

Fitness programs change lifestyles and health

Physical activity that increases the heart rate helps to decrease health risks and provides additional health benefits such as improved sleep, lower cholesterol and improved mental health. Fitness programs including walking and dancing are accessible to almost anyone, easy to start and can lead to behavior changes and positively impact residents' health and well-being by decreasing risks for obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, depression, cancer and death.

Here are a few examples of Land-grant University System work in fitness programs:

- In **North Carolina**, an Extension professional created a twice-weekly line dancing class for adults and seniors. The program offers an environment that encourages participants to move at their own pace and have fun while improving their physical, social and mental health. *North Carolina A&T; 1890 Extension* (See [full statement](#)).
- Walking education for adults in **Indiana** provided increased physical activity and walking behaviors. The Get WalkIN program is a 12-week series of emails on different topics. Participants increased time spent walking and self-efficacy for physical activity. *Purdue University; Smith-Lever (3b&c)* (See [full statement](#)).
- **Louisiana** towns received assistance from Extension on the federal funding application process for sidewalk infrastructure. As a result, 11 communities with populations under 5,000 received over \$13 million for pedestrian improvements, improving physical activity, safety and social connections. *LSU AgCenter; Non-profit grants & contracts, state appropriations* (See [full statement](#)).

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Creating infrastructure to encourage physical activity

Extension professionals and community organizations in **Arkansas** connected and implemented built environment changes in a downtown community, making it more pedestrian-friendly. A two-mile walking trail was constructed on the banks of the Mississippi River. It connects to the downtown area by three existing trails. The project included wayfinding signage, crosswalks, and accessible features. Pedestrian counters show increased trail use and these increases in physical activity translate into potential healthcare cost savings.

University of Arkansas; Other USDA Competitive, other funding (See [full statement](#)).