Title: Walk Georgia 2012

Author: Crawley, Constance C.

Year: 2012

Summary:
Walk Georgia is an on-line fitness program that effectively promotes physical activity in adults, youth and children to reduce risk for obesity, overweight and other chronic diseases.

Situation:
Sixty-seven percent of adults in Georgia are overweight or obese and 33% of Georgia's 10-17 year olds. Georgia is second in the nation for obesity and overweight in school age and high school students. The fastest growing segment of the obese population are individuals who are at least 80 pounds or more above their ideal body weight. Inactivity and overweight are associated with type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, asthma, obstetrical complications, orthopedic problems in children, and certain cancers. The American Heart Association estimates that obesity costs American companies $225.8 billion per year in health-related productivity losses. Being obese also adds $460-$2,500 per year to the average health care cost of an individual. Successful weight control is a combination of healthy eating and regular physical activity. Only about 29% of children and youth between the ages 6-17 report doing vigorous physical activity on a regular basis. More than 80% of American adults and adolescents do not meet the federal guidelines for aerobic and muscle strength training activity. Nearly 27% of Georgia adults report no leisure time physical activity.

Response:
Walk Georgia was offered in the spring of 2012 for 12 weeks. People were encouraged to log their minutes of physical activity on the Walk Georgia Website either as an individual or as part of a 4-member team. Minutes logged were then converted into miles and for every 15 miles logged, the individual or team could select 3 counties to “visit.” During each visit, the individual could read factoids promoting tourism and education about the history, geography, recreational facilities and economy of that county. Participants also received a weekly newsletter about healthy eating, physical activity, and recreation opportunities in Georgia parks.

Impact:
During the spring of 2012, 2,099 Walk Georgia participants logged the equivalent of 443,279 miles. The average individual logged 16 miles per week and the average team member logged 18 miles per week. Thirty percent of participants had done Walk Georgia previously, but for 52 percent, this was their first time. The average participant reported weighing 173 when the program began and 166 pounds at the end of the program. Over 40 percent of the participants reported physical activity during the last week of the program. Forty-eight percent stated that Walk Georgia had helped them to increase their physical activity and that they intended to continue this level of activity once the program ended. At the beginning of the program, 67% of participants reported that they exercised three or more days per week, but at the end of the program 91.55% did. Ninety-four percent of participants were satisfied with the program and 91.4% said they would recommend it to others.

Scope: State

County: Clarke
Group: Family & Consumer Sciences

State Issue: Food, Nutrition and Health
Program Function(s):
Extension

Program Area(s):
Family and Consumer Sciences

Topic(s):
Overweight & Obesity
FO-6: Georgians will decrease morbidity from chronic disease through improved nutrition practices.

Keyword(s):
Weight Control
Physical Activity
Exercise
Walk GA Banner Program
Chronic Disease

Funding Source(s):
Smith Lever Act Funds

CAES Collaborators(s):
Pitts, Emily C
Baggarly, Jan
Kriesel, Warren R.
Bowie, Maria Beggs