

Getting Your Employees Active

Walk Across Texas! is an eight-week physical activity program ideally suited for worksite settings. This program helps people of all ages establish the habit of physical activity through team support. Walk Across Texas! is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.



The Health Problem

- ❖ Twenty nine percent of Texans engage in no leisure physical activity.
- ❖ Twenty seven percent of Texans are obese, which is higher than the national rate (21 percent).
- ❖ In 2001, it was estimated that overweight- and obesity-related costs for Texas adults were at \$10.5 billion.
- ❖ Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for heart disease and other chronic conditions.
- ❖ Approximately 1.4 million (8.5 percent) Texans have heart disease or have had a stroke.
- ❖ Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among Texas adults over the age of 18.

The Benefits of Physical Activity

- ❖ A physically active lifestyle is associated with a longer, healthier life.
- ❖ Regular physical activity significantly reduces a person's risk to develop heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, and some cancers.
- ❖ With regular physical activity, 58 percent of people with pre-diabetes were able to temporarily or permanently delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.
- ❖ Regular physical activity has been found to be associated with fewer hospitalizations, doctor visits, and medications.

A Healthy Workforce

- ❖ Physically active employees are more productive employees, with fewer sick

days and accidents, a higher morale, and lower job turnover.

- ❖ At least 50 percent of employers' health care costs are driven by negative lifestyle habits of employees: smoking, poor diet, and lack of physical activity.
- ❖ Worksite health promotion programs have been shown to lower medical expenditures, resulting in direct cost-savings.

The Basics of Walk Across Texas!

- ❖ Walk Across Texas! challenges eight-member teams or individuals to walk 830 miles for eight weeks. Participants' walking mileage is tracked on a map of Texas.
- ❖ Walk Across Texas! can be offered in any community or worksite setting.
- ❖ Led by a Texas AgriLife Extension Service agent, community or worksite coalitions are formed to plan and implement their Walk Across Texas! program.
- ❖ Walk Across Texas! coalitions partner with AgriLife Extension to oversee participant registration and milestone activities: Kick-Off, Half-Way, and Recognition Day events.
- ❖ Walk Across Texas! site managers, captains, and other volunteers receive training.
- ❖ The first team reaching their destination (830 miles) and the team walking the most miles are recognized for their achievements.

The Impact of Walk Across Texas!

Evidence from 2007 Walk Across Texas! data demonstrate that more Texans are becoming physically active and healthy as the result of this program.

- ❖ A total of 24,292 individuals registered and 20,162 participants completed Walk Across Texas!
- ❖ Ninety-five Texas counties participated in the program.
- ❖ Fifty percent of participants reported feeling less stressed after participating in Walk Across Texas!
- ❖ If 2007 participants continued walking at the same level as during Walk Across Texas!, they have the potential to save a collective \$168,210,368 in future health care costs by avoiding type 2 diabetes and by reducing work absences.



- ❖ As illustrated in the following table, Walk Across Texas! is an effective program to increase physical activity.

Comparison Week 1 to Week 8 Individual Mileage			
Year	Week 1	Week 8	Mean Difference
1999	10.7 mi	12.1 mi	1.4 mi
2000	10.7 mi	12.7 mi	2.0 mi
2001	10.1 mi	11.4 mi	1.3 mi
2003	13.2 mi	14.9 mi	1.8 mi
2004	15.7 mi	17.5 mi	1.8 mi
2005	16.9 mi	19.3 mi	2.34 mi
2006	19.5 mi	23.3 mi	3.8 mi
2007	21.1 mi	25.3 mi	4.2 mi

The Success Stories

Supporting the impact evidence, below are a few comments from Walk Across Texas! participants:



- ❖ *“Walking helped me keep my blood sugar under control.”*
- ❖ *“I felt energized – my blood pressure is down to normal.”*
- ❖ *“I dropped my cholesterol 30 points during Walk Across Texas.”*

Promoting Healthy Communities

- ❖ Publicity for the Walk Across Texas! competition and related community events creates public awareness and promotes individual action to increase activity for better health.
- ❖ Walk Across Texas! is crossing state lines and has been adapted by Extension in 10 other states.

Walk Across Texas! is a proven program that can help employees become active and healthy.