

WALKING INITIATIVES BENEFIT APPALACHIAN COMMUNITIES

Motivating community action supports increased opportunities for physical activity

Public Health Program

- Appalachian cultural traits - independence and fatalism - can foster a wait-and-see attitude about preventive care, resulting in treatment only for life-threatening illness.
- Unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as a lack of physical activity, combined with a lack of preventive care can lead to serious chronic diseases such as heart disease.
- Promoting active lifestyles in the rural, Appalachian communities of Washington County, Ohio can reduce the number of people with sedentary lifestyles and help prevent chronic disease.

Program

- The Washington County Cardiovascular Health Coalition plays a vital role in making local communities more 'walkable' with funding support from the Public Health and Health Services Block Grant.
- Coalition partners also provide funds for trail supplies, trail surface materials, signage and educational tools; and technical assistance in grant writing, volunteer development, community support and program planning to schools, local governments and community groups.
- The coalition initiated the Washington County Walks Club which supplies individuals with pedometers, walking guides, a free one month membership at the YMCA and a monthly walking log for a nominal fee and a hiking club which sponsors weekly hikes.

Impact

- Twelve new walking paths and trails are now available and provide residents with increased opportunities for regular physical activity.
- Three local school districts established walking programs or clubs for elementary school students.
- The City of Marietta expanded its multi-use River Trail and is working with their local school district on a project to make it easier for children to walk to school.
- Over 400 county residents at nine worksites and members of many community groups have participated in county walking clubs and other initiatives.
- Community partners are now leading many walking efforts on their own with the coalition taking a supportive role.

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