

2023

WALK WITH A DOC: COLUMBUS NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING CLUBS *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*



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PROGRAM DETAILS

Overview

Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs provides Columbus residents with a unique opportunity to engage in physical activity while also providing a casual setting for interaction with medical providers.

The ninth season of the program spanned from April to November 2023, offering a total of 64 community walks across five locations. Walks were held at five community recreation centers around Columbus: twice per month at Woodward Park on the North Side, Marion Franklin Park on the South Side, Dodge Park on the West Side, and Big Walnut Park on the Far East Side, and once per month at Linden Community Center on the North Side, which was a new location for the partnership this year. These health-vulnerable areas were selected to provide an opportunity for physical activity in neighborhoods where those opportunities are limited.

The program allows residents of these communities to access healthcare providers on a regular basis and connects them to valuable medical advice that extends beyond physical activity. Walking paths at each site are paved to ensure wheelchair accessibility, and people of all ages and abilities are encouraged to attend. Walkers are invited to walk as long as they choose, with no minimum distance or pace required to participate. The selected community centers are centrally located in each neighborhood, and provide an indoor space in case of inclement weather.



Walk Details

All Walk with a Doc events took place on Saturday mornings and lasted for approximately one hour. At the beginning of each event, participants gathered and listened to a five-minute talk about a relevant health topic from a medical professional. The majority of the events were led by OhioHealth physicians, and other medical partners occasionally provided support when OhioHealth physicians were unavailable. Topics included many relevant health issues such as heart health, cancer, dementia, diabetes, arthritis, nutrition, sleep, stress, weight loss, healthy aging, and more. After the brief health presentation, the medical professional led the group on a walk along a designated path.

During the walk, participants were encouraged to engage in discussion with the health professional. Many providers are “regulars,” attending multiple walks and developing relationships with community members. Walks are staffed by Columbus Recreation and Parks, as well as volunteers from YMCA of Central Ohio.



Two special events were held throughout the season. On May 6th, Dr. Jerry Sterkowicz and over a dozen physicians from the US Medical Soccer Team joined the North Side event to walk and talk with participants (pictured top right). On May 20th, Dr. Kabwe Chilupe stressed the importance of finding activities that you enjoy by leading the South Side participants in a “Dance with a Doc” event where the group learned several line dances together (pictured bottom right).



Incentives

Throughout the season, a variety of incentive items including t-shirts, pedometers, and healthy snacks were offered to increase attendance and enthusiasm about the program. Participants frequently and proudly wear and use their incentives throughout the season and in their neighborhoods during the rest of the year.

End-Of-Year Celebration

On November 4, 2023, walkers were invited to an End of Year Celebration at Franklin Park. This event brought together walkers, leaders, volunteers, and partners from all four locations to walk together and celebrate another successful season. Approximately 80 individuals attended the event. All participants received a WWAD grocery bag and a pair of On shoes. Raffle prizes included Fitbits, CRPD & YMCA memberships, and Columbus Zoo passes. This event was emceed by Dr. David Sabgir, an OhioHealth cardiologist and founder of the international Walk with a Doc program.

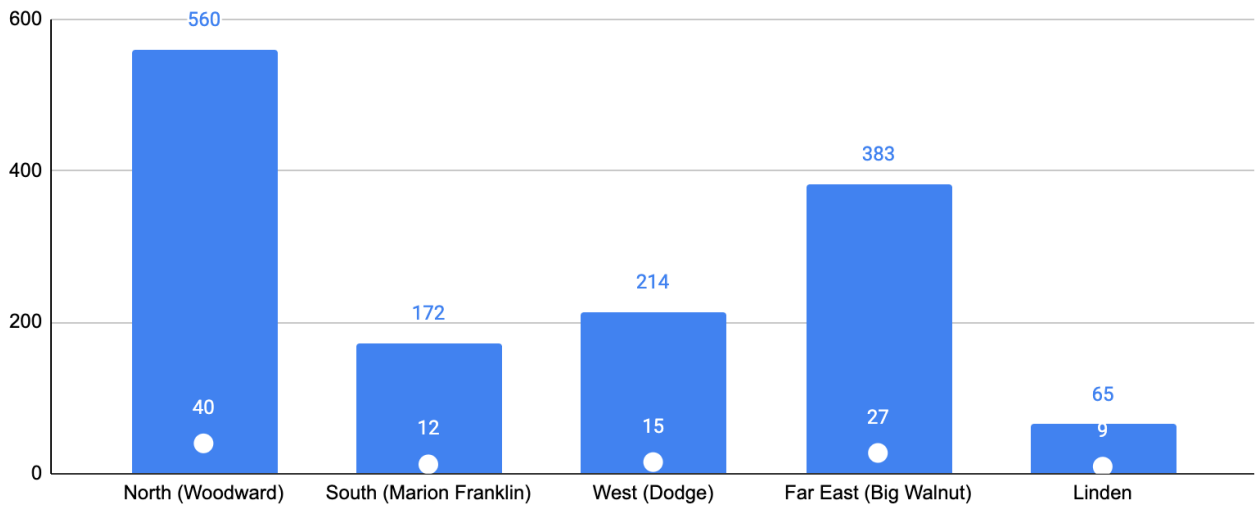


EVALUATION

Attendance

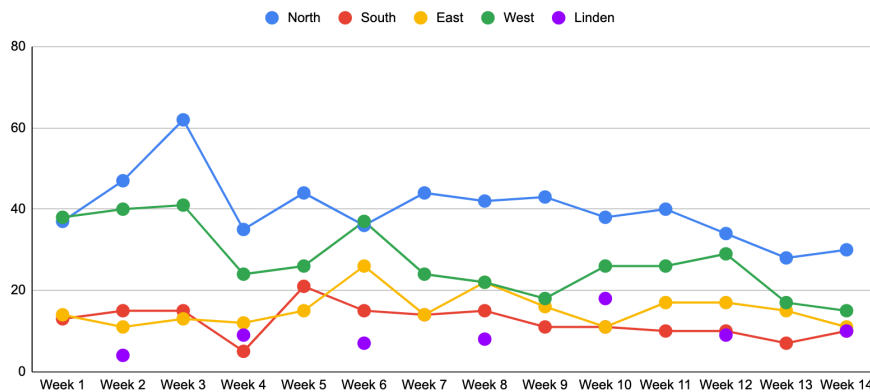
In total, Walk with a Doc Columbus saw 1,474 walks taken by approximately 200 people during the 2023 season, which is a 30% increase from the 2022 season*. The average across all 5 locations was 20.8 participants per walk. As displayed in the chart below, average attendance for each location was North Side: 40, South Side: 12, West Side: 15, Far East: 27, and Linden: 9. Each location saw many new participants throughout the season, as well as a consistent group of “regulars” that came nearly every week. Some participants attended Walk events at multiple locations.

Total & Average Walker Visits



*In addition to the numbers in the chart above, 80 walkers attended the End of Year Celebration walk.

Average Attendance By Week



Participant Feedback

Participants were asked to complete a short survey at the end of the season to assess their satisfaction with the program. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 98% saying they enjoyed the program overall. Below are the top reasons why participants chose to participate in Walk with a Doc events:

- Maintain/improve my health (88%)
- Get my physical activity for the day (76%)
- Connect with a healthcare provider outside of a medical setting (64%)
- Socialize with others (62%)
- Spend time outside (55%)

Leader Feedback

Evaluation of Goals Set for the 2023 Season

- **Retention:**
 - 2023 Goal: Bring back at least 60% of walkers from 2022 in the 2023 season.
 - 2023 Evaluation: 47% of walkers from 2022 returned in 2023 (70 out of 146)
- **Growth:**
 - Goal: Increase the average attendance at each location by at least 10%.
 - Evaluation: The North Side decreased by 9%, South Side increased by 37%, West Side decreased by 10%, Far East Side increased by 37%, and the End Of Year Celebration increased by 36%.
- **Participation:**
 - Goal: More than 50% of participants will attend at least 5 walks.
 - Evaluation: We were unable to track this information.
- **Expansion:**
 - Goal: Bring the existing WWAD program at Linden Park into the Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs partnership.
 - Evaluation: the Linden WWAD program was successfully brought into the partnership.
- **Walk Leaders:**
 - Goal: Identify physician champions, residency programs, and other opportunities to increase Walk Leader engagement.
 - Evaluation: 21 OhioHealth providers were involved throughout the season (a decrease from 23 in 2022). 5 providers from outside of the OhioHealth network were involved (an increase from 3 in 2022). 7 events were not staffed with a physician or healthcare provider (an increase from 3 in 2022).
- **Participant Experience:**
 - Goal: Explore additional challenges and incentives to attract new participants and provide a good experience for existing participants.

- o Evaluation: T-shirt distribution went better this year thanks to the staff at CRPD. Participants enjoyed the free shoes that were given out at the end-of-year celebration.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs marked its ninth season in 2023, and saw an overwhelmingly positive response from the community. The program will return again in April 2024, and we will continue to look for new ways to grow the program and support the health of our participants. We will examine our walker attendance in detail, and set goals for 2024 with regards to retention, growth, and overall participation. We will work diligently throughout 2024 to provide the best Walk with a Doc experience possible to the Columbus community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The program has been a model of strong multi-sector collaboration since it began. The program would not have been a success without the collaboration of the following partners:

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department provided the use of their facilities and walking paths. Staff also assisted with promotion and programmatic support such as tracking attendance, distributing incentives, and providing healthy snacks and drinks.

OhioHealth was the healthcare sponsor who provided funding for the program and was instrumental in recruiting and scheduling volunteer physicians for the walks.

Walk with a Doc (WWAD) is a national nonprofit based in Columbus, Ohio. WWAD took the lead in coordinating and managing program logistics by hosting monthly meetings with partners. WWAD provided fiscal management, branding, incentives, and promotion by sharing weekly updates to participants and leaders via their social media, website, and email newsletter.

YMCA of Central Ohio promoted the program to their members and provided volunteers to welcome participants, help with sign-in, distribute incentives, introduce leaders, and make announcements.

Columbus Department of Public Safety provided Community Liaison Officers to walk with participants and answer questions from community residents about the neighborhood.

Columbus Public Health served in an advisory capacity with historical knowledge of the program.

Fleet Feet helped promote the program in their stores and worked with On to provide free shoes for participants who attended the end-of-year celebration.