

## News Column

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### *On your marks, get set...Walk Kansas begins March 27*

For the past 20 years, thousands of people enrolled in the Walk Kansas program have walked, biked, swam and moved their bodies in many other ways to improve their physical fitness. But benefits of the program go far beyond just physical abilities.

According to Family and Consumer Science Specialist Sharolyn Jackson, “We know that what is good for the heart is also good for the brain so this year, we are focusing on how physical activity, nutrition and other lifestyle practices improve brain function.”

Walk Kansas will run March 27 through May 21, encouraging teams of four to six to sign up together and get moving. Each 15 minutes of activity counts for 1 mile of distance, and teams track their mileage virtually as they move across pre-determined routes in or across Kansas.

“Any kind of activity counts so long as you’re working at moderate intensity where you can barely carry on a conversation, but you can’t sing,” said Jackson.

“For a lot of people, walking is something they can do. For others, it might be riding a bike, rowing, swimming, strength training, team sports, or even rolling, if you’re in a wheelchair. We call it Walk Kansas, but in reality, anything counts as long as you’re working at a moderate or vigorous intensity level.”

Participants can do the activities on their own or with an exercise buddy or team member.

Registration for Walk Kansas is available online and will open on March 1st. Team registrations require a captain and up to five additional members, which can live anywhere in or out of the county or state. If you would rather participate solo, individuals can sign up to complete their own challenge.

This year’s program provides three team challenges:

- Challenge 1 - “8 Wonders of Kansas” trail, requires each person get at least 2 ½ hours of moderate activity/week and challenges the team to travel 480 miles.
- Challenge 2 – “Cross Country Trail” requiring 4 hours of activity/week from each person, with the team traveling 768 miles.
- Challenge 3 – “Little Balkans to Nicodemus Trail” that will require 6 hours of activity from each team member/week, challenging the team to go 1152 miles.

The solo challenge trail begins in Manhattan at Kansas State University and explores points of interest on a trail to Wichita State University.

All participants will receive a weekly online newsletter with helpful information on physical activity, improving lifestyle habits, nutrition, and healthful recipes. This year, the nutrition focus is on the MIND

diet, which is a combination of what are widely known as the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets.

Not only is exercise great for our bodies, but there are benefits for our minds too. It helps retain brain function as we age and helps delay the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. It can help manage stress, which is hard on our minds as well.

Walk Kansas also promotes getting adequate sleep, drinking water and strengthening exercises. Small changes in these areas lead to better habits and eventually, long-term behavior change.

For more information about Walk Kansas, Family and Community Wellness, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension, contact the office at 620-583-7455, email me at [celutz@ksu.edu](mailto:celutz@ksu.edu) or stop by the office. Visit the K-State Research and Extension - Greenwood County Facebook page and [www.greenwood.k-state.edu](http://www.greenwood.k-state.edu) for more up-to-date information on programming.