

Community walking program goes virtual!

AT A GLANCE

Using social media to reach the public and track a community walking program when face-to-face interactions are difficult during a global pandemic.

The Situation

Approximately one-in-four (29%) adults in Idaho, and 32% of adults in Idaho County are listed as obese (BMI \geq 30kg). In addition, 27% of adults age 20 and over report no leisure time physical activity, despite 64% of the population report having adequate access to locations to be physically active (County Health Rankings, 2020). With the onset of the global pandemic COVID-19 affecting everyone in 2020 came the need for additional physical activity programming that could reach more people in a safe and effective way.

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, 2018).

Idaho County's family and consumer sciences Extension educator partnered with two local health care providers to develop an eight-week community walking challenge offered virtually and managed through social



Walking improves your health.

media (Facebook group). *Walk the Prairie & Beyond – HD!*

Each week begins with an educational video provided by the partners on a variety of health and wellness topics:

- Fitness Apps
- Physical Activity Guidelines & Recommendations
- Nutrition — Fruits and Veggies
- Cooking Healthy with a Budget
- Sleep Health
- Hydration
- Journaling

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- Mindfulness/Balance/Flexibility
- Stress/Anxiety
- Brain Health

Participants are asked to post/comment after they watch the video and then are provided with their weekly challenge. The challenge coincides with the weekly topic and then includes a specific “thing” they need to look for on their walks and post a picture, along with how many miles/steps they have walked by the end of the week.

The partners comment on posts throughout the week providing feedback, encouragement and answering questions that come up. At the end of the week points are awarded for watching the video, posting pictures, commenting on how they completed the challenge and posting their walking achievements. Weekly prizes are awarded.

Flyers are also distributed throughout the county and through other media sources to encourage additional participation. Community members who do not have access to online technology are provided contact information to the partners and can send their weekly participation information in via phone or office visits.

Program Outcomes

For the first eight weeks of the *Walk the Prairie & Beyond – HD!* challenge there were an average of 43 walkers that participated each week. There are 261 members of the Facebook group and 98% of participants are female.

The challenge was extremely well-received and successful in its outreach, so the partners are currently offering a second eight-week challenge – *Moving Through the Holidays*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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