



# Stroud Region Open Space & Recreation

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## For Immediate Release

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*One in a series of educational essays on engaging the benefits of local greenways, parks and recreation systems.*

## Walking for a healthy heart, one step at a time

by Joshua Leap

Did you set a New Year's resolution to be more focused on improving your health for 2013? Have you stuck to this resolution or were you one of those that let that resolution fall to the wayside after the initial hype and motivation of a brand new year? If you are, there is still a chance to attain that goal you set for yourself, especially with the spring and summer months fast approaching.

One of the first things young children learn is how to walk: one of the easiest and most affective activities to keep yourself in shape and healthy life-long. Walking is a form of aerobic exercise, meaning it increases oxygen consumption and improves the function of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. You do not need weights, yoga mats, or other gym equipment in order to walk. In comparison to other physical activities, walking is relatively inexpensive, and one of the most popular. According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CDC), approximately six in ten adults reported walking as one of their weekly physical activities.

In addition to being popular, walking also offers great health benefits. Walking lowers blood pressure, increases lung capacity, reduces body fat, and improves blood sugar and cholesterol levels. The CDC also reports that people who are physically active significantly lower their risk for heart disease, depression, strokes, and even some cancers. Half of all deaths in the United States are due to heart disease.

Scientific evidence shows that regular participation in physical activity definitively lowers the risk for this disease, and can even help people recover from bypass surgery while preventing a second heart attack. Having a parent who has suffered from heart disease for the greater part of two decades, I can attest to the importance of exercise in not only maintaining health, but in brightening overall morale. My father has said, "Doctors have continuously stressed the importance of exercising and staying physically active to me. I believe that is one of the reasons I am still here today. I make the effort to get out there even if it's just for ten minutes a day."

Within the twenty-six parks that Stroud Region has to offer, eight of them include walking and jogging trails. These parks are Creekview, Dansbury, Katz, Kovarick, Brodhead Creek, Pinebrook, Yetter, and Zacharias. Walkers can enjoy the natural landscapes and scenery throughout their stroll. Most of the trails are flat with moderate inclines making the activity accommodating to all.

The most well-known trail within the region is the Levee Loop Trail. What makes it unique is that it connects East Stroudsburg Borough, Stroudsburg Borough, Stroud Township and several parks. The clean and inviting trail offers a scenic portion of the Brodhead Creek and the public can feel at ease since there are always people walking or jogging. The trail is 4.2 miles long, and is the host to the popular annual Levee Loop Walk and Run event. With the efforts of Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation's Volunteer in the Parks Program, the trail is continuously undergoing improvements to enhance the overall experience for the public.

So, whether or not you made a New Year's resolution to be healthier this year, now is the time to get up off the couch and out into the beautiful springtime weather. You don't have to walk alone to appreciate nature. You can bring your pets with you and enjoy it together. Monroe County and the extended Pocono Mountains area is blessed to have an abundance amount of walking and hiking trails that fits everyone's needs. Walking offers great health benefits, and the best place to do it is right in our own backyard here in the Stroud Region.

*Joshua Leap is the Recreation Associate of the Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission. The agency provides essential public services of regional economic stimulation, environmental stewardship, and social stability through healthful recreational and cultural programming and responsible stewardship of parks and open space.*

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