

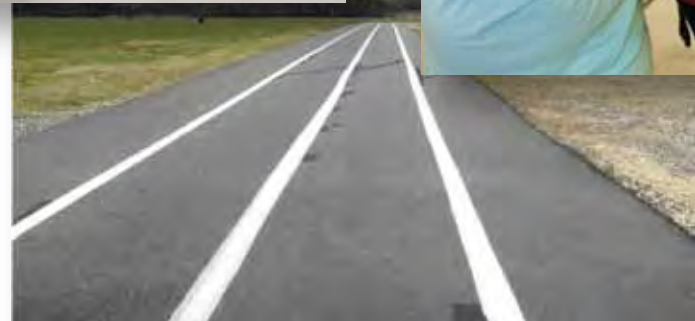


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# INSIDE *engage*



In this issue we explore health and fitness with in-depth articles on community fitness, obesity in Arkansas and the impact of physical inactivity.

Check out how community initiatives in Conway, Batesville and Lake Village are creating a healthier, more active Arkansas.

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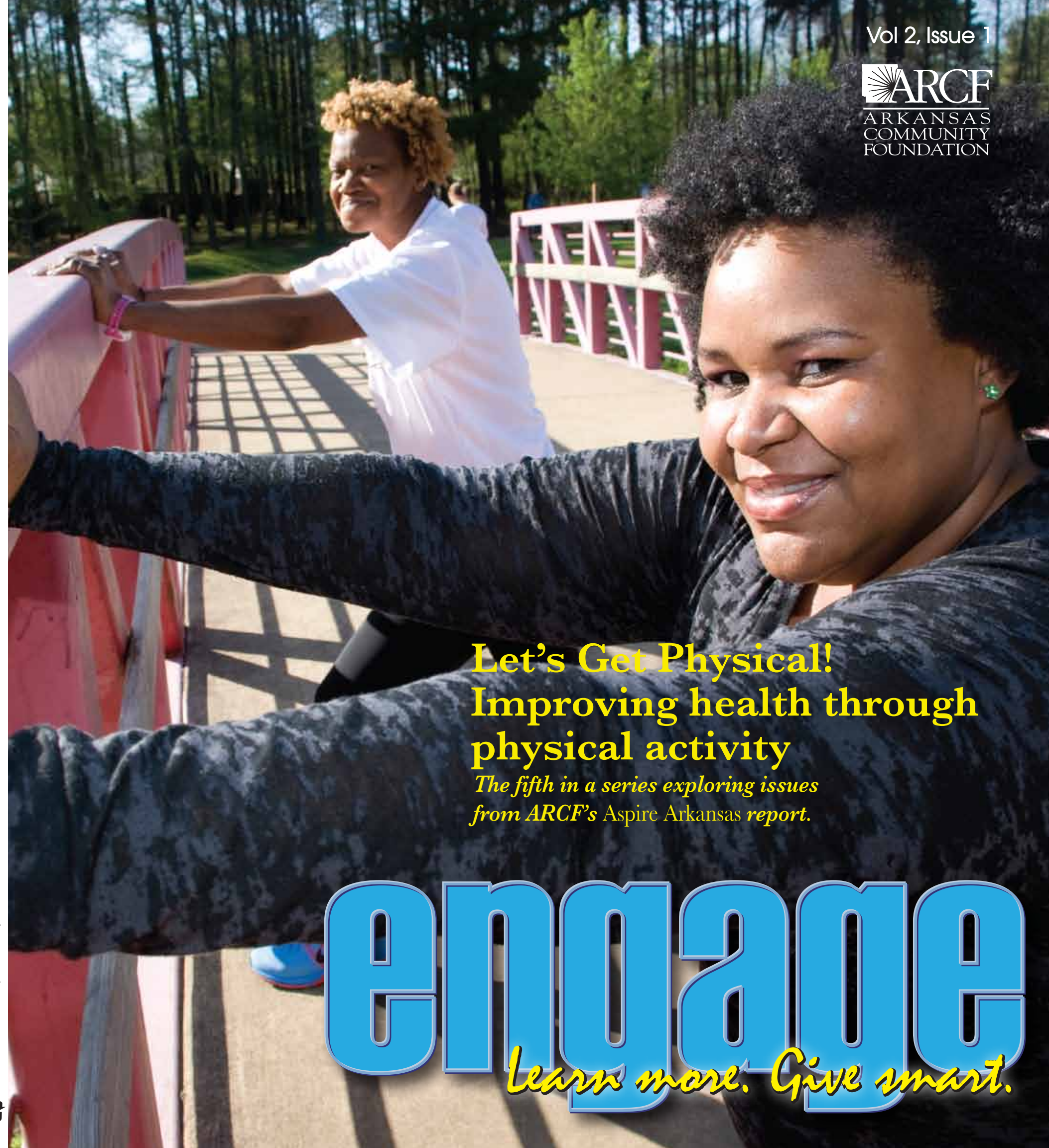
Vol 2, Issue 1



**Let's Get Physical!**  
**Improving health through physical activity**

*The fifth in a series exploring issues from ARCF's Aspire Arkansas report.*

**engage**  
*learn more. Give smart.*







Heather Larkin and Rosie, out for a walk.

## ARCF Helps Communities Promote Fitness

Becoming more active and healthy is ultimately a personal choice, but as the stories in this edition of *ENGAGE* attest, there is much we can do at the community level to help one another build exercise into our daily lives.

Promoting health through physical activity is an issue communities have to tackle together, and Arkansas Community Foundation provides a place where neighbors can come together to get started.

For example, up in Mountain Home, neighbors partnered to build a 50-mile hiking, jogging and biking trail around Lake Norfolk in memory of their friend David Floyd, who passed away in 2006. To make sure that the trail will be maintained, the group created an endowment at our local affiliate office in Mountain Home.

Another way Arkansans are working together is through Giving Tree Endowments, which are built by local people who pool their gifts in a single fund dedicated to their county or region. When you make a gift to the Giving Tree Endowment in your area, your donation benefits a broad range of local charitable needs, both now and in the future. Grants from our Giving Tree Endowments have helped build parks, purchase uniforms and practice spaces for children's athletic teams, fund exercise classes at senior centers and support Special Olympics teams, and that's just in the area of health and physical activity!

At Arkansas Community Foundation, our specialty is helping Arkansans come together to invest in the communities they live in and love. Whether your charitable passion is health, education, hunger or something else entirely, we're here to help you make *your* place a *better* place.

Heather Larkin, JD, CPA  
ARCF President and CEO

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Sheneatha Livingston, Aline Cross and Nick Cross jog at Conway's Tucker Creek trail.

# Arkansas Towns Get on Track to Support Healthy Living

by Kim Dishongh

**A** gym membership wasn't in Sheneatha Livingston's budget when she set out to get in shape three years ago. But Tucker Creek trail in Conway was there, free for the pounding, and it was perfect for her fitness needs.

"You always saw skinny and fit people running the streets. I was too embarrassed then to do that," says Livingston, who has lost more than 50 pounds since she started. "I felt safe and 'better' about my efforts running at the trails."

Paid for with a total of \$214,000 in grants from the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and part of a \$1.5 million voter-approved bond issue, the well-used three-mile trail is lined with portable potties, water fountains, benches, open spaces for throwing Frisbees and footballs, picnic spots and even public art.

It's one of the resources the city provides to give residents on opportunity to live healthier lifestyles.





**“The goal is — and we’re really close to this — that every residential district would be connected by a sidewalk... Ultimately our goal is to make the trails interface with all the different business areas of Conway.”**

**— Duston Morris**

### Vitality and Economic Growth in Conway

“If we look at how we make our communities and keep their vitality and keep their continued economic growth and development, we have to be able to attract businesses and professionals who want to come and live and work in our communities,” said Duston Morris, an assistant professor of health sciences at University of Central Arkansas and chairman of the Conway Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board. “So many people want active living now or at least the opportunities to get out and explore their communities.”

Morris moved to Conway from Kansas two years ago, in part because of the city’s efforts in this area and has taken an active role in making Conway a place where people can easily get fit. Part of the Tucker Creek trail is still under construction, according to Conway’s Parks and Recreation Director Steve Ibbotson. Another trail, Stone Dam Creek trail, which will tie into the UCA campus, is under construction as well.

“Ultimately our goal is to make the trails interface with all the different business areas of Conway,” Morris said.

It’s not all about walking and running in Conway, though. There are bike lanes on many of the city’s main roads and bike locks throughout downtown and on the UCA campus. There is even a bike share and repair program getting underway, which will offer repair and maintenance assistance through a local bike shop and loans of refurbished bikes for residents “in need of basic transportation.”

“It’s critical to point out that there’s not any one person who spearheads anything. It’s a group effort. The bottom line is everybody is on the same page — the mayor and the engineer and the city police and businesses and those who get out,” said Morris.

### Affordable Exercise Opportunities in Batesville

The Eat Well, Play Hard, Make It Balance program in Independence County is evidence of that. The program was funded for two years through a \$668,000 Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant from the Centers for Disease Control, money that paid for equipment, certified exercise instructors and certified nurses to do blood pressure and weight checks and offer nutritional advice.

Classes are held at schools in each of the county’s four public districts, all of which have formalized joint use agreement policies allowing the community to use school facilities after regular school hours. *(See page 6 for more on joint use agreements.)*

Jennifer Hughes of Newark lost 70 pounds by going to classes in her area. “The classes are motivation. I can’t work out by myself,” said Hughes, a single mom. “I would just quit on my own, or I would want to get started but I would never actually do it in the first place.”

The classes are close to Hughes’s convenience store job so she spends much less on gas to get there than she would to drive more than 30 miles round trip to

a gym — assuming she could afford a membership — and they don’t take time away from her 4- and 5-year old children, who go with her. “They get a workout themselves just running around with the other kids,” said Hughes.

### Finding Funding

Funding for the program ran out in October 2012, but private donations kept it going for a while longer. On Feb. 1, \$20-a-month fees were put in place. Program leaders told Batesville Mayor Rick Elumbaugh they expected to work in the red for the first three months after the fee requirement went into effect.

“He was OK with that, and the city was going to put up the money to try to get it going,” said Susi Epperson, program manager and a member of the Independence County Home-town Wellness Coalition. “They didn’t have to. When we did payroll at the first of March we were able to pay everybody. We were actually able to carry over several hundred dollars from this month, so we were really excited.”

People had seen the value of the program by then, she said, and were willing to pay for it. The coalition is looking for ways to fund vouchers for people who can’t afford the \$20 monthly fee. Hughes knows people who can’t pay, but she manages to scrape it together for herself. “I can pay for it just by not buying a soda every day,” she said.

### Getting Creative

Leaders in the county have found other ways to keep the fitness momentum going. A \$10,000 joint use agreement grant was used to pay for a trail between the high school and elementary school in the Cedar Ridge School District, complete with a zipline, a playhouse and horseshoes to serve as an incentive to students whose good behavior might have traditionally been rewarded with candy. Highway Department grants were used to put in greenway trails.

“These have been just really super for our community because they’re getting a lot of use,” said Elumbaugh, a former physical education teacher.

Batesville voters approved a ½ cent sales tax last year to raise \$26 million to pay for soccer and baseball complexes, an aquatic center and a community center with basketball and racquetball courts, an indoor walking track and workout rooms.

Batesville used a \$5,000 Growing Healthy Communities grant through the Arkansas Department of Health to build a community garden along the trail and to establish a farmer’s market. Grant money also helped pay for striping on roads for bike lanes.

### Community-Based Approach

Morris says the creative use of resources is key, as is finding people who care enough to make things happen. “It has to be a community-based, bottom-up approach where we empower people in our communities to take responsibility to create healthy communities. The mayor can’t do it alone. Grocery stores can’t do it alone, school districts can’t do it alone,” he said. “Communities need to share with communities because we can learn from each other as we advocate for healthy living. That’s something I feel like we do well in Arkansas. We’re always learning from each other.”



**40%: That’s how much you decrease your risk of dying early by exercising at least 7 hours a week.**

**Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**



# Communities Pay for Inactivity



Dr. Joe Thompson, Arkansas Surgeon General

**“Community leaders — elected officials, clergy, business leaders, school officials — should support their citizens and promote a more vibrant and productive population by providing safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity.”**

— Dr. Joe Thompson

Rising costs of healthcare affect us all, regardless of our own health. In the U.S., physical inactivity for adults is estimated to cost the healthcare system approximately \$250 billion each year. Increased health care costs due to obesity (which is strongly related to physical inactivity) are figured to be between \$150 and \$190 billion per year in the U.S. and between \$1.5 billion and \$1.9 billion per year in Arkansas, according to the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI).

“There is overwhelming evidence to support the call for individuals to make an investment in their own future health by increasing their physical activity,” said Dr. Joe Thompson, Arkansas Surgeon General and Director of ACHI. “Active lifestyles directly contribute to health, productivity and longevity. Student academic performance can be improved, chronic diseases avoided and productivity enhanced by maintaining healthy and active lifestyles.”

A 2010 Active Living Research synthesis of several studies concluded that being physically active is more than a personal decision. “Community design and the availability of open spaces and recreation areas strongly influence how active people are,” said the report. “People living in walkable neighborhoods get about 35-45 more minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week, and are substantially less likely to be overweight or obese, than do people of similar socioeconomic status living in neighborhoods that are not walkable.”

Walkable communities have higher home sale prices, higher property values, enhanced marketability and often faster sales or leases than conventional developments. They command higher property values across property type, including office, retail, apartment and industrial. By contrast, a community that fails to keep up with the growing demand for areas that allow for physical activity will be in competition with neighboring areas that promote healthier lifestyles. In time, the community may see lower market demand for residential housing, and lower residential, retail and office values.

“It is an individual decision to decide to become more active, but the community has a responsibility to promote a healthy environment,” said Michelle B. Justus, ACHI Director of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. “Are there sidewalks that allow you to get from one place to another safely? Are there parks and playgrounds? Do routes from homes to schools provide a safe atmosphere for walking and biking?”

In addition to making communities more walkable, The Community Guide, official publication of the Community Preventive Services Task Force affiliated with the Centers for Disease Control, endorses community-wide education regarding physical activity. These campaigns can include public service communications, support groups and community health fairs.

Children especially benefit from community improvement and increased physical activity. As physical activity standards continue to decline as priorities in school, communities can provide other opportunities for them, and studies have shown that children tend to be happier when they are more physically active.

“Increased physical activity also helps build a sense of community,” said Justus. “When people get out and about in a community, they check on each other and have an increased sense of belonging.”



**6%: The percent of deaths worldwide attributed to physical inactivity, making it the fourth leading mortality risk factor in the world.**

Source: World Health Organization

# Trading Spaces

How to create a joint use agreement to share recreation facilities



Safe and easily accessible, schools are an often untapped recreational resource already available in almost every community in our state. Through “joint use agreements,” school districts are formalizing partnerships to share spaces for recreation and athletics to give more people the opportunity to be active.

We spoke to Marilyn Chambers, Special Programs Coordinator for the Hamburg School District, and Kelly Spencer, Health and Wellness Coordinator for the Cabot School District, to learn how they set up successful joint use agreement programs.

**Identify a common goal.** In Hamburg, the immediate need was for more places for families to be active. “It’s a rural community. We don’t really have city parks or a Boys & Girls Club,” noted Chambers. “We saw a need, with an emphasis on reducing obesity, to give parents and students the opportunity to have activities to promote physical fitness.” Chambers sought a partnership with Hamburg Mayor Dane Weindorf to build a walking track and playground that could be used by the elementary school during the day and by parents and children in the evenings. Later, they partnered to resurface the municipal tennis courts, which are shared by the high school tennis team and the community at large.

In Cabot, the need was for more room to accommodate the growing suburb’s 80 junior high and high school athletic teams and multitude of recreational leagues. By sharing 100 percent of their recreational spaces, gyms and playing fields, the Cabot School District and Parks and Recreation Department each double the space available for their programs. “It just works out well that we both [the school district and parks department] use each other’s facilities for free,” said Spencer. “We use their spaces just as much as they use ours.”

**Clarify roles and responsibilities.** The process of creating a formal agreement helps identify potential sources of conflict before they arise and ensures that everyone benefits from the relationship. “Our policy lays out who is responsible for damages, clean-up and supervision,” explained Spencer.

In Hamburg, the mayor’s office and school district partnered to seek grant funding for materials to build a walking track and playground; then, the city and county contributed labor, the school built a fence around the recreation area, and local police officers patrol the neighborhood to create a sense of safety for patrons. “By sharing the responsibilities, it wasn’t a burden on anyone,” Chambers said.

**Measure your results.** It’s easier to celebrate success when you’ve got proof of how far you’ve come. In Hamburg, a UAMS researcher is partnering with the school district to survey parents about their exercise habits before and after the construction of the track; results are due out later this year. “I can just tell by driving by and seeing people walking who I’ve never seen there before that it is affecting the physical fitness of our people,” said Chambers.

## Grants for Joint Use Agreements

Funding from the Arkansas Tobacco Excise Tax has enabled the state to offer Joint Use Agreement Grants to help Arkansas schools formalize partnerships with community groups to create new recreational opportunities and promote physical activity.

Available each spring, these grants can be used to support the start-up costs of establishing a new joint use program, such as constructing or renovating recreation spaces, hiring personnel to supervise after-hours activities or paying for utilities to keep gyms and walking tracks open later.

For more information on how to apply, contact:

Jerri Clark  
Arkansas Department of Education  
Office of Coordinated School Health  
501-683-3600  
[www.arkansaschs.org](http://www.arkansaschs.org)





The senior fitness class at Lake Village's Community Outreach Center uses weight-training exercises to maintain strength and flexibility.

# Lake Village Seniors Stay Strong and Fit

While warming up before a senior fitness class at the Community Outreach Center in Lake Village, 68-year-old Claire Jaggars told the story of how she started exercising. "Five years ago I quit smoking. I gained weight and realized I had to get real active," she explained. "My best friend was dying of lung cancer, and when I got that call, I threw down the pack and never touched it again. I want to see my grandson grow up to be a doctor or lawyer."

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, you can find Jaggars and her classmates — most of whom are in their 60s and 70s —

dancing, marching and stretching to the beat of a high energy remix of favorite oldies tunes. Led by Cammie Trexler, the center's director and main fitness instructor, members of the senior fitness class tackle a rigorous workout that uses resistance bands, medicine balls and hand weights to improve strength, balance and flexibility. It's clear that age isn't slowing these seniors down.

There's a misconception out there that older people can't build muscle and shouldn't exercise, noted Dr. Jeanne Wei of the UAMS Reynolds Institute on Aging. But in fact, she points out that recent research indicates that older people are actually much more

capable of building and retaining muscle mass and strength than previously thought. "It's even more important for older people to use what they have," she said.

Thanks to the Outreach Center, many of the senior citizens in Lake Village are doing just that. "When I first started here, many of the students weren't real mobile," said Trexler. "They've advanced a lot. The class is really growing."

Founded in 2008, the Community Outreach Center is a partnership between the city of Lake Village, Chicot Memorial Medical Center and UAMS East. In addition to senior fitness, the center offers cycling classes, yoga, aerobics, Pilates, Zumba and other exercise classes along with use of cardiovascular and weight-training equipment. About 500 people of all ages take advantage of the center's classes and equipment each month. And the best part? Membership is entirely free to the public, removing cost as a barrier to exercise.

The residents of Lake Village are keenly aware of the healthcare challenges in their area. "Chicot County is in the red zone for heart disease, cholesterol and obesity," noted Trexler. That's why maintaining the Outreach Center as a free service for the community is a high priority for each of its partner agencies. There's a growing sense in Lake Village that the community is ready to fight back against the epidemic of poor health plaguing the region. "We want to see our community become healthier," said Velma Gaston, assistant to the CEO of Chicot Memorial Medical Center. "One way we can keep people healthy is to encourage them to come here to the center."

The good news is that the center's formula of free access and high-energy classes is starting to yield noticeable results, particular among particularly among its senior citizen patrons. There's Snookie Goodwin, who attends the senior fitness class as a warm-up for an even more demanding strength-training class later in the evening. "I have fibromyalgia, and this is what really helps. I should be a poster child for exercise!" she joked. And there's Laverne Bariola, age 76, who recently participated in her first half-marathon run/walk. Exercise is important to her, she says, because "you just feel better!"

Beyond simply urging residents to become more active, the Community Outreach Center and its partner agencies are providing a place where neighbors can support each other in improving the health of their entire community. As Claire Jaggars explained, "It's fun, it's active. The girls are a ball. We have a blast together! I wouldn't exercise at home, but I do it here because we're all having fun together."

## Tips for Senior Wellness:

Dr. Jeanne Wei of the UAMS Reynolds Institute on Aging and Todd Price of CareLink shared their tips for increasing physical activity for senior citizens.



### Make it Social.

Many seniors prefer to exercise with others their own age and may need the guidance of an instructor to help them identify exercises that work for their fitness level. "If [seniors] can go to a group setting, it's better because the socialization that comes with physical activity is so vital," said Price.

**Start Low, Go Slow.** Dr. Wei explained that for seniors who are just beginning an exercise regimen, it's important to build up gradually to more strenuous activities in order to prevent injury. "If you haven't had a physical exam and you're over 65, that's a good place to start," she said.

**Avoid Sudden, Forceful Motions.** Injuries related to physical activity become more common in people over age 75, so Wei recommends avoiding activities that could lead to sudden, jarring motions. She suggests stretching tendons thoroughly before exercising and using a slow, steady motion for any weight-bearing exercises. "Use resistance bands," she said. "They are fabulous because they're flexible."

**It's Never Too Late.** Exercise helps older adults "maintain their independence longer, helps them stay socially connected, boosts their energy levels, helps manage the symptoms of illness or pain, maybe even reverses some of the symptoms of aging, helps improve their mind and memory," Price said. What's more, a relatively small amount of exercise can make a big difference. Wei explained that for people over the age of 80, "If we can walk more than five blocks a day, we're able to reduce our chances of stroke, heart attack and dementia. Everyone can walk five blocks. If you can't, it's okay to start with less. Work toward five blocks."

Contact your county Area Agency on Aging for more information about senior wellness programs in your area.



# ARKANSAS VIEWPOINTS

## What are the barriers to physical activity in Arkansas communities?



By Joy Rockenbach  
Arkansas Coalition for  
Obesity Prevention

**W**e get into our cars to go everywhere. We build places for cars and not people. Last time I checked, walking was still free. We have seen an explosion of trails and parks all over the state, but most of the time we have to DRIVE somewhere in order to walk, run or bike. We build schools away from the neighborhoods so kids can't walk or bike to school.

The Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention (ArCOP) works with a project called Growing Healthy Communities. We help communities learn how to assess their community for walkability and what changes they can make. Sometimes the changes are as easy as planting flowers and trees to make an area a friendlier place to be or re-stripping crosswalks so they are more noticeable. We teach towns ways to re-stripe their streets so that cars, bikes and people can share the road — this slows cars down and allows more people to get where they are going safely. Many of our communities now require new developments to put in sidewalks and green spaces.

Imagine being able to walk and shop in your neighborhood. You visit with neighbors; you connect with folks; your mind, body and spirit feel energized. You stop on the way and have a coffee; you visit some more; you buy things at local stores, enriching the local economy. To have more physical activity in our state, Arkansas must be more walkable and bikeable and it must be more connected!



By Trudy Redus  
President, Jefferson County Growing  
Healthy Communities

**A**s you begin to age in our society, you really want to stay fit and active. So, you start to think, "I'll get out and walk." What a great goal! The number one physical activity is walking. Then the question becomes, "Is it safe?" This is just one of many barriers for physical activity. Granted, there are many others, but the number one concern when it comes to walking is safety. In spite of the concern for safety, however, we must look at opportunities to increase physical activities in individual neighborhoods and, at the same time, improve our infrastructure. I truly believe that outdoor recreation increases physical activity.

Most Arkansans feel somewhat safe in their individual neighborhoods. Therefore, we begin to look at the built environments. Where are the sidewalks? Since, for most communities, this is a huge barrier, we have to focus on making it a more walkable community. If you have a school in your neighborhood, a joint use agreement to share the track or field for after hours and on the weekends would be a huge plus.

You know the saying, "If you build it, they will come." Not always the case! The Pine Bluff Parks and Recreation Department has an award winning walking trail around a 500-acre lake. It is a beautiful, serene walking trail. A little over three miles have been completed thus far, but not everyone can get to the walking trail, which creates another barrier for inactivity. So, the goal now is to have a stop on the bus route for the walking trail.

## Get a move on, Arkansas!

In Arkansas Community Foundation's *Aspire Arkansas* report, released in May 2011, we identified seven goals for Arkansas's communities and looked for data that shows how each of our communities are faring with regard to each goal. Below are maps from the report addressing physical activity and obesity.

The biggest question raised by the data below is not "where are people the most active?" but rather, "what prevents people in every community from being active, and how can we help remove those

barriers?" For more on barriers to physical activity, see our Arkansas Viewpoints columns on page 9.

For additional data on health and fitness and historical trends for your county visit  
[www.arcf.org/AspireArkansas](http://www.arcf.org/AspireArkansas).



### adult OBESITY

Percent of Overweight and Obese Adults, by County: 2008

