

## **On the Move-Walk Across America Case Study**

### **The Program**

[Owatonna Clinic-Mayo Health System](#) developed the initial seven-week program called *Walk a Billion Feel Like a Million* program in 2004 to track a billion steps in the community as part of the city's sesquicentennial celebration. The following year, it was renamed *Owatonna on the Move* in an effort to increase physical activity. In 2006, Owatonna Hospital-Allina Hospitals & Clinics, became a co-sponsor of the program, as part of their [Heart Healthy Living](#) and [Childhood Obesity Initiatives](#) to address the obesity epidemic we face in our nation. Based on research by the American Heart Association, the eating and physical activity patterns of most Americans have made us the most overweight nation in the world. More than 60 percent of adults don't get the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity a day and we're getting heavier every year.

The program was renamed once again, [On the Move-Walk Across America](#), encouraging participants to increase their activity level by walking 10,000 steps. By using an electronic step counter to measure steps per day, Steele County residents' quantified overall physical activity levels. In addition, the 2006 program also educated participants about making healthful eating choices. Schools were encouraged to incorporate nutrition information in their curriculum as they walked across America. Twenty-five cities were identified with a nutritional item or physical activity on a United States map that was distributed to all participants.

All Owatonna Public School students in grades 1-6 and K-8 at St. Mary's Catholic School received a free pedometer in 2006. Community members could purchase a pedometer at the Satellite Heart Walk, an American Heart Association event sponsored by Owatonna Hospital in February 2006, from the [Owatonna Clinic](#) and [Owatonna Hospital](#) for \$8. Every registered participant received a step tracker log to enter their daily steps and a conversion chart for other activities. Steps were either called in or emailed in every Monday. The total number of steps and number of trips across America were reported to the local media, as well as posted on a display board in downtown Owatonna's Central Park.

The program kicked off April 3 in the schools with presentations from Owatonna Clinic physicians and the Owatonna Hospital Certified Athletic Trainer. Students were given information about the importance of eating right and exercising and demonstrations on how to use the pedometer. New this year, was a competition among the schools to win the "traveling trophy." The school with the most steps averaged by the number of students was awarded the "traveling trophy." The community participants began tracking their steps on April 17.

On May 22, 2006, the community celebration and awarding of the "traveling trophy" was held in conjunction with the 35<sup>th</sup> annual All-City Track meet. Surveys, apples and water were distributed at the celebration, along with outdoor activities prior to the track meet.

### **Short-term outcomes**

1. Increase access to physical activity for all ages
2. Increase awareness of reaching 10,000 steps per day
3. Increase awareness of healthful food choices
4. Decrease screen time

### **Intermediate outcomes**

1. Increase physical activity
2. Improve nutrition

### **Long-term outcomes**

1. Decrease obesity
2. Decrease death and disability related to heart disease
3. Improve the well-being of our patient population, employees and community members

### **The Results**

More than 4,200 community members participated in the program, including children and adults. The program generated media interest across the region, including a Mankato TV station, television news program, local radio programs, and local newspapers. A [survey](#) was conducted after the seven-week program via online and hardcopy. More than 840 students took the online survey and 303 adults. The results of the survey indicated that tracking steps can be a motivator to increase physical activity among all ages.

#### ***Survey Results:***

- 87% of student reported that using the pedometer helped increase their physical activity
- 82% of students felt their physical activity increased during the program. Increases came primarily from walking, running, and biking more than they did before the program began.
- More than 77 percent of students felt they chose healthier foods such as fruit, vegetables and water rather than sugary snacks and soda
- 74% of students stated that their teachers helped them find ways to increase their steps or physical activity, while only 50% of students stated that their parents/guardians helped increase their steps or physical activity
- 92% of the students enjoyed the seven-week program
- 81% of students stated the competition among the schools was fun.
- 81% of adults stated the use of the pedometer helped increase physical activity
- 65% of adults surveyed stated their activity level increased during the program
- 98% of adults surveyed stated they would like the program to be offered again

An unanticipated benefit of the program was reported by the schools. They found that students were more alert and responsive in the classroom when they were provided more time to be active during the school day. The sixth graders at St. Mary's School were given an extra 10-15 minutes of activity time in the afternoon, which improved student participation and focus in class.

### **Conclusion**

The *On the Move* committee recognizes targeting parents/guardians to play a more active role in encouraging their children to increase physical activity and improve nutrition is critical for sustainability. All delivery organizations involved in this year's program are continuing the program in 2007 that encourages increased steps and the use of step counters. *On the Move* proves that using electronic step counters as part of a community-wide initiative can motivate individuals to set achievable goals and can get delivery organizations, such as schools and businesses involved in sustaining individual physical improvements.

## **Budget Information**

### ***2007 Budget:***

- Total cost for the program was \$17,022, which included the cost of the pedometers, advertising, collateral promotion materials, mailings.
- \$15,200 was raised through corporate and private donations to help purchase the step counters for all school students in grades 1-6.