

# “Walking” Towards A Healthy Lifestyle: Omaha Embraces Popular Physical Activity

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## SUMMARY

The 2012 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vital Signs Report stated that walking is the most popular aerobic physical activity and about 6 in 10 adults reported walking for at least 10 minutes in the previous week. Creighton University and its community partners committed to offering various forms of accessible, physical activity to Omaha residents with walking being a popular option. The goal was to educate Omaha residents that walking is an aerobic exercise that can help to reduce chronic illness among community members.



## CHALLENGE

Walking has been proven to address many health issues i.e. cardiovascular disease. According to a study conducted at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Life Science Division in Berkeley, California, walking can lower your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes (risk factors for heart disease and stroke) as much as running. Being faced with the challenge of Omaha residents' reluctance in the belief that walking is an impactful

physical activity and could improve a person's cardiovascular health, Creighton University and its community partners recognized that the policy, systems and environmental improvements approach was needed to achieve positive results. Through the implementation of exterior/interior walking trails, walking clubs, destination signage, and inspiring messages to walk during everyday activities - walking was embraced by the Omaha community.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Omaha residents identify that physical activity is essential to overall health. Walking is a physical activity opportunity that fosters positive results. Connect with others on “walking” toward a healthier lifestyle by making walking part of a daily routine. This initiative is supported by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement. For more information please visit <https://www.creighton.edu/health/cphhe/reach/>.

*"12 of Omaha's Black Churches have established safe walking trails inside fellowship halls and church parking lots. These trails serve as visible reminders that congregational members can reduce CVD by taking daily faith walks to a healthier future."*

*- Doris Lassiter - CPHHE-REACH Faith-Based Coordinator*

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## SOLUTION

Community partners agreed to place ninety-two (92) exterior/interior walking trail signs that map out walking trails specific to the partner's location to be used by the community and staff that offer additional physical activity opportunities.

Twelve (12) partnering faith-based organizations, eleven (11) Omaha Housing Authority towers and two (2) non-profit organizations have encouraged walking clubs, stairwell use and walking during meetings i.e. religious services and staff meetings. In addition, eighty-four (84) destination signs were placed within the community indicating neighboring sites (including distances and timeframes) that people could walk to as a form of physical activity.

## RESULTS

Through the implementation of policy, systems and environmental improvements (PSEs), community partner coordinators have reported a significant increase in the number of staff and community members walking as a form of physical activity. Urban League of Nebraska – Omaha and Charles Drew Health Center have reported staff use of exterior/interior walking trails and destination signage during 1-hour lunch breaks, before/after work and outdoor meetings. The Omaha Housing Authority towers have reported a maximum of 45 minutes of walking per day by residents via walking clubs, stairclimbing and nearby walking trails. Partnering faith-based organizations currently have five (5) walking clubs, numerous walking aerobic classes and positive messaging during religious service targeting over 5,000 members on the effects of walking.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Creighton University and its community partners will continue to develop additional sources and locations that promote walkability while simultaneously providing outreach to the community. Team members will continue to inform residents, congregation members, staff and others of the importance of physical activity, its health benefits and how walking is yet another form of productive physical activity that promotes disease prevention and management. The direction of this initiative is to encourage more of the community to commit to walking more each day which increases physical activity and decreases cardiovascular disease.