

Multiple counties implement community walking programs

AT A GLANCE

Walking is an inexpensive and accessible way of improving health outcomes for a diverse population of people who live in urban, suburban and rural communities.

The Situation

The prevalence of overweight adults in Idaho has increased significantly in the past decade from 55.7 percent in 2000 to 65.7 percent in 2014, and approximately one-in-four (29 percent) adults in Idaho are listed as obese (County Health Rankings, 2018). According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention, 55.3 percent of adults in Idaho participated in 150 minutes of aerobic physical activity per week and 20.2 percent of Idaho adults indicated they did not participate in any leisure time physical activity (2015).

Our Response

Walking is among the most common forms of physical activity and is appropriate for people of all ages and most abilities. Walking typically does not require special skills or facilities and when walking at a brisk pace helps individuals accumulate time towards the 150-minute weekly physical activity goal (Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

Two educators worked to promote walking programs in their counties (urban and rural) to encourage additional physical activity for healthier communities. Two programs were developed in an urban community —



Walking improves your health.

Valley on the Move and *Just for the Health of It*. One community walking program, *Walk & Talk*, was developed for a rural community.

Valley on the Move was part of a larger healthy lifestyle program termed Good Long Life. Participants were asked to wear pedometers for any three days within the first week to set a baseline and then keep record of their overall steps, attempting to increase their steps by 2,000 steps weekly. Participants were provided at no cost to them a six-week step log, pedometers and supportive educational materials.

Just for the Health of It is a free community walking program that begins with a five to 10-minute talk on a healthcare related topic from a local professional followed by a 30-minute community walk. There were

14 walks planned on Saturdays through a three-month period. In addition to promoting physical activity, *Just for the Health of It* was developed as a way to increase awareness of the diversity of care and resources available in the Lewis-Clark Valley for overall health and well-being.

Some examples of topics covered during *Just for the Health of It* were:

- Balance your body, mind and spirit
- Arthritis: what symptoms are, care and joint replacement options
- Diabetes
- Walk yourself out of pain
- Humor — why laughter is the best medicine
- Whole grains — what are the benefits
- Total body health starts with your teeth

Walk & Talk is a community walking program offered three days a week to all ages and fitness levels. Three different times of the day (8:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 5:15 p.m.) are rotated each week to increase the availability to all participants. Participants meet at varying places throughout the community, and the average walk is 30 minutes with an approximate goal of 3,000 steps. Participants are provided with pedometers that are individually numbered. All step data is recorded daily by participants on a step log.

Program Outcomes

Analyses of data from all sources revealed for *Valley on the Move*:

- Participation (males = 9 percent; females = 91 percent; ages 46-55 = 48 percent)
- Attendance over six sessions ($n = 49$)

For *Just for the Health of It*:

- Participation (females = 82 percent; males = 18 percent; ages 46-55 = 30 percent)
- Attendance over 24 sessions ($n = 104$)

In the three months that *Walk & Talk* has been collecting step data, participants have completed 40 sessions, 153,344 steps for a combined total of 22.13 hours.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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