



2018

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



PROGRAM

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 sixth season of the program spanned from April to November 2018, offering a total of 60 community walks across four locations. Walks were held twice per month at four community recreation centers around Columbus; 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. These health-vulnerable areas were selected to provide an opportunity for physical activity in neighborhoods where those opportunities are limited.

The program provides the residents of these communities to access medical 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 for set-up and in inclement weather. Light refreshments are provided at each walk.

Walk Details

Walks begin at 8:30 AM, and are led by a medical professional after a five-minute talk about a relevant health topic. Mount Carmel physicians lead the majority of walks, with other medical partners who support Walk with a Doc attending when Mount Carmel physicians are unavailable. Topics include many relevant health issues such as immunizations, diabetes prevention and management, and Alzheimer’s disease. After their presentations, the medical professionals lead the group on an hour-long walk along a designated path.

During the walk, participants are encouraged to engage in discussion with the visiting physician or health professional. Many providers are “regulars,” attending multiple walks and developing relationships with community members. In addition, once per season, each side is visited by the Mount



Dr. John O’Handley addresses the walkers at the Far East Recreation Center



Walkers at Marion Franklin enjoy fellowship and conversation during their walk

Carmel Mobile Medical Coach, a 40-foot mobile clinic that provides a variety of medical services intended for individuals without access to health care. Walkers are able to tour the mobile clinic and speak to a nurse about how the Mobile Coach is used. Walks are staffed by volunteers from YMCA of Central Ohio.

Incentives

Throughout the season, a variety of incentive items including t-shirts, pedometers, fanny packs, hot/cold packs, and cooling towels were offered to increase attendance and enthusiasm about the program. Pedometers are offered to each walker at their first walk, and t-shirts are earned by attending at least three walks. Each other incentive was earned by completing one of three tasks: bringing a friend on the date the incentive was offered, liking or sharing content from the WWAD Facebook page, or having attended at least 75% of the walks up to that point. Participants frequently and proudly wear and use their incentives throughout the season, and in their neighborhoods during the rest of the year.

Evaluation

Participants were asked to complete short surveys at the end of each walk to assess their satisfaction with the program. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and many participants expressed their thanks for the program, writing *“My first time, very enjoyable. Won't be my last!”*; *“I am older now, 88 years, and so enjoy making the trip here and walking with others;”* and *“Please continue this event. This event is great for health/wellness as well as neighborhood comradery”* among many other encouraging comments. It is clear that Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs has made a positive impact in the health and wellness of the Columbus community.

After a particularly difficult year for scheduling physicians in 2017, the 2018 season showed improvement but was not without difficulties. A total of nine walks this season did not have a physician in attendance, and five of those eight were South Side walks. The South Side location has been the most difficult to schedule each year, and further emphasis will be placed on ensuring that participants at this location receive the same level of program quality as each other location.

Community Partnerships

The Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs program has been a model of strong multi-sector collaboration since it began. With Columbus Public Health playing the role of coordinating and managing program logistics, Mount Carmel Health System provides physician volunteers as well as printing and administrative support, Walk with a Doc's main office provides financial support, the YMCA of Central Ohio provides volunteers to manage the walking events themselves, and the City's Recreation and Parks and Public Safety departments provide locations for the walk and staffing support. Each organization also participates in regular planning meetings throughout the year.

In February 2019, the Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs will be represented at the Active Living Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. The program was selected to present a poster documenting the multi-sector collaboration that has been the backbone of its success. This opportunity will help to promote the Walk with a Doc program nationally, seek to learn lessons from other active living programs, and gather recognition and support for the Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs.

Starting in 2016, Fleet Feet Sports became a sponsoring partner of the Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs. In the first year of the program, Fleet Feet funded eight “Shoe Scholarships” at a total value of \$500, achieved by matching a \$250 donation from one of their vendors. Those scholarships

gave shoes, socks, and insoles to eight walkers who had been nominated by their peers for their commitment to Walk with a Doc and strong example of living a healthy lifestyle. In subsequent years, Fleet Feet has continued to put forth \$250 of their own money to sponsor four shoe scholarships.

ATTENDANCE

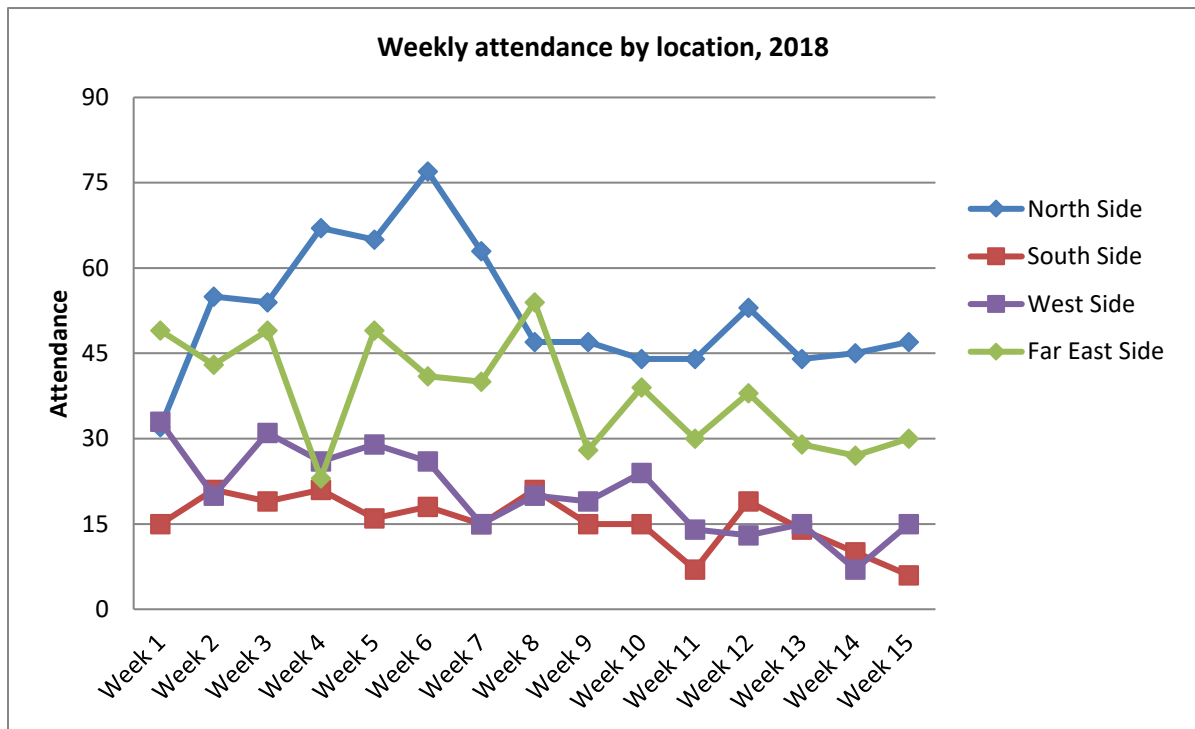
In total, 370 unique community members participated in the Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs in 2018. Average attendance at the walks decreased by 6% overall, which returns the program to approximately the same participation as 2016. There is no immediately apparent explanation for the decrease in attendance. Adverse weather was no more common than in years past, and community outreach and advertising remained largely the same as well. Continued efforts will be made to expand outreach and reverse this decline in the 2019 season. The commitment of our walkers is outstanding: Thirteen walkers attended every single walk at their respective locations, and 43% of walkers attended 5 or more walks!

Table 1: Average attendance, 2016-2018

Side	2016 average	2017 average	2018 average	2016 to 2018 change
North	60	59	52	Decreased by 12%
South	13	14	15	Increased by 9%
Far East	33	37	38	Increased by 2%
West	22	24	20	Decreased by 15%



North Side walkers gather to listen to Dr. Gowda



The 2018 season saw the first decline in attendance in the six-year history of the program. There was a slight decrease in the number of unique walkers (down 3% from 2017), but a similar proportion of

walkers attending 5 or more walks (43% compared to 44% in 2017). This may indicate a need to better attract those occasional walkers who come to one or a few walks, and encourage them to continue walking on a more regular basis.

The North Side has independently worked to provide name tags for each walker, helping to create a greater sense of community and familiarity. This added program element could help to make new walkers feel more welcome and included, and so name tags will be provided to all walk locations starting in 2019.

The Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs display a great deal of pride for their specific neighborhood, and the trophy awarded annually to the group with the largest increase in attendance is highly prized. More frequent challenges related to attendance, number of steps, and other competitive tasks may engage walkers on a deeper level.

As both an evaluation strategy and a promotional tool, capturing the stories of individual walkers could be very impactful. Walkers who are in need of motivation may feel inspired and more connected to the program after having a chance to hear and celebrate the successes of walkers who have experienced personal and health benefits from participating in Walk with a Doc. Additional efforts will be made in 2019 to collect and share these success stories across our walks and with the larger community.

END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

On November 17th 2018, walkers were invited to the fourth annual End of Year Celebration breakfast at the Mount Carmel College of Nursing. This event brought together walkers, doctors, partners, and community members to mingle and share stories from the 2018 season. Approximately 85 individuals attended, and awards were distributed to recognize outstanding volunteers, physicians, and walkers who made the season a success. A special award was presented to the South Side walking club for having the highest percent increase in attendance from 2017 to 2018. This event was emceed by Dr. David Sabgir, founder of the national Walk with a Doc program.



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs marked its sixth season in 2018, and saw its first decline in participation over those six years. While new efforts will be made to return the program to positive growth, there will also be efforts to capture other metrics of success. Currently the program is reaching close to 400 Columbus residents each year, and enhancing the program to maximize the benefits for those participants will be a primary focus. The program will return again in April 2019, and will continue to look for new ways to grow and support the health of our participants.

We have examined our walker attendance in detail, and have set goals for 2019 with regards to retention, growth, and overall participation.

- Retention: We will bring back at least 60% of walkers from 2018 in the 2019 season
- Growth: We will reach at least 200 new walkers in 2019
- Participation: More than 50% of participants will walk at least 5 times

Rather than focusing on total number of participants, which is the result of many factors including these three, each of these goals can be directly targeted by communication to previous walkers, outreach into the community, and strong program delivery and incentives, respectively. We will work diligently throughout 2019 to pursue these goals and provide the best Walk with a Doc experience possible to the Columbus community.

PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The program would not have been a success without the collaboration of the following partners:

Columbus Public Health- Columbus Public Health staff promoted, implemented, and evaluated Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs. In addition, Columbus Public Health staff provided updates to partners, information to community members' inquiry, trained the YMCA of Central Ohio volunteers, and performed outreach.

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department provided the use of their facilities and walking paths. Staff also assisted with program promotion and programmatic support.

Department of Public Safety- Community Liaison Officers attended at least one walk at each site. The Community Liaison Officers walked with the participants and answered questions from community residents about the neighborhood.

Mount Carmel Health System- Mount Carmel Health System was instrumental in recruiting and scheduling the volunteer physicians and Mount Carmel Mobile Medical Coach for the walks, program promotion, providing funding for printing, incentives, and programmatic support.

YMCA of Central Ohio- The YMCA of Central Ohio not only promoted the program to their members, but also recruited and offered volunteers. Volunteers from the YMCA of Central Ohio set up and tore down the walk each week. The volunteers were crucial in coordinating program logistics, encouraging participants to sign-in and fill out surveys, and promoting the program throughout the season. The YMCA of Central Ohio also provided information about its chronic disease prevention programs.

Walk with a Doc- Walk with a Doc is a national non-profit walking advocacy organization based in Columbus, Ohio. Walk with a Doc provided program funding, branding, promoted the Walk with a Doc: Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs on its website and listserv, and provided programmatic information and support.

Fleet Feet Columbus- Fleet Feet Columbus provided a \$250 donation that was used to provide new socks and shoes for four program participants who were nominated by their peers.