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Editor's note: Step It Up, Kentucky! Proclamation attached.

DPH Challenges Communities to Step It Up!

Campaign Encourages Healthy Environments, Access to Walking, Physical Activity

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 27, 2016)— The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is challenging communities and organizations to join [Step It Up, Kentucky!](#). This statewide campaign aims to improve the health of all Kentuckians by building the demand for walkable communities, making walking a priority.

Public health recommends getting 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week to improve health, which can easily be achieved by walking. People are more likely to make the decision to walk when they have places, programs and policies that provide opportunities and encouragement.

"Getting people to move more starts with improving the places we live, learn, work and play," said Elaine Russell, coordinator for the Obesity Prevention Program. "Communities can be built for people to be active in their everyday life. By providing safe, attractive and convenient places to walk, anybody can incorporate exercise into their daily routine."

Recently, the U.S. Surgeon General launched [Step It Up! A Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities](#), which calls on Americans to increase walking by designing communities that encourage physical activity in order to address rising rates of chronic disease. Step It Up, Kentucky! demonstrates a state-level commitment to the Surgeon General's call to action.

Step It Up! has already received numerous endorsements from businesses, organizations, individuals and state leaders, including Gov. Matt Bevin, who issued an official proclamation in support of Step It Up!

There are many things communities can do to support *Step It Up, Kentucky!*, including participating in walking programs, working with local coalitions to create spaces and opportunities for walking, or just spreading the message that Kentucky communities need to be redesigned as thriving places for everybody to be active and healthy.

Individuals and organizations can join *Step It Up, Kentucky!* by pledging their support and taking any of the small steps to promote walking in their communities:

- Organization Endorsement of *Step It Up, Kentucky!* >>> [CLICK HERE](#)
- Individual Pledge to *Step It Up, Kentucky!* >>> [CLICK HERE](#)

Over the past few years, the DPH Obesity Prevention and Healthy Communities Programs have provided competitive funding opportunities for 27 local communities to develop pedestrian plans. Through the Walkable Communities Committee, DPH has worked with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to establish free statewide trainings and provide technical assistance on designing walkable communities.

“The collaboration between Kentucky’s Public Health Department and Transportation Cabinet is transforming communities across the state,” said Ian Thomas, state and local program manager for *America Walks*, a nonprofit national organization that promotes walking and works to build walkable communities. “Their Walkable Communities Committee and training programs are a national model, which we hope to see replicated in other states.”

The Surgeon General’s call to action reinforces the importance of this work and encourages more communities to contribute to a statewide walking movement.

“Creating a culture that supports healthy lifestyles starts with building support at the local level,” said Dr. Connie White, acting commissioner for DPH. “All Kentuckians deserve safe, inviting places to be active. *Step It Up, Kentucky!* is the first step on a long journey to better community health.”

From adding sidewalks to developing parks and recreation sites, there are a number of things communities can do to become more walkable. Winchester, for example, created a mile-long circular path in the middle of the Central Kentucky city by simply mowing a stretch of undeveloped land. Rockcastle County, meanwhile, paved a one-mile path along a roadway in Mt. Vernon that is now used by walkers, runners and bikers. The path also served as the site for an eight-week walking challenge in the community.

For more information on Step It Up!, visit the Partnership for a Fit Kentucky’s website: <http://www.fitky.org/our-efforts/physical-activity/step-it-up-kentucky>. If you are interested in reading more about obesity prevention, increasing access to physical activity, or what other communities are doing to encourage wellness, visit the Partnership for a Fit Kentucky’s blog <http://www.fitky.org/category/blog/>.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.