



St. Francis of Assisi Park Ideas Workshop

On Saturday January 30th, I attended the second ideas workshop put on by the Step Into Cuba Alliance and led by Attila Bality of National Parks Service RTCA. The purpose of the workshop was to create a master plan for St. Francis of Assisi Park/Eichwald Recreation

Center by working along with UNM Landscape designers. Community members worked with students to brainstorm design elements that would

encourage physical activity and park use. Some community suggestions were:

Including a drop off area for students to walk to school along a paved trail; adding an amphitheater for concerts, boxing matches, etc; putting in three regulation size basketball courts and bleachers; increasing the number of covered and uncovered picnic areas, trees for shade, gardens, paved parking and permanent outdoor toilets; adding BBQ grills to the picnic areas; paving the trail around the perimeter of the park for walking, bike riding and rollerblading and also include benches, water fountains and exercise stations along the trail; create game areas for sand volleyball, horseshoes, croquet, bocchi ball and life size game boards; putting a half pipe (skate park) inside a dirt pump track (BMX track); a climbing wall, adding in natural play areas for younger children; Tai Chi and Yoga pavilions with Japanese gardens and meditation/exercise platforms; using solar power for lighting; irrigation systems and amphitheater power; and using green building practices for new structures.

Submitted by Jan Petery)



BE GOOD TO YOUR HEART...

If you want to be good to your heart, take a walk. Research shows that just 2 1/2 hours of brisk walking a week can cut your risk of heart attacks and strokes by nearly a third. Walking raises your HDL (“good”) cholesterol level and reduces your blood pressure, two important factors in preventing or controlling heart disease. The more you walk, the more benefit you get: Five hours a week cuts your heart disease risk in half.

Like other forms of aerobic exercise, walking strengthens your heart muscle and dilates your blood vessels. Any aerobic exercise, if done regularly, benefits your heart. The advantage of walking is that it’s the easiest form of exercise around.

How Often to Walk

For the best heart protection, walk at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Don’t have a half-hour? Studies show that you can break up your exercise into three 10 minute sessions a day and still keep your heart healthy.

For the best heart benefits, walk at a pace that’s brisk enough to raise your pulse. The easiest way to make sure you are doing this is to conduct the “talk test.”: Bring a friend and talk as you walk. If you’re breathing somewhat hard but can still talk, you’re in the target zone. If you’re too breathless to form complete sentences, you’re exercising too hard and overtaxing your heart.

You can get heart health benefits no matter where you walk. Try walking both inside and outside so you don’t get bored. Invest in comfortable, sturdy shoes that fit well and good outerwear so that you don’t have to stay inside if it’s cold and wet. (If you need some motivation to get outside, consider that your body burns more calories if you exercise when the weather is chilly.) If you don’t like to walk in cold, wet weather, you can walk indoors on a treadmill. The Eichwald Center has treadmills available to members. Or, you can walk around the indoor basket ball court at the Eichwald Center or at the High School Gym.

Walk up a hill when you can (or raise the incline on your treadmill). When you walk uphill, your body weight creates resistance, giving your heart a better workout

How you move when you walk is important. When you move your body the right way, you walk faster and are less likely to experience pain or injury. Moving the wrong way constricts your chest muscles and makes it harder for you to breathe, slowing your pace.

Here’s how to walk: Hold your body straight and tall, draw your navel in toward your spine, and press your shoulders back slightly. Hit the ground heel first and roll through your foot, pushing off with your toes. This motion helps your leg muscles push blood back up toward your heart so it doesn’t have to work too hard.

To burn more calories and give your heart a better workout, get your upper body involved. Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle and move your arms in time with your feet. Your arms should move in slow, controlled motions; uncontrolled arm swinging may lead to injury.

It’s a good idea to warm up as you begin your walk. Walk slowly to start, gradually increasing your speed until you are walking briskly. At the end of your workout, it’s important to take five minutes to cool down, gradually slow your pace until your pulse returns to normal.

How to Stick to It

The more you walk, the more you’ll experience benefits for your heart. If you find yourself losing your drive, try one of these tips to keep you going.

When you don’t feel like exercising, promise yourself that you’ll just take a few steps. Commit to 10 minutes. You may find yourself wanting to go longer when that time is up.

If you feel bored, mix up your routine. Switch the location of your walk, listen to music, or change speeds from a brisk pace to a faster speed every five minutes.

One of the best ways to stay motivated is to walk with a friend. People who exercise in groups are more likely to continue working out than people who exercise alone on treadmills.

Always check with your health care provider before beginning any exercise routine. Now that RX Trails has been implemented, you can actually request a ‘walking prescription’ at the PMS health center in Cuba and it’s four satellite clinics.

For more information on the benefits of walking or to join a walking group, check out www.stepintocuba.org or call 505-289-3718 and ask to speak to the Walking Champion.

You can be good to your heart and we are here to help!





Healthy Communities Winter 2010

Step Into Cuba Walks & Activities Calendar

We are on a Winter Break. Look for the 2010 Spring Schedule!

Winter Walking Tips

Walking is one of the most effective and easiest forms of exercise, so don't let the winter weather keep you indoors! Walking outdoors in the 'winter wonderland' can be refreshing and invigorating as long as you keep these tips in mind.

If possible, choose a place to walk where there is little or no traffic, like one of many wilderness hikes in our area, or in town try St. Francis park, quiet residential streets or the high school track. Walk with a friend or carry a cell phone, especially if you go on a wilderness hike!

Sidewalks along 550 can be impassable during winter months, and most other roadways in our community don't even have sidewalks, so if you must walk on roadways, walk against the traffic as close to the curb as possible. It's important to stay aware of the traffic, so don't cover your ears, you will want to hear cars approaching. Snow packed and icy roads may prevent motorists from stopping or slowing down, so be cautious.

Dress in bright colors or wear reflective gear, and make sure any children you are walking with are also dressed in bright colors or reflective gear.

Dress in several lightweight layers that you can take off or put on to keep you from overheating or getting too cold. Make sure kids are dressed in layers, too!

Winter sun can be very strong, so wear sunglasses and a hat.

Wear gloves and a scarf.

Wear comfortable shoes, preferably waterproof, that fit well and have good traction.

Start your walk slowly to give your muscles a chance to warm up.

Take slower and smaller steps to prevent slips and falls on icy surfaces.

Bring water. Dry winter air can be dehydrating.

Don't carry heavy bags or packages as this can impair your balance.

Stay safe and active this winter

Ride the Sandoval Easy Express!!

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