



PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH GRANTS

NRPA POLICY POSITION

- Support grant programs funded through the HHS/Labor/Ed Appropriations and administered through the Centers for Disease Control, that support state and community level programs that prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases. Such as the CDC Arthritis Program which provides funding for the sub-awards given to community park and recreation agencies to implement the Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease Interventions.
- Support the inclusion of park and recreation agencies as directly eligible partners in any federal strategy or guidelines aimed at the local level.

BACKGROUND

Public park and recreation agencies play a vital role in improving the overall health and wellness of the nation. Because parks provide the spaces, places and opportunities for physical activity as well as nutrition programs, they are essential partners in combating some of the most complicated challenges our country faces, such as poor nutrition, hunger and obesity. Park and recreation agencies improve health outcomes and thus should be directly supported through national and community-level funding and policies that enable them to continue to expand their efforts in making a positive change in the health and wellness of our nation, especially relative to efforts to increase physical activity. Investments in preventive care and wellness promotion produce healthier children and adults.

In Kauai, Hawaii, they are engaging in extensive efforts to address a decline in health of local residents due to sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits. As part of the mayor of Kauai's vision to encourage and promote physical activity, the Kauai Parks and Recreation Department is collaborating with the Kauai District Health Office, Kauai Path, Inc., and a collection of other organizations — local, county and federal — to develop Ke Ala Hele Makalae, a coastal multi-use path for biking, walking and running. In mid-2012, 8.7 miles of the trail were complete. The partners have a long-term goal for the path to stretch 25 miles and serve as an open-access alternative transportation connection across the east side of Kauai Island. The goals of the multi-use path are to provide an alternative route between destinations

along the east coast of Kauai and decrease car usage and traffic congestion among residents and tourists.

The National Recreation and Park Association is proud to partner with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement the Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease (WWE) interventions through sub-awards to twenty-eight local park and recreation agencies in the first year and an additional 10 agencies in the second year. Through the first year of this initiative we have engaged nearly 2,400 people in these evidence-based programs and expect to reach an additional 1,000 next year. Participants reported both physiological improvements, such as decreased pain and increased energy levels, as well as psychological improvements, such as decreased anxiety and improved mood.

As the nation's most common cause of disability, arthritis intervention programs are essential to managing healthcare costs and quality of life.

According to the CDC, an estimated 52.5 million U.S. adults report having arthritis and that number is expected to grow to 67 million by 2030.

WHY CONGRESS SHOULD ACT

The obesity epidemic has serious health and economic consequences for our country. Since 1980, adult obesity rates have doubled, while childhood obesity rates have more than tripled, leading to a significant increase in more than 30 serious diseases. Physical inactivity and poor nutrition are large contributing factors to increased obesity. The obesity epidemic has placed a major strain on the healthcare system as more than one-quarter of healthcare costs are now related to obesity. Many of these costs are paid for by states and local communities and add to increased health insurance costs for all individuals. It is critical to fund the CDC prevention programs that support the park and recreation agencies and the work they do. These agencies have a network that reaches almost every community, including the most vulnerable.

¹ Environmental Factors Associated with Adults' Participation in Physical Activity: A Review. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2002; Physical Activity and the Built Environment. President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest, 2006.

² The Trust for Public Land Center for City Park Excellence. The Economic Benefits of Seattle's Park and Recreation System, 2011.

- **Studies show that living close to parks and other recreation facilities results in higher physical activity levels for both adults and youth.¹**
- **A 2011 study conducted on Seattle's park and recreation system revealed that Seattle's residents were able to save \$64 million in medical costs as a result of getting physical activity in the parks.²**