

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Town Center
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March 24, 2016

Dear Bedford Citizen,

I am writing to add to the history of the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) alluded to in a letter to the editor from Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) Chair Terry Gleason. While Mr. Gleason is correct that much of the initial success of the program in Bedford was due to the strong participation of Lane School and its Principal Rob Ackerman, he implies that the Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway (FMB) were the primary initiators of that program and that is not the case.

BAC and FMB were stalwart partners in initially supporting SRTS with a core group of representatives from town boards and committees focused on addressing the rise in childhood obesity rates. Primary among the that initial group called the "Youth Task Force" was then Board of Health member Lea Susan Ojamaa, a Bedford resident who also worked for Massachusetts Department of Public Health and had first-hand information about the data associated with increase in Body Mass Index of Massachusetts children and youth. With representatives from School Committee, Police, Recreation, and Youth and Family Services, Ms. Ojamaa proposed Bedford's participation in the Massachusetts SRTS program. For the first few years we were fortunate to have Mr. Gleason and several members of BAC and FMB join the effort as well and offer to chaperone youth from the Marshall's parking lot to Lane School, helping with helmet adjustment, tire pressure, and a host of other bicycling challenges.

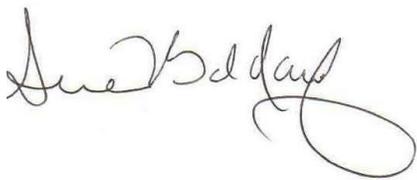
Seeing the enthusiasm and need for coordination, the Youth Task Force applied for and received grant funding from Community Health Network 15 for a small amount of money for a coordinator to grow and expand the SRTS program to all eligible schools in Bedford. Lane was the first school to sign on, John Glenn Middle was next, and Davis was third. In addition to Principal Ackerman, Principal Kevin Tracey and Assistant Principals Andrea Salipante and

Keith Kinney are also supportive of SRTS and are regularly present and involved in SRTS events. High schools are not eligible for the Massachusetts SRTS program though they were certainly supportive as well.

That coordination effort has been crucial to the development of the SRTS program and its education of parents and the community about the on-going positive health benefits of walking and/or biking to school. In fact, that part time coordination effort led to the SRTS infrastructure project funded by MA DOT and several more grants and opportunities for Bedford, including the development of Bedford in Motion and its website, the Healthy Bedford Task Force and its Planning and Implementation efforts, the Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan, and the Healthy Dining Program, to name a sample. Bedford now has a Healthy Communities Coordinator who continues to work and collaborate across all boards and committees to further the health of the community in these efforts as well as new initiatives like the Walk-About efforts with Economic Development, Recreation, and the Bedford Chamber of Commerce, the Park and Pedal Program in conjunction with Public Works, and the circulator bus proposal with the Selectmen.

We are pleased that BAC and FMB are so enthusiastic about the SRTS program and hope they continue to be. Certainly we see how the efforts at Lane have increased the number of bicycles at the middle school and high school over the years of building the program and believe the work at Davis the last several years will likewise expand capacity up to Lane and the other schools. The funding of the SRTS Infrastructure Project proposed to increase the safety from the Great Road to the middle school is further testament to the success created by helping students walk and bike to school safely in Bedford. It has been a group effort by many folks in town, all of whom deserve a round of applause!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Baldauf". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Sue Baldauf, Youth & Family Services Director
On behalf of Youth Task Force