

## Speaker Biographies – Safe Routes 5 E's Conference 2011

**Alexis Kelso, Safe Routes Coordinator, WALKSacramento**, grew up in Calaveras County. She moved to Sacramento in 2008 to attend Sacramento State. She began working as an intern for WALKSacramento in March 2009 and upon receiving her B.A. in Geography was hired as the Safe Routes Coordinator in May 2009. Alexis is coordinating the Sacramento Safe Routes to School Conference to be held in late 2011 and is the primary report writer for WALKSacramento's Safe Routes Five E's program. She is also developing the Master Plan for the Citrus Heights Safe Routes to School program. She helps with website maintenance.

**Lauren Ledbetter, AICP**, is an Associate at Alta Planning + Design's Berkeley office. Her expertise includes bicycle master plans, pedestrian master plans, Safe Routes to School programs, and program evaluation. She has worked on Safe Routes to Schools projects throughout the state of California, developing educational and encouragement programs, conducting walking audits, identifying and prioritizing engineering improvements and writing grants. Lauren has secured several million in Safe Routes to School grant funding for Alta's clients. Lauren sees her work at Alta as "my small way of contributing to the greater good of society and improving our ability to coexist with the natural world." Alta specializes in non-motorized transportation planning and design, to create active communities where bicycling and walking are safe, healthy, fun, and normal daily activities.

**Mellissa Meng, North Natomas Transportation Management Association**, has spent several years working in North Natomas, a community in northern Sacramento, to establish Walk and Bike to School programming. One of her passions is to encourage and educate children and their families to get out of their cars and to connect with the outdoors, better their health, get to know their neighbors and for the sheer joy of it. One of the best parts of her job is helping to instill the love of cycling in children. Through a program called, Project Ride Smart, she teaches hundreds of children to ride safely on the roadway, using the rules of the road.

Prior to working at the NNTMA, Mellissa promoted healthy eating and physical activity throughout Gold Country region, as well as managing various conservation and pollution prevention programs in Sacramento and Santa Cruz.

**Sonja Atkins** is the **Coordinator for Safe Kids Greater Sacramento** led by Mercy San Juan Medical Center. She has been in the injury prevention field for over 10 year and has developed, implemented and evaluated multiple injury prevention programs, led state-wide legislative efforts and built various collaborations aimed to reduce childhood injuries and deaths. She is a nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technician Instructor and Safe Kids Senior Checker. By using International Walk to School Day as a kick-off event, she has developed a year-round Walking Wednesdays program for a local elementary school. Data from the program was used to apply for a Safe Routes to School grant to continue safety education and to make street improvements around the neighborhood. She previously worked for the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and SETA Head Start.

**Terry Preston, Complete Streets Coordinator, WALKSacramento**, has served as a community organizer, advocate and policy wonk on behalf of safe, healthy, active public spaces for over twenty years. He served as a legislative assistant to Assemblymember Elihu Harris, future mayor of Oakland, then worked on numerous political campaigns to get funding for parks, libraries and open space. Service as a staff AmeriCorps project manager with the East Bay Conservation Corps in Oakland, California public schools demonstrated the need for healthy, active communities for all children. It was here that Terry took part in his first Walk to School Day event. Terry served as communication director for Greenbelt Alliance, building support for walkable communities, and moved on to serving as a trainer, advocate and transportation policy coordinator with community non-profit Odyssey after moving to Sacramento ten years ago. Terry came to WALKSacramento from serving as a volunteer parent coordinator of a WALKSacramento-supported Walk to School program in Natomas. Terry raised funds, organized parents and community members, worked with school staff and developed outreach campaigns for the project. He now manages WALKSacramento's Safe Routes 5 E's program, and the Complete Streets campaign, led by the broad-based Complete Streets Coalition, originally convened by WALKSacramento. Both programs work toward building more walkable communities for everyone in the Sacramento region.

A native of San Francisco, Terry walked to school, uphill, both ways, starting in first grade, and has continued walking everywhere since.

**Ted Link-Oberstar, a Safe Routes to School Parent Advocate**, co-founded Traffic Tamers at Bannon Creek Elementary School in South Natomas to promote safe walking and bicycling to school. This project became the basis of a comprehensive, district-wide Safe Routes initiative in the Natomas Unified School District. The initiative, now led by a full-time grant-funded coordinator, supports walk-to-school programs in most of the district's 8 elementary schools as well as developing education and awareness efforts and proposed infrastructure improvements for all district schools.

Ted often serves as an advisor to other organizations and communities seeking to start Safe Routes to School programs. He was awarded Citizen of the Year in 2008 by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, which recognizes individuals and organizations whose achievements and innovations made a significant difference in the Sacramento region. Ted has served as Legislative Representative (and twice as interim Legislative Director, for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

**Victoria Custodio, MPH** is a Project Coordinator for the California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC), a program of California Active Communities at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). With TARC, Victoria provides technical assistance, targeted trainings, networking opportunities and resources to support Caltrans SRTS Non-Infrastructure grantees throughout the state. As a public health educator, Victoria has worked on various childhood injury prevention and physical activity promotion initiatives, as well as on evaluations of school-linked services and school-community collaborations. In her spare time, Victoria serves as the parent volunteer coordinator for the SRTS program at Crocker/Riverside elementary school in Sacramento.