

## Walk Kansas Kicks off March 16

*Eight-week fitness program is available as an easy, inexpensive way to better health.*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – One of the most successful programs developed by K-State Research and Extension is about to start its 13th year.

Walk Kansas, the eight-week program designed to promote activity and better health for Kansans, begins March 16. Registration information is available at county and district extension offices and at [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org).

Walk Kansas is a team-based program in which groups of six people, one serving as a captain, work toward a common goal. That goal typically is for the team members to collectively meet the minimum goal for physical activity (150 minutes per person each week), to walk 423 miles over the eight-week period, the distance across Kansas.

Those teams that want a greater challenge can set a goal to walk the equivalent of across the state and back (846 miles) or around the perimeter of Kansas (1,200 miles).

"There is no magic bullet to keep us healthy for a lifetime," said Sharolyn Jackson, Walk Kansas state coordinator with K-State Research and Extension. "Exercise comes as close as anything we have to prevent chronic disease and extend life."

"Walking reduces stress, combats depression, improves heart health and helps fight off unwanted pounds – and you feel better, almost immediately, after getting some physical activity," Jackson said.

Team members can walk individually or as a team.

The program has grown from about 500 participants the first year to an average of 18,000 the past five years, Jackson said. Over the first 12 years, about 203,000 Kansans have participated. There are 250+ participants comprising over 40 teams registered with the Geary County Extension office.

"It doesn't matter if you walk indoors on a treadmill, at the shopping mall or fitness center walking track or outdoors through the neighborhood or at a park, she said. "The key is to do the walking and let your team captain know weekly how many minutes you walked. The website converts the time walked into miles."

Another feature of the program is the option to log servings of fruits and vegetables eaten weekly.

For those who wish to participate but don't have a group to form a team, she recommends contacting the local county or district K-State Research and Extension office and asking to be placed on a team.

A new option this year is a Walk Kansas Photo Challenge.

The Walk Kansas website has links to information that supports participants, including Kansas parks and trails, nutrition tips and a frequently-updated newsletter.

The cost to participate in Walk Kansas is minimal – often as low as \$10, Jackson said, but varies slightly by county and district.

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Sidebar or box:

### **Walk Kansas Participants Encouraged to Submit Photos**

For the first time, 2014 Walk Kansas participants are encouraged to submit photos of kids, families, friends and even pets being physically active and supporting Walk Kansas goals for physical activity and healthy eating. Photos can also share a motivational or inspirational message.

Some photos will be selected to promote Walk Kansas on the website [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org) and used in K-State Research and Extension newsletters and social media. Each photographer who submits a photo that is selected for publicity will receive a Walk Kansas hoodie sweatshirt. To enter:

- Submit a high-resolution (3 mb or larger is best) digital photo before May 1, 2014 to [sharolyn@ksu.edu](mailto:sharolyn@ksu.edu) . Include your name, email address, mailing address, and appropriate release forms. All photos submitted must include a signed Photo Reprint Permission form, available at: [www.communications.k-state.edu/doc/forms/PhotoReprintPermission.pdf](http://www.communications.k-state.edu/doc/forms/PhotoReprintPermission.pdf) .
- Photos that show faces of individuals must also include a Publicity/Photo Released signed by each individual in the photo, available at: [www.communications.k-state.edu/doc/forms/PhotoConsntRlsForm.pdf](http://www.communications.k-state.edu/doc/forms/PhotoConsntRlsForm.pdf) .
- All photos submitted become the property of K-State Research and Extension.

Release forms may be signed, scanned and emailed or signed forms can be mailed to: NE Area Extension Office, 1007 Throckmorton Hall, Manhattan, Ks. 66506. More information is available on the website: [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org) or by contacting Sharolyn Jackson at [sharolyn@ksu.edu](mailto:sharolyn@ksu.edu) or 785-532-2273.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.

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