

Roaming Readers Walking Club

[Eureka Public Library District](#)

Adults

Roaming Readers Walking Club

Dec 11, 2015

\$1-50

\$

Your name

Cynthia O'Neil, Program Coordinator, Eureka (Ill.) Public Library District

The Roaming Readers Walking Club was offered as an exercise option in conjunction with our fall fitness program. The walking club featured a 30-minute walk around the library neighborhood with a discussion of the participants' latest and favorite reads. The goal of the program was to encourage establishing a regular fitness routine before the winter months, as well as encourage book discussion and socialization between library patrons. The program ran through the fall, from Sept. 16 to Nov. 11.

Advanced Planning

Our Roaming Readers Walking Club was modeled after a Campbellsport (Wis.) Public Library and Ripon (Wis.) Public Library program found online. Our program was part of an overall "Exercise Your Rights ... Get Your Library Card Today!" September card sign-up promotion, as well as a Fall Fitness Program series honoring the library's 85th birthday.

We encouraged residents to exercise a minimum of 85 minutes a week from September to November. Patrons registered for the program and picked up a log card. Log cards were stamped weekly and turned in at the end of the program for a chance at a grand prize drawing. To help patrons in meeting their goals, we offered the Roaming Readers Walking Club, a weekly [Sitting Fit Chair Yoga](#) class and a monthly health education class.

Planning began about two months in advance and involved library staff as well as partnership with our local Snap Fitness facility. Snap Fitness provided part of the grand prize as well as the monthly educational class. The walking club program was simple; it only required development of an "informed consent and liability waiver release" form and making sure one staff member was available each week to guide the walk.

Marketing

Marketing for the Roaming Readers Walking Club involved submitting a press release to our local and regional newspaper and television media outlets, an article in our monthly library newsletter, inclusion on our monthly program calendar, a Facebook posting, and fliers posted in the library as well as around Eureka. Our larger Fall Fitness Program was featured in a direct-mail postcard that we sent to district residents as part of a September card sign-up promotion.

A regional television station picked up on the Fall Fitness Program and ran an interview at the beginning. In addition, a large regional newspaper picked up the story at the end of the Walking Club program and published an article in their health section. As the idea was unusual, the marketing was successful in getting broader coverage.

Budgeting

For the Roaming Readers Walking Club, costs were very minimal. Expenses included copy paper, ink and staff time. The larger fall fitness program also required the purchase of a [Fitbit Zip Wireless Activity Tracker](#), the grand prize, and the direct mail postcards.

Day-of-event Activity

The program was held each Wednesday morning from 8:30 to 9 a.m. for nine weeks. We asked participants to fill out a release form on his/her first day of participation, and we made sure we had those on hand every Wednesday we walked in case someone new joined us. We also made sure we had at least one staff member available to lead the group each day.

Program Execution

The program ran very smoothly. We had a core group of seven women, all of retirement age, participate most every week, and then we had some additional participants who joined us occasionally. One difficulty was in having any book discussions involving the whole group. The width of the sidewalks and traffic noise necessitated breaking up into mini groups of two to three people.

Within those mini groups, there would often be a general discussion of what books were being read or what some of their favorite books were, but often the conversation spread into other fun directions! A book in common was never required, as the main purpose was fitness.

Feedback was very positive, and we are thinking about hosting it again in the spring. Participants felt that exercising in a group with a regular schedule helped them achieve their fitness goals in a fun way.

Advice

You will likely attract people of varying walking abilities, and safety is of primary importance. Scouting a walking route ahead of time and taking into account the sidewalk condition of the route is important. If a local school track is available, that would be a good option to consider. To accommodate different walking speeds, the staff member would often hang back with the slower group, and the faster walkers would wait at periodic intervals to keep the group together.

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

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Sep 21, 2015

Children (9 and under)+ | 

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[Run with It](#)

Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)

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Young Adult (17 - 20)

Adults (21 and up)

Intergenerational

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Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)

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