**BOSTON NEIGHBORWALK**

*Boston Steps to a Healthier US Program Overcomes Barriers to Walking*

**Public Health Issue**

* Boston, Massachusetts area residents can be challenged by safety concerns common to big cities even though their city has many attractive, walkable areas.
* Walking is a low cost, highly effective way of meeting physical activity guidelines but not enough urban residents are walking.

**Program**

* *Boston NeighborWalk* program, part of the Boston Public Health Commission, provides $500 grants to community-based organizations to identify convenient and accessible walking routes, organize weekly walks, and recruit walking groups, which are assigned a walk leader who also assists in educational sessions.
* The Boston Public Health Commission has been supported by the direct involvement of the Mayor(s) of Boston throughout the life of the program.
* The Boston Police Department patrols walking areas to help insure safety and the Boston Red Sox provided funding to help sustain the program*.*

**Impact**

* This program enables residents to be active (for free!) in their own neighborhoods.
* The Harvard University Prevention Research Center showed that in the first 5 years:
  + over 1200 individuals took 1501 walks averaging 2.2 miles
  + median daily walk time for participants was 43 minutes
  + participants report walking more at work (+57%), place-to-place (+73%) and in leisure time (+57%)
* The NeighborWalk experience shows that safety barriers can be overcome when municipalities and organizations commit to doing so. The program also credits walking in groups as a facilitator to activity.
* Celebration of the 10th year in 2012 with 27 groups and more than 380 participants walking demonstrates the program’s sustainability.
* Integrating *NeighborWalk* into *Boston Moves for Health,* a new, larger, mayor’s initiative can help meet the mayor’s goal for residents of 10,000,000 miles walked this year.

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