READY, SET, WALK
Promoting Patron Fitness Through Community Partnership

Background
The Haslet Library is a small public library, serving the population of Haslet, TX, which has a population of around 1,500. The library also draws users from surrounding areas of Denton, Wise and Tarrant Counties. The Library officially opened its doors in 2008, and added the library’s first adult services librarian to the staff in the fall of 2015. In the past year, creating programming to serve the needs of adult patrons and to draw in new library users has been a major organizational goal, along with fortifying the library’s relationship with other community groups, and establishing the library as a center for social and civic engagement.

Objectives
• To attract new patrons
• To demonstrate the library’s investment in the well-being of its community
• To promote library services and programs
• To promote and facilitate healthy habits among patrons
• To help patrons create and maintain social networks which will motivate and sustain them in their pursuit of health and wellness (Behavioral and Social Approaches to Increase Physical Activity: Social Support Interventions in Community Settings, n.d.).
• To encourage social interaction among patrons
• To strengthen the library’s relationships with other community groups

Execution
• Promote program through email blasts and social media
• Host informational meeting, featuring speaker from Walk Across Texas
• Recruit participants from library groups and other city organizations
• Recruit captains to record weekly mileage
• Kick off program with group walk
• Host other group walks, promote city fitness programs
• Host midway push party, with healthy snack competition
• Share regular progress updates with participants

Results
72 people participated in the program, including patrons, library staff, and extended family members. Participants reported health benefits including improved sleep and weight loss, and several noted that they had made strong friendships, and would continue to spend time with their teammates after the program ended.

IMPLICATIONS
Library fitness programs are a fun, low-cost means of increasing patron participation and strengthening awareness of the library’s role as a center for community engagement. Such programs can be an effective tool for helping patrons to build lasting social networks and generate support for future programming, and can also strengthen ties within the organization. Furthermore, reaching out to other community organizations for assistance and participation can help to build new relationships, and invigorate established ones, between the library and other groups, as well as allowing the library to leverage outside resources.

What have you enjoyed most about Walk Across Texas?
"Wonderful friendships–keeps me movin’!"

What have you enjoyed most about Walk Across Texas?
"I like the awareness it has brought me regarding the various ways to get exercise."