

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 764,000 Texans have been reached through participation in Walk Across Texas.

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ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- Over the lifetime of the 18,820 participants in 2024, approximately 719 could prevent the onset of diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease through sustained levels of physical activity,
- The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without diabetes is \$7,714, while the average annual cost for people with diabetes is \$19,736.
- The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without cardiovascular disease is \$5,269, while the average annual cost for people with cardiovascular disease is \$11,192.
- The estimated lifetime health care cost savings are more than \$160,000 for type 2 diabetes and more than \$40,000 for cardiovascular disease. When avoidance of lost wages is included, the lifetime economic benefit for 2024 participants who completed the program is \$119.5 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.

