Interactive Trails Map, QCTrails.org, Points Way to Outdoor Physical Activity

Be Healthy QC

Summary
Like many communities across the nation, the Quad Cities, Illinois/Iowa is challenged with helping its residents get enough outdoor physical activity, according to a 2015 Community Health Assessment. Partners are rallying across sectors, and in January 2016 introduced QCTrails.org, a website highlighting over 300 miles of land and water trails in the Quad Cities. The goal is to promote better access to opportunities for physical activity on the community’s vast trail network.

Challenge
The Quad Cities boasts ample outdoor resources, especially a vibrant network of trails and connected parks and greenspaces. Partners wanted to identify ways to make residents aware of this important resource and encourage opportunities for outdoor physical activity using these trails. Information about a variety of trails was located in many disparate locations. The challenge was to collect this vast amount of information and make it available in a web-based trail map, promote this resource, and work with local trail managers to keep trail information up-to-date on the website.

Solution
With Bi-State Regional Commission (the local metropolitan planning organization) staff leading the initiative to create the website, partnerships were formed with trail managers in eight cities and two counties to collect information, and in January 2016, QCTrails.org was launched. Project leaders realized that displaying trails on a website was not enough to affect residents’ behaviors and encourage physical activity. The team also needed to promote QCTrails.org, especially to target populations that were identified as being at risk for health factors associated with low physical activity.

Your Involvement is Key
This work was made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in support of Be Healthy QC. Administered by the Quad City Health Initiative, Be Healthy QC seeks to increase access to healthy food and beverage options and physical activity opportunities through the implementation of policy, systems and environmental change across the community. Follow our progress at www.behealthyqc.org and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/quadcityhealthinitiative.
Results

Outreach efforts have started to pay off. To date, project partners estimate that approximately 11,900 people have been reached through community events and education. As of September 30, 2016, users on the site averaged 395 per week with 12,261 users visiting the site since its launch on January 30, 2016. The QC Trails Facebook page has been instrumental as a communication outlet for sharing information related to updates on the site and health and wellness information. By September 30, the QC Trails Facebook page had 410 “Likes.” Additionally, outreach to employers has resulted in them promoting QCTrails.org to employees within their wellness programs. All this means that Quad Cities residents are increasingly becoming aware of the many opportunities for physical activity and getting outdoor exercise on Quad Cities trails.

"Many worksite wellness coordinators are discovering QCTrails.org. It's user friendly and makes it easier to find trails and parks for employee fitness challenges."

- Lisa Miller (Bi-State Regional Commission)

Sustainable Success

Project leaders are working with trail managers to develop a process for keeping trail information up-to-date. Outreach and promotion efforts of QCTrails.org will continue, including the creation of materials for how people can discover trails and exercise outdoors. Expanding the footprint of the website to include trails in two adjacent counties is planned. Other types of trail experiences like bike lanes will also be included. A user input survey is on the website and additional enhancements are being explored. Conversations with project partners will ensure that QCTrails.org remains a reliable, comprehensive, and indispensable resource for residents to find opportunities to get outside and exercise on Quad Cities trails.

Contact

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Success Stories

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