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Alonsa

Friendships, Partnerships, and Healthier Living

A Trek Across Canada walking challenge in Alonsa brought out 35 dedicated participants for the six-month program – that’s 17.5 per cent of this community of 200 people! Every week, seven team leaders recorded their group’s distance as well as the amount of fruit and vegetables the walkers had eaten for the week. When the final tallies were in, they had eaten 14,000 fruits and vegetables walked some 14,000 kilometres – across Canada, back again, and then some!

“Partnerships and friendships were formed, and it brought our community together.”

The cross-Canada trek really caught on in Alonsa, and the walkers gained unexpected connections through the challenge. “People were calling and saying ‘please can we join?’” said CDPI organizer Vickie Kien. “These were people that had never had anything in common. Partnerships and friendships were formed, and it brought our community together.”

The walking challenge attracted everybody from children to seniors, and many of them

also participated in Alonsa’s Walking Poker Derbies. Exercise equipment was up for grabs as prizes for the best poker hands, which were dealt out one at a time after participants complete the one-kilometre walking route that circles the town. About five hours later, and after five laps around the community, everyone gathered at the curling rink to laugh about their poker hands and enjoy some hot chocolate.

Aerobics classes have also proven to be popular, with more than 20 ladies coming out for weekly sessions held at the local school. Self-defence classes were also well received in Alonsa. CDPI paid for licensed karate instructors to come out from Brandon to teach the sessions, which 19 women of all ages signed up for to learn hands-on techniques for combating would-be attackers. CDPI also sponsored old-time dance lessons and barn dances, taught by a local couple in their late 70s who have been dancing together for decades. Recorded music by a local country band provided the perfect old-time soundtrack for polka dancing, fox-trotting, and all the other dances being taught. The Sunday afternoon dance sessions showed some former wallflowers how to really get out there and shake a rug. “Now when we have a function, you see the people who were at the dance lessons getting up and dancing when they never would have before,” said Kien.

An enthusiastic group of local seniors has really taken to walking and exercise since participating in CDPI-funded activities. Since the CDPI committee purchased Bocci ball sets and built horseshoe pits, the

seniors' competitive pursuits have moved outdoors. "They've taken it and run with it, and now there are posters up in town about tournaments," said Kien. "Those seniors used to sit and play cards and now they're all playing horseshoes and Bocci!"

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Take Note

Walking is a simple way to improve overall wellbeing and reduce the chances of developing the health concerns associated with inactivity.

- Walking is free and can be done almost anywhere
- Walking is within the physical capabilities of many people
- Walking may be a more realistic challenge than other more vigorous forms of exercise
- Walking can be integrated into people's lifestyles relatively easily
- The impact is low and strain on the feet and joints is minimized thus making the risk of injury very low

<http://www.walkbc.ca/benefits-walking>