

Daily Union Article

Saturday, March 2, 2019

Title: Get Your Sneaker Primed!

The cold and wet weather we have been experiencing for the past many weeks is likely to have made many of you stir-crazy. If you are a walking trail enthusiast, the temperature and the trails have not likely been conducive for walking weather. Do not get discouraged. I can tell you with 100% confidence that here in Kansas, the weather is sure to take a turn – that is, eventually! Nevertheless, if your feet and legs are itching for a good walk, I suggest you find an indoor location to get your sneakers primed because Walk Kansas 2019 is just around the corner!

Registration is now open for Geary County K-State Research & Extension's annual wellness program - Walk Kansas. As a State, Kansas has several areas of opportunity when it comes to wellness and physical activities. Among the more notable opportunities are:

- Less than 1/2 of Kansas adults meet minimum recommendations for physical activity.
- Less than 10% of Kansans eat enough fruits and vegetables. (CDC, 2015)
- Chronic disease, including obesity, is responsible for more than 70% of health care costs.

Geary County residents have similar wellness and physical activity opportunities, as well:

- 17% of Geary County residents are rated as having poor or fair health (compared to 15% for the State of Kansas)
- 35% of Geary County residents are classified as obese (compared to 32% of Kansans overall)
- 26% of Geary County residents are physically inactive while 74% of our residents have access to exercise opportunities

*Source: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>*

So how are your wellness and physical activity habits? Do you need to cut down on saturated fats, increase your fruits and vegetables, become more active and drink more water and less of the readily available sweet drinks? Walk Kansas might be a great place for you to start with all of those adjustments! Beginning March 17, the program runs for 8 weeks and concludes thru May 11.

How does the program work and how can you get involved? Teams of 6, with a captain, log minutes of activity for 8 weeks. Each team selects a goal, or challenge, they will collectively work towards. Participants log activity minutes and the amount of fruits/vegetables they eat. They determine who is going to serve as the team captain so that they can register the entire team online. Once that is completed, team members log online at [walkkansasonline.org](http://walkkansasonline.org). Once everyone has logged in, participants receive weekly newsletters and motivational messages.

### Team Challenges

Each team will select one of these challenges. As your team moves across or around the state, you will learn about points of interest in Kansas by viewing progress of your team on the online map. Challenge 1) Explore the 8 Wonders of Kansas.\* This will require each person to log 2½ hours of moderate/vigorous activity per week. The trail is 480 miles. Challenge 2) Go Cross Country. Begin in the NE corner, trek diagonally to the SW corner of the state, and see many interesting points along the way! Each person logs 4 hours/week, which will take the team 768 miles. Challenge 3) Explore the Little Balkans (SE KS) and then head to Nicodemus! This requires each person to log 6 hours/week and the trail is 1152 miles.

So – are you ready to prime your sneakers and sign up a team? It is not too early to start thinking who you want to invite to join you in this challenge. Team registrations should be entered online by the first day of the program, March 17 to get the best start in the program. However, the online registration system will remain open until March 31. The cost is \$8.00 per person for the 8-week program. Take the first step toward a healthier lifestyle by joining us for Walk Kansas, 2019.

Now that you have the information, you can make a plan. Start now by taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Check with your doctor, learn what you need to adjust, and walk with us in Walk Kansas 2019! For more information on healthy lifestyle patterns or the Walk Kansas program, contact me at the Geary County Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!