identify speeders, means offenders have a very good chance of being caught.

By contrast, many U.S. states actually prohibit these interventions, and only meager resources are devoted to pedestrian and bike paths.

To change the U.S. paradigm, a new “traffic justice” initiative was launched in 2006 by the National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW), a nonprofit group in Bethesda, Maryland.

“With the exception of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), we don’t look at the root cause of the crash,” said Bob Chauncy of the NCBW.

David Willis, a senior research scientist at the Texas

Transportation Institute agreed. He reported that 40% of fatal crashes in the United States are caused by excessive speed.

“Unlike almost every other civilized society in the world,” he said, “we don’t focus on driver behavior – we focus on vehicle design.”

WalkSanDiego’s model of changing the street environment for safe walking also works for safer driving, bicycling, and other modes.

WalkSanDiego believes the staggering toll in deaths, injuries, property damage, suppressed physical activity, and now global warming emissions, are no longer acceptable.

WalkSanDiego intends to be part of the solution.

'De-pedestri-fication' contributes to obesity epidemic in America

SDSU Professor Dr. James Sallis presented research to date on the link between neighborhood environments, physical activity, and health at WalkSanDiego's March 2007 Brown Bag forum.

In his talk "Research on Built Environments and

Walking: Are Results Getting Better or Worse?", Dr. Sallis said that physical activity is one of the most critical health problems of our time, but convincing busy people to be active when their environment doesn't support it is nearly impossible.

In 2002, the World Health Organization attributed 2 million deaths to inactivity. Sadly, despite years of promotional campaigns touting its health benefits, physical activity for the U.S. overall has remained a steady 20% of the population since 1986.

The U.S. has gone through what Dr. Sallis has termed "depedestri-fication" — Americans have become almost solely dependent upon motorized vehicles as a means of transportation.

He reported a dramatic increase in research exploring the links between health outcomes and neighborhood form, the presence of trails, parks, and playgrounds, and other physical activity opportunities.

Dr. Sallis presented a brief preview of his Neighborhood Quality of Life Study (NQLS), which thus far has shown a positive correlation between high walkability neighborhoods and the amount of physical activity residents get.

The research also suggests people walk more with increasing environmental supports in place — sidewalks, mixed land uses, street connectivity, parks or trails nearby and aesthetically pleasing features.

"Just building sidewalks is not enough," he explained. "You need seven or eight key walkability factors to get people out walking."



Chula Vista residents find the automobile-oriented environment around "big box" retail stores discourages walking.

Brain breakthrough points to physical activity as crucial

In a recent landmark paper, researchers announced that they had coaxed the human brain into growing new nerve cells, a process that for decades had been thought impossible, simply by putting subjects on a three-month aerobic-workout regimen.

Other scientists have found that vigorous exercise can cause older nerve cells to form dense, interconnected webs that make the brain run faster and more efficiently.

And there are clues that physical activity can stave off the beginnings of Alzheimer's disease, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and other cognitive disorders.

No matter what your age, it seems, a strong, active body is crucial for building a strong, active mind.

For more information, see special coverage of the subject in the March 26, 2007 issue of *Newsweek Magazine*.



Kristin Mueller considers safety improvements at an important access point to a park in Torrey Hills (City of San Diego).

WalkSanDiego Consulting Activities

While our most visible work has taken place in Chula Vista, we continue to work with neighborhoods around the region, sometimes on a consulting basis.

WalkSanDiego is building its consulting practice as a way to work more directly on the pedestrian environment, and as a source of revenue.

This page highlights a few of WSD's current projects.

In Torrey Hills, we were retained by a condominium developer to work with residents on pedestrian improvements and traffic calming near Torrey Hills Elementary School. Our joint recommendations included corner bulb-outs, new marked crosswalks, and the extension of a grassy median.

We worked with the Uptown Partnership, Inc., residents, merchants, and a city engineer on improvements in the 5-Points area of San Diego at Washington and India Streets. The area features popular restaurants, stores, and a historic staircase.

A separate project with the Uptown Partnership will include refinements to a walkability and traffic calming plan for Park West and Hillcrest Village. For this project, WalkSanDiego is a subconsultant to RBF Consulting.

WSD joined with Alta Planning & Design on two projects. The first is a California-funded research project to count pedestrian and bicycle trips in diverse locations throughout the region. The project will help refine counting methods, and the San Diego region was fortunate to be chosen as the testing ground. WSD is helping on three tasks: selecting count locations, quality-assuring the data, and interpreting the results.

Alta recruited WSD to serve on a team to create a Pedestrian Master Plan for the City of Carlsbad. Last year, WSD was involved in creating a similar plan for the City of San Diego.

Pedestrian tragedy hits close to home

WalkSanDiego member Ted Bunce reports that he lost a dear friend to a careless SUV driver on December 13, 2006.

Julio Acosta Ruiz, 35, was struck as he walked in a crosswalk at Falcon and Washington Streets in Mission Hills. He died 10 days later from head injuries.

The SUV driver was making a left hand turn and talking on a cell phone; Ruiz had the green light. Mr. Bunce told us, "I've contacted Councilmember Kevin Falconer, Councilmember Toni Atkins, the District Attorney's Office, and all the newspapers. Julio was a wonderful, remarkable person — his death should not go unprosecuted."

San Diego ranks third in the nation in the percentage of traffic fatalities that are pedestrians (22.5%). The region is also among the highest in the state in the percentage of pedestrian crashes (20%) involving hit-and-run drivers.



WANTED

WalkSanDiego
board members

As WalkSanDiego matures, new skills need to be added to our board to expand our scope of services. We're currently on the look-out for prospective board members with skills in accounting, bookkeeping, the law, or real estate.

If you are interested in promoting walking, please contact us by e-mail at calmtraffic@walksandiego.org.

Become a Member of WalkSanDiego

To join, fill out and mail this form with your check.
Or join on our secure website, www.walksandiego.org.

Membership in **WalkSanDiego**:

- Entitles you to free admission to walks, talks, and training events.
- Strengthens the pedestrian voice of the region.
- Gives you a "seat at the table" of agencies allocating the region's transportation funds.
- Provides you the know-how to make changes in your community.

Name _____

Address _____

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Walking interests _____

- Individual - \$25 Family - \$40
- Benefactor - \$50+ Sponsor - \$100
- Student, senior or treading lightly - \$10
- Small business member - \$100
- Corporate member - \$500-\$2,000+

Send to: WalkSanDiego
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'Keep those donations coming!' says the IRS

While we're extremely gratified to attract major grants, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules require us to obtain at least one third of our revenues from "public sources."

As a result, WalkSanDiego President Andy Pendoley set up a new Sustainability Committee that will work to increase member donations and corporate sponsorships.

"It will be challenging to balance these grants with new donations, but we're confident the public and businesses will come forward to support us," he explained.

So, when you receive your renewal notice, please respond generously.

If you're not yet a member, please join us by completing and returning the membership form included in this newsletter or, if you prefer, by clicking on the "Donate Now!" button at www.walksandiego.org.

New 4-legged Member



WalkSanDiego Boardmember David Hopkins with his lovable new seeing-eye-dog, Katie.



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