FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steps to a Healthier You: **WalkWorks** is Coming to McKean County

**PITTSBURGH, June 16, 2015** – The Pennsylvania Department of Health is partnering with the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford and the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health to increase opportunities for physical activity in McKean County through an initiative called **WalkWorks**.

By setting up community-based walking routes and forming sustainable walking groups, **WalkWorks** seeks to enhance and improve the health of residents.

“We are excited to help implement **WalkWorks** in McKean County so that residents have the opportunity to participate in group walks and benefit from the social support of others while improving their own health,” said Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy.

“Implementing **WalkWorks** in Mt. Jewett, Kane and Bradford will offer residents the chance to participate in group walks and gain from the social support and incentive of others in an effort to optimize their own health,” said Lisa Fiorentino, director, Center for Rural Health Practice at Pitt-Bradford. “This is a great program and we are thrilled that the Department of Health and Pitt Public Health chose us as a partner.”

In its physical activity guidelines, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) recommends that adults aged 18 to 64 get at least 150 minutes of moderately intense aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, per week.

“There are so many benefits to walking, from improving one’s physical and mental health to reducing traffic congestion and pollution,” said Carol L. Reichbaum, director of **WalkWorks** for the Pitt Public Health Center for Public Health Practice. “This program can improve the health and quality of life of everyone in our communities. It can help to lower our rates of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.”
To ensure that the movement stays afoot, another aspect of WalkWorks is promoting change in local policies that will encourage more people to walk.

“WalkWorks promotes active transportation by identifying infrastructure needed for pedestrian activity. This is a goal of our multi-modal transportation system in Pennsylvania,” said Mark Magalotti, co-director of the University of Pittsburgh Swanson School of Engineering Center for Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure. Pitt Public Health and the Swanson School are providing technical assistance to their community-based partners and transportation planners to promote infrastructure planning, design, implementation, and policies to create roadways that are safe for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists.

“The goal is to influence local and regional planning efforts so that pedestrians as well as bicyclists are considered and improvements are made to the existing transportation network,” added Reichbaum. “We want to make it easy for people to enjoy walking in their communities. The health benefits will follow.”

The three routes are located in Bradford, Kane, and Mt. Jewett, with each being one to two miles in length. A team of engineers from Pitt has conducted “walkability assessments” of the routes recommended by a group of stakeholders. The routes will be marked with WalkWorks signs and maps will be created and posted online.

For more information about WalkWorks, please visit www.pawalkworks.com.

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About the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health
The University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, founded in 1948 and now one of the top-ranked schools of public health in the United States, conducts research on public health and medical care that improves the lives of millions of people around the world. Pitt Public Health is a leader in devising new methods to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases, HIV/AIDS, cancer and other important public health problems. For more information about Pitt Public Health, visit the school’s Web site at www.publichealth.pitt.edu.

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