Healthy Parks Healthy People Greater Washington Area



The National Park Service National Capital Region (NPS/NCR) has been working on health related projects since 2004 with the leadership of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (CHOH). Fast forward eight years, the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) is now working with NPS Superintendents and multiple health partners to increase Greater Washington residents' recognition of the value of parks to improve their health and well-being.

Much of this momentum began three years ago, when CHOH Superintendent Kevin Brandt and staff attended the National Environmental Education Foundation's (NEEF) Nature Champion Train-the-Trainer Workshop. They learned how doctors could prescribe outdoor activities at nature sites for children's health and made valuable connections with doctors from National Children's Medical Center and Unity Health Care, Inc.

Since then, several lead doctors, pediatric residents, and the D.C. Department of Health have been working to pilot a DC Park Prescriptions program at four clinics. RTCA has helped facilitate communication between park staff and health partners to complete assessments of parks within a two mile radius of the clinics. This information will be used by doctors and given to patients for their "park prescription."

Simultaneously, RTCA began the *Healthy Communities* partnership program with the National Association of Community Health Centers, Community HealthCorps Program. Community HealthCorps Navigators (AmeriCorps youth) were placed through D.C. Primary Care Association at local health DC clinics for 10 months where they linked clinic patients to nearby green space, addressed social determinants of health, and reduced health disparities for improved health and well-being.

Most recently, CHOH received funding from the Connect Trails to Parks program for NPS/NCR parks to designate 13 TRACK Trails in parks. TRACK Trails is part of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's Kids in Parks program, an initiative of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation.

All of these programs are under the Healthy Parks Healthy People Greater Washington Area Initiative. A kick-off media event is scheduled for September 20, 2012 at the Lincoln Memorial. There also will be community roll-out events at Fort Dupont Park on September 22, 2012 and at Rock Creek Park on September 23, 2012.