

PREVENTION

IT'S NOT JUST A WALK IN THE PARK, IT'S A WORKOUT!

by Diane Nelms, Obici Healthcare Foundation Program Officer

How does walking in a quaint park sound - perhaps one tucked away near downtown Suffolk featuring a .32-mile trail for easy walking, jogging or running. Where trees, ferns and plants are everywhere. Or how about a park in a wildlife refuge, or one beside a river or one on a lake? Suffolk boasts them all and more!

Walking in a park is pleasant and for all levels of fitness. Spending time in nature and fresh air is reported to lessen stress and rejuvenate.

Walking is easy. No special or expensive equipment is needed - just a pair of comfortable shoes. All ages and abilities can walk. Make a plan with a friend as walking alone on trails is discouraged.

Being physically active is one of the most important contributors to improving health. Exercising addresses chronic disease, including heart disease and diabetes.

Walking can help manage weight and strengthen stomach muscles, which helps prevent falls. It can even reduce depression and may improve thinking! Walking lifts your mood, promotes relaxation and improves concentration.

Walking in a park and being in nature boosts self-control and optimism and encourages slowing down.

Let's park walk in Suffolk - here's the list:

Bennett's Creek Park - 57 acres located along Bennett's Creek with natural resources and a 1-mile natural surface, easy walking trail; Cedar Hill Cemetary - 37 acres in a highly decorated cemetary with a 1-mile loop trail for easy walking; Cypress Park is in downtown Suffolk with a .32 mile trail; Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge - just 15 minutes from downtown Suffolk with the 4.5 mile natural surface Washington Ditch trail and the elevated Washington

Boardwalk trail; Health and Human Services Building - features a .2-mile loop among a variety of unique buildings in the historic Fairgrounds section of downtown Suffolk; Holly Lawn Cemetary - 35-acres located in the business district and surrounded by natural landscapes; Lake Meade Park Trail - 2 mile round trip stone-dust trail among beautiful landscaping, waterfront views and located in the business district; Lone Star Lakes (North) - 1,063 acres with 12 freshwater lakes and a 4-mile natural surface

for walking; Lone Star Lakes (South) - a 1-mile, two loop, natural-surface trail built for relaxing paces; Magnolia Park - .25 mile paved path tucked away in the Huntersville Community; Planter's Park - .25 mile paved loop trail just minutes from downtown; Pughesville Park - a lollipop-shaped trail with an asphalt surface located in the northern end of Suffolk; Seaboard Coastline Trail - 3.3 miles that connects Suffolk, starting in Driver, to the Chesapeake city line and is part of the

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" Providing walkable trails in our communities provides excellent opportunities for individuals and families to have a positive quality of health and wellness sustainability"



Sleepy Hole Park

Suffolk Public Schools Encourage Integrated Physical Activity in the Classroom

by Janice White, Obici Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors

Physical activity, movement of the body using energy, is important for good health. Research indicates that adults need 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise each week and children and adolescents should exercise 60 minutes per day. Sedentary lifestyles and changes in eating habits have contributed to weight gain, as more Americans work at desk jobs, and use electronic devices.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that “the prevalence of obesity increased dramatically during the past 30 years. Although the prevalence may have stabilized, it remains high. More than one-third of U.S. adults and 17 percent of children are now obese.” It further states that “physical activity such as walking can help improve health even without weight loss. People who are physically active live longer and have lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression and some cancers.” Source: Center for Disease Control (August 2012). CDC Vital Signs

As obesity rates were increasing at an alarming rate for children across the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation, Suffolk Public Schools developed a strategic plan to educate and encourage students to incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into their daily routine. Thanks to funding from the Obici Healthcare Foundation, Suffolk Public Schools was able to implement its strategic plan.

With funding, Suffolk Public Schools hired a wellness coach, integrated physical activity/movement into the teaching of core subjects in kindergarten through grades 10, and promoted healthy eating and physical activity from childhood to adulthood. Evaluations of the program revealed that obesity rates decreased, students moved more and made better food choices. Parents were also pleased to see the impact of the program on their children and families.

Walking is one way of getting the physical exercise needed to maintain health. It is an activity that does not require gym membership and can easily be done individually or as a family activity. Kudos to the Obici Healthcare Foundation for promoting community health, particularly the reduction of obesity among children.

"Our country will return to a state of better health only when adults accept the challenge to engage in physical activity and healthy eating behaviors and encourage their children to make better food choices and likewise engage in physical activity as a way of life."

Janice F. White joined the Obici Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors on April 1, 2017. Formerly, she was the Supervisor of Health Services and Administrator of the Strategic Health Action Plan for Suffolk Public Schools. Prior to her career at Suffolk Public Schools, she was a medical surgical nurse at Sentara Obici Hospital.



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Rails to Trails Program which utilizes unused railways to ultimately connect to Virginia Beach; Sleepy Hole Park - 74 acres that sits on the Nansemond River with both an upper and lower loop; Train Station Prentis Street - located in the historic district with east, west and spur trails; Whaleyville Community Center - located in Whaleyville on the south end of Suffolk, this 1/4 mile trail is dogleg-shaped; and Lake Kennedy Park Trail, Suffolk's newest .25 mile asphalt exercise trail will open soon.

Suffolk is home to some of our region's most beautiful parks. Helen Gabriel, assistant director for Suffolk's Parks and Recreation states, “Providing walkable trails in our communities provides excellent opportunities for individuals and families to have a positive quality of health and wellness sustainability.”

Visit www.suffolkva.us/parks/parks and click on the Suffolk Walking Trail Guide.pdf for addresses and locations of Suffolk's parks.

We encourage you to take in the beauty, the seasons and nature. Enjoy these beautiful parks - here's to your health and "workout"!



Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge