Improving Health and Reducing Health Care Costs through Walk Across Texas!

Economic Impacts of Extension Education

Overweight + Inactivity = Increased Risk of Chronic Disease

- Excessive weight and inactivity are consistently linked with increased incidence of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, and colon cancer.
- Eighty percent of American adults do not meet physical activity recommendations.
- Only 27% of students in grades 9–12 engage in recommended amounts of moderate-intensity physical activity.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service developed Walk Across Texas! It is a fun fitness program created to help participants adopt the habit of regular physical activity.
- Teams of up to eight family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors walk together or individually for eight weeks each year. Some also attend extension classes and receive information on nutrition, exercise, weight loss, and other health topics.
- Teams compete to see who can walk the 832 miles "across Texas" first, and all participants are recognized for their achievements.

- Since 1996, more than 142,000 Texans have completed the program to significantly increase their physical activity level.

Economic Impacts

- Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can permanently or temporarily delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in 58% of people.
- Over the lifetime of the 9,713 participants who completed the program in 2018, an estimated 2,238 could prevent the onset of diabetes through sustained levels of physical activity.
- The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without diabetes is $7,151. The average annual cost for people with diabetes is $16,752.
- The estimated potential lifetime health care cost savings are $88,444 for females and $68,043 for males. When avoidance of lost wages is included, the potential lifetime economic benefit for 2018 participants who completed the program is $199 million.
- Participants are also expected to benefit through reduced incidence, severity, and health care costs of other chronic diseases that are linked to excessive weight and inactivity.

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