



2022

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 eighth season of the program and first full season after the pandemic spanned from April to November 2022, offering a total of 49 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 allows 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.



Walk Details

All Walk with a Doc events took place at 9:00 AM on Saturday morning 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 immunizations, nutrition, heart health, diabetes prevention and management, mindfulness, 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.

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.

Evaluation

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 96% saying they enjoyed the program overall. Below are the top reasons for why participants chose to participate in Walk with a Doc events:

- Maintain/improve my health (100%)
- Get my physical activity for the day (77%)
- Spend time outside (68%)
- Connect with a healthcare provider outside of a medical setting (64%)
- Socialize with others (59%)

Many participants expressed their thanks for the program. One participant wrote, “I loved learning new health-related info, being out in nature with friends, and getting physical exercise!” Another wrote, “Since the COVID-19 pandemic, this was a great incentive for us and gave us a healthy goal to look forward to.” Many expressed their appreciation for the volunteer medical professionals and the engaging talks on a variety of subjects. One suggested that we increase our marketing efforts because “everybody needs to know about this program”.

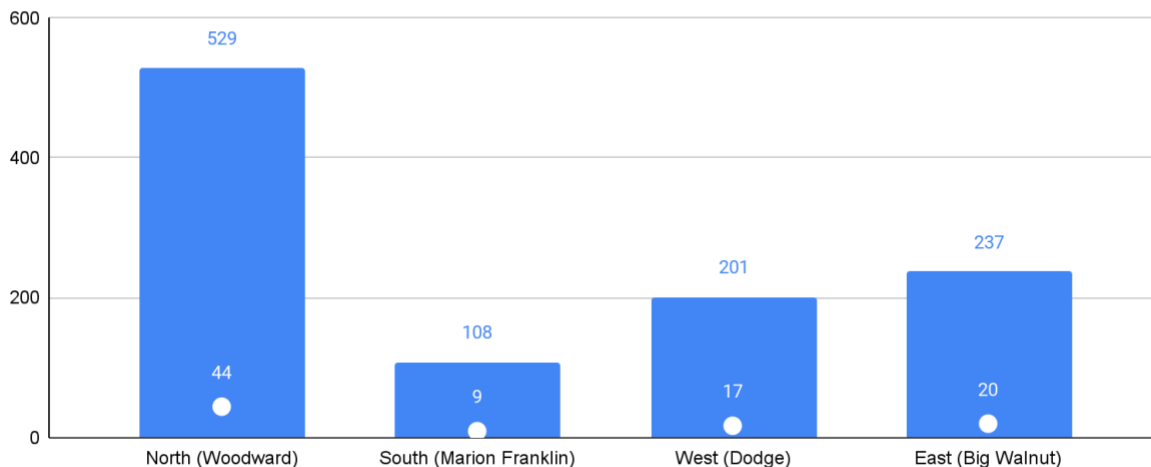
Medical professionals also appeared to enjoy numerous benefits from leading the events. OhioHealth conducted an end-of-year survey, and 100% of respondents said they enjoyed the walks and want to lead again next year. One wrote, “This was a very positive experience. I feel like the walkers were very receptive to the information and several of them came prepared with questions.” Another wrote, “This is a great program. I love the community interactions.” Only three events did not have a healthcare professional sign up to lead. It is clear that Walk with a Doc has made a positive impact on the health and wellness of the Columbus community.



ATTENDANCE

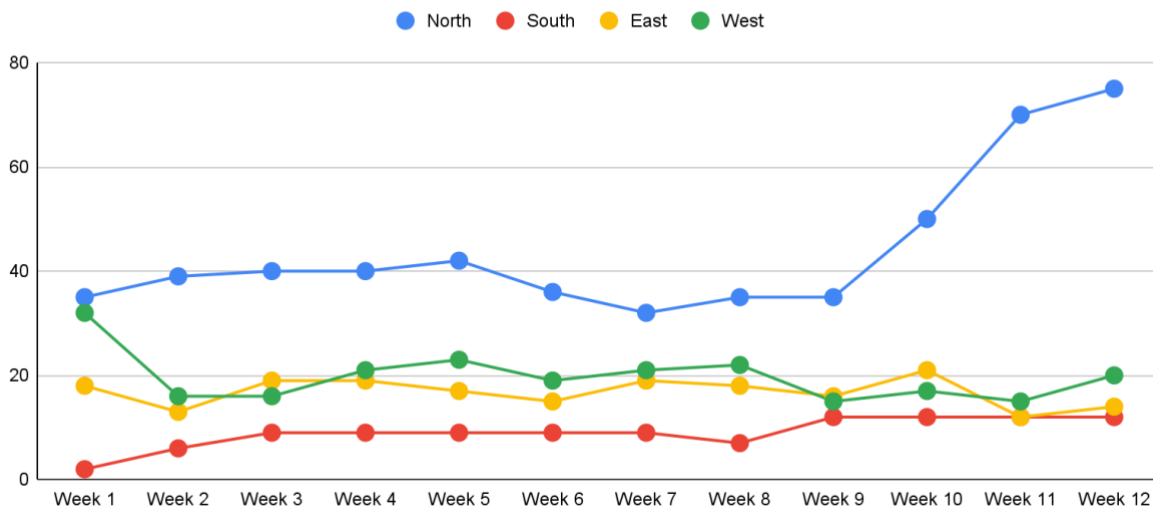
In total, Walk with a Doc Columbus saw 1,134 walker “visits” during the 2022 season*. On average, the North Side hosted 44 participants/walk, South Side 9 participants/walk, West Side 17 participants/walk and Far East Side 20 participants/walk. Each location saw many new participants throughout the season, 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, 59 walkers attended the End of Year Celebration walk.

Average Attendance By Week



END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

On October 29, 2022, 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 59 individuals attended, and awards were distributed to recognize outstanding volunteers, physicians, and walkers who made the season a success. 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 eighth season in 2022, and saw an overwhelmingly positive response after pausing for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will return again in April 2023, 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 2023 with regards to retention, growth, and overall participation.

- Retention: Bring back at least 60% of walkers from 2022 in the 2023 season.
- Growth: Increase the average attendance at each location by at least 10%.
- Participation: More than 50% of participants will attend at least 5 walks.
- Expansion: Bring the existing Walk with a Doc program at Linden Park into the Columbus Neighborhood Walking Clubs partnership.
- Walk Leaders: Identify physician champions, residency programs, and other opportunities to increase Walk Leader engagement.
- Participant Experience: Explore additional challenges and incentives to attract new participants and provide a good experience for existing participants.

We will work diligently throughout 2023 to pursue these goals and 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 answered questions from community residents about the neighborhood.

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