

# Walking Trails: From Conception to Reality

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# Rural Setting

- Socio-demographic characteristics
  - Higher rates of poverty
  - Less access to health care
  - Higher rates of chronic diseases
- Greater travel distances
- Higher rates of inactivity
- Physical environment/access
  - no or few shopping malls
  - no sidewalks
  - dangerous roads

# Ozark Heart Health Project

- Local Coordinators
  - Form community-based coalitions
  - Coalitions develop & deliver interventions
  - Interventions target CVD risk factors
- Heart Health Coalitions
  - Volunteer, grass roots efforts
  - Professional and lay community
  - Civic and community involvement
- SLU-PRC and MDHHS
  - Technical guidance and support
  - Administrative support
  - Program evaluation



# Walking

- is the most common form of leisure-time physical activity and is accessible across socio-economic groups
- has the same health benefits as other more vigorous types of physical activity
- can be done anytime, anywhere, at one's own pace
- is easy to do - a natural activity
- appears to be modifiable based on environmental changes

# Walking Trails

- Developed to provide a free place for people to exercise
- Over 25 trails have been developed in the 8-county region
- Range in size from .25 miles to 3.0
- Some are circular or ovals tracks while others are paths through communities or parks
- Surfaces range from chat to asphalt



# Key Elements to Establishing Walking Trails

- Form partnerships
- Find and secure location
- Build and maintain community support
- Procure funds and resources
- Accept donations!
- Get it built . . . Be prepared for the unexpected



# Form Partnerships

- City officials
- Parks and recreation department
- Local businesses
- Churches
- Schools
- Formal and informal community leaders
- Community organizations





# Find and Secure Location

- Convenient, easy access
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Safe from criminal activity, stray animals, and traffic
- Existing greenspace or donated land, if possible
  - Parks
  - Churches
  - Businesses





# Build and Maintain Community Support

- Involve community from the start
- Emphasize benefits to the community in addition to positive health consequences
- Reinforce community ownership of project
- Be a "listener" in regards to community goals and objectives

# Procure Funds and Resources

- Average cost per trail - \$3000
- Small grants - DOT, Eagles Clubs
- Host Community Work Day to Get Everyone Involved
- Dedicated Partnerships Sharing Same Vision, US Parks Service, Churches, Businesses, Schools, etc
- Use Local Media Support



# Accept Donations!

- Man power
- Asphalt
- Land
- Equipment
- Ideas
- Matching Funds



# Get It Built . . . Be Prepared for the Unexpected

- Weather delays
- Landmarks - don't disturb
- Resistance from community
- May need to start small and expand
- Change in political arena
- Change in coalition leadership
- Waiting on funding fiscal year



# Lessons Learned

- Volunteers and partnership make it happen
- Team must:
  - have a shared vision
  - communicate well
  - trust each other
- Change does not happen over night
  - be patient and flexible
  - stay committed to the project
  - be visible in the community

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