Walk Kansas will begin March 31st

Winter may be imposing its lull on some people’s exercise programs, but Sharolyn Jackson is not one of those.

In fact, Jackson – a K-State Research and Extension family and consumer sciences specialist in northeast Kansas – has her thoughts squarely fixed on spring’s warmer days and a program that is nearing a quarter century of getting folks moving.

Jackson is the state leader of the popular Walk Kansas program<https://www.walkkansas.org/>, a team-based challenged that encourages people to walk, jog, run, bike swim or do whatever they need to live more healthfully. The program routinely draws more than 5,000 participants in Kansas and across the country.

She says Walk Kansas was founded in 2001 on the principle that if teams of six people would meet the minimum guidelines for physical activity over eight weeks, they could collectively and virtually walk across the state of Kansas – or approximately 423 miles.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week – or about 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

“When you think about a moderate activity, there’s an easy way to gauge if you’re getting that,” Jackson said. “It’s called the Talk Test. Whatever activity you’re doing, if you can barely have a conversation, but not sing, then you’re exercising at a moderate level.”

Jackson is encouraging those interested in Walk Kansas to begin forming their teams now. Registration opens on March 4<https://www.walkkansas.org/>, and the eight-week challenge will run from March 31 through May 25. Walk Kansas is also open to those who want to take on the eight-week program by themselves.

Walk Kansas is open to participants beyond Kansas. In fact, Jackson said it is common for team captains to form their team with family members or friends who live in other states or even other countries. Each team member walks when they want, where they want.

“The bottom line is to just move, no matter what type of activity you enjoy, to limit those periods of time when you’re sitting,” Jackson said. “A lot of us have jobs in which we do more sitting and working in front of computers, and that’s exhausting in its own way. So, we need to get into the habit of getting up every 30 minutes, which is ideal, but at least once an hour to move around a little bit. That’s a habit that you can get into that is really good.”

Walk Kansas, she adds, helps to offset a mindset of always doing things with less effort. “When it comes to physical activity,” Jackson said, “we’re really looking at how we can do some things with more effort, because that boosts your fitness and your overall health.”

Jackson said another benefit of Walk Kansas is the weekly newsletter, which includes tips on other healthy habits – such as tips on sleep, diet, strength, balance and more.

Pottawatomie County will be offering Walk Kansas again this year for Pottawatomie and Marshall County residents. Registration will open up on March 4th and you can register anytime before March 31st. You can register online at walkkansas.org, or by getting forms at the Pottawatomie County Extension office. The forms will also be available on pottawatomie.ksu.edu. For questions, please call Erin Tynon at 785-457-3319 or email: [etynon@ksu.edu](mailto:etynon@ksu.edu).