



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Local Health Departments Challenge Each Other to Walk the Walk with Symbolic Trek on the Appalachian Trail

DURHAM and HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. (July 31, 2015) – Staff members from the [Orange County Health Department](#) have challenged their counterparts at the [Durham County Department of Public Health](#) to a walking challenge. This walking challenge follows an internal walking challenge the Orange County Health Department did in the Spring where the staff walked the distance of Orange County, North Carolina to Orange County, California. As with the initial challenge, the goal of the [Appalachian Trail Challenge](#) is to improve employee health and spread the message that physical activity is not only essential to physical and mental health, but it can be fun too.

The friendly competition challenges employees to collectively walk the 2,168.1 mile distance of the Appalachian Trail. The first team to reach the goal wins. Steps will be calculated into miles by utilizing the average stride of 2,000 steps equals one mile. The winner of the challenge not only gets bragging rights, but there is also a trophy and a friendly wager between the health directors of a gift basket of local goodies.

Walkers will begin tracking their daily steps on August 3, 2015. They will be using a variety of fitness trackers including Fitbits, pedometers, and others. Due to the difference in staff size, the total number of each team's steps will be entered into an equation to make it more equitable. At the beginning of the challenge Orange County has 46 walkers (44% of their total employee base) and Durham County has 55 walkers (28% of their total employee base). Progress will be tracked on a map of the trail that will be available on each department's website, and health highlights of the various locations along the trail will be featured with hyperlinks. Both departments will be participating in competitive banter on their social media pages to expand the fun and competition.

Health Benefits of Walking

(Source: American Heart Association)

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Improve blood lipid profile
- Maintain body weight and lower the risk of obesity
- Enhance mental well being
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer
- Reduce the risk of non-insulin dependent (type 2) diabetes

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