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TAKING STRIDES

ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK STATE YMCAS

**2019 Safe Routes to School Student
Ambassador Pilot Program**

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Alliance of New York State YMCAs received a grant from YMCA of the USA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify state strategies for creating active and healthy communities.

The goal in New York is to start a conversation around the benefits of Safe Routes to Schools and what can be done to improve our communities statewide. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federal, state and local effort to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school – and to make walking and biking to school safe and appealing.

The Alliance created the Safe Routes to School Student Ambassador Pilot Program in order to engage youth who are interested in creating meaningful and effective change through policy and practice. The SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program is ideal for middle or high students interested in advocacy and public policy, specifically as it relates to transportation, health, education, and/or environmental policy.

SRTS Student Ambassadors will have the opportunity to conduct research, meet with key stakeholders in their community, and share their findings with the Alliance of New York State YMCAs, YMCA of the USA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the New York State Department of Transportation, and other Safe Routes to School advocates.

EXPECTATIONS

Students selected to participate in the SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Attend SRTS Student Ambassador Kickoff Webinar;
- Complete a “walk audit” near their middle or high school using the materials provided by the Alliance;
- Identify and secure the guidance of a local community leader or official, such as a mayor, local school board, highway superintendent, etc.;
- Prepare and deliver a presentation on their “walk audit” findings to the relevant decision-making office or council in the community;
- Assist the Alliance with the planning of the full launch of the 2020 SRTS Student Ambassador Program; and
- Communicate regularly with the Alliance and complete any evaluations or surveys, as requested.

TIMELINE

April 15, 2019	Application Released
May 1, 2019	Applications Due
May 8, 2019	Notification of Selection
Week of May 13, 2019	Kick-off Webinar
June 14, 2019	Deadline for Walk Audits to be Completed
July 10, 2019	Deadline to Schedule and Host Meetings to Share Walk Audit Findings with Community Leaders
July 11 or 12, 2019	Debrief & Evaluations

FAQs

What is Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federal, state and local effort to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school – and to make walking and biking to school safe and appealing.

What are the benefits of Safe Routes to School?

A successful SRTS program benefits children and communities in many ways. When routes are safe, walking or biking to and from school is an easy way to earn the regular physical activity children need for good health. Studies have shown that physically active kids and teens have improved mood and concentration, a stronger self-image and more self-confidence. Physically active kids have fewer chronic health problems. Transportation is also one of the key barriers to attendance that contributes to chronic absenteeism and tardiness among students.

Most importantly – it’s fun! Research shows that walking or riding is children’s preferred method of getting to school. There is so much to see, smell, touch, think, and talk about. By walking with friends, children will build relationships and learn more about their neighborhood, their friends, and themselves. Walking and biking to school can help children achieve the goal of 30-60 minutes of cardiovascular exercise each day!

SRTS initiatives help the environment by easing traffic jams and curbing air pollution. Research shows that 25 percent of morning traffic is parents driving their students to school. Fewer car trips also mean lower gasoline bills, a significant factor with today’s higher gasoline prices.

How will SRTS Student Ambassadors be selected?

The Alliance of New York State YMCAs will identify 6-12 middle or high school students involved with a YMCA program from around the state to serve as SRTS Student Ambassadors based on their submitted applications and the recommendations of their local YMCA staff. Using our YMCA Regional Network (see map), students will hail from

the existing six regions: Western New York, Central New York, Northeastern New York, Westchester/Mid-Hudson, New York City, and Long Island.

What will SRTS Student Ambassadors learn?

The SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program is an opportunity to enhance students' public speaking, critical thinking, and analysis skills.

After completing the program, students will be able to articulate the health benefits of walking; identify factors which make communities walkable; identify community leaders who have the power to influence creating safer, more walkable routes to schools; and engage with community leaders on how to create meaningful change.

The SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program will also help students better understand the many steps needed for successful advocacy.

What is a "walk audit?"

A walk audit is a report completed by anyone who tours the school property and adjacent neighborhoods to look for routes students can safely use to get to school. SRTS Student Ambassadors will learn walking distance standards for their school community and study the areas and paths that fall within that radius.

Walk audits are an easy way for youth to have a seat at the table to discuss the benefits of walking and the need for walkable communities. Students will use a toolkit provided by the Alliance to help them conduct a walk audit and collect their findings to share with local community leaders.

Is there a cost to participate in the SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program?

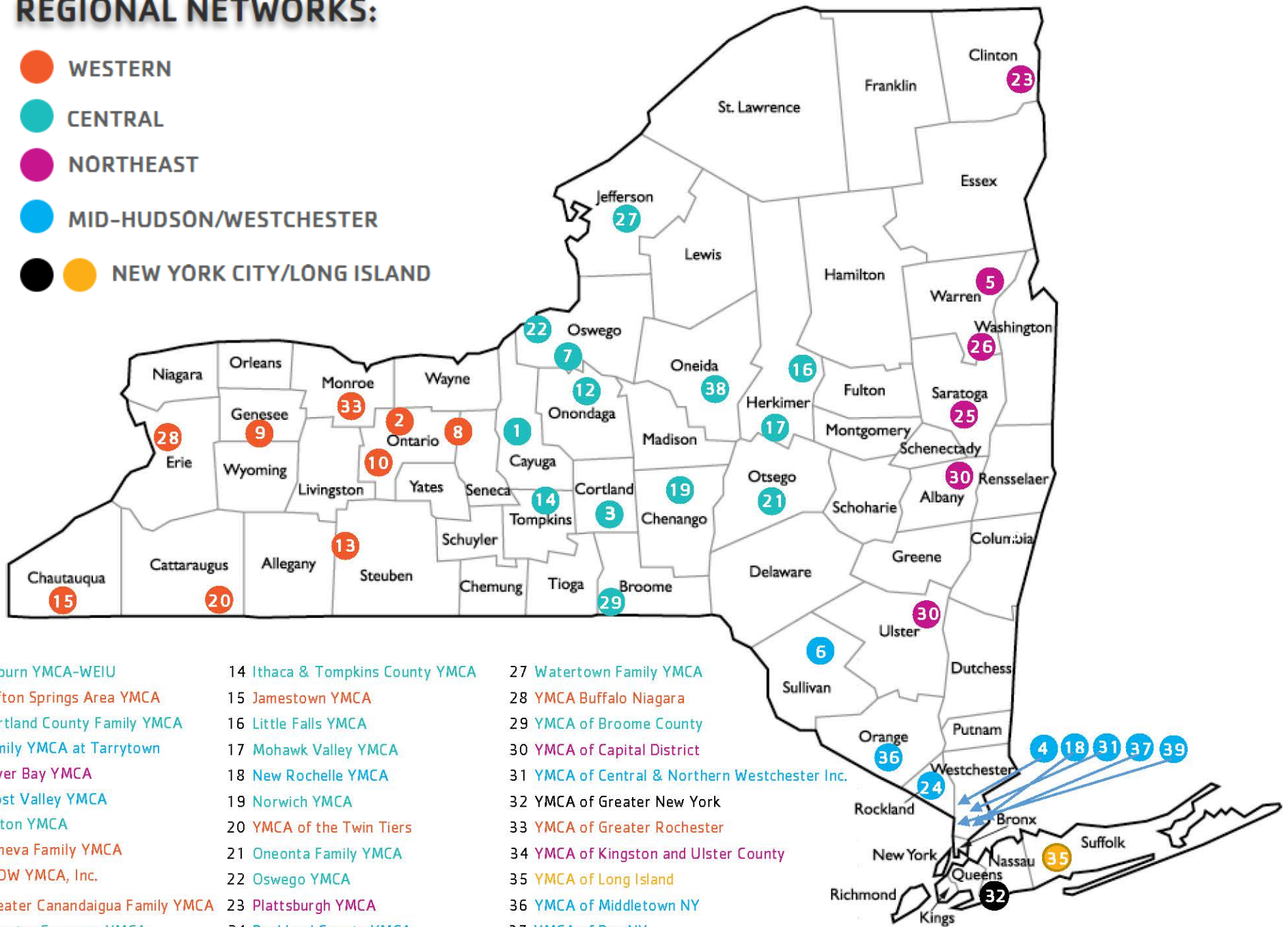
There is no cost to participate in the SRTS Student Ambassador Pilot Program.

Where can I apply to become a SRTS Student Ambassador?

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SRTSStudentAmbassadorPilotProgram>

REGIONAL NETWORKS:

- WESTERN
- CENTRAL
- NORTHEAST
- MID-HUDSON/WESTCHESTER
- ● NEW YORK CITY/LONG ISLAND



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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 Auburn YMCA-WEIU | 14 Ithaca & Tompkins County YMCA | 27 Watertown Family YMCA |
| 2 Clifton Springs Area YMCA | 15 Jamestown YMCA | 28 YMCA Buffalo Niagara |
| 3 Cortland County Family YMCA | 16 Little Falls YMCA | 29 YMCA of Broome County |
| 4 Family YMCA at Tarrytown | 17 Mohawk Valley YMCA | 30 YMCA of Capital District |
| 5 Silver Bay YMCA | 18 New Rochelle YMCA | 31 YMCA of Central & Northern Westchester Inc. |
| 6 Frost Valley YMCA | 19 Norwich YMCA | 32 YMCA of Greater New York |
| 7 Fulton YMCA | 20 YMCA of the Twin Tiers | 33 YMCA of Greater Rochester |
| 8 Geneva Family YMCA | 21 Oneonta Family YMCA | 34 YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County |
| 9 GLOW YMCA, Inc. | 22 Oswego YMCA | 35 YMCA of Long Island |
| 10 Greater Canandaigua Family YMCA | 23 Plattsburgh YMCA | 36 YMCA of Middletown NY |
| 12 Greater Syracuse YMCA | 24 Rockland County YMCA | 37 YMCA of Rye NY |
| 13 Hornell Area Family YMCA | 25 Saratoga Regional YMCA | 38 YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley |
| | 26 Glens Falls Family YMCA | 39 YMCA of Yonkers Inc. |