

New Project Examines How Successful Developers of Multi-Use Trails Overcame Hurdles

Saint Louis University School of Public Health to Develop Case Studies

ST. LOUIS — In an effort to increase physical activity among residents in both rural and urban areas, local communities develop multi-use trails for people to walk, run or bike, both for exercise and to get from one place to another. Saint Louis University has received a \$60,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its Active Living Research program to study the policies that lead to the successful development of these community trails.

Through their analyses, the researchers hope to inform community decision-makers and reduce barriers that may hinder the promotion of more active lifestyles.

“Our goal is to develop public policy briefs that provide a historical perspective of how other communities addressed issues that may have surfaced,” said Amy Eyler, Ph.D., associate professor of community health at Saint Louis University School of Public Health and principal investigator for the study. “It can really be a tool for legislators and other decision-makers.”

Eyler said her research will examine five multi-use trails in Missouri, Washington, Massachusetts, South Carolina and North Carolina. She will lead a team of public health researchers who will conduct interviews, analyze the data and create case studies.

“Complex issues related to funding and land use can hinder the process for developing community trails,” she said. “Our case studies will show decision-makers what kinds of policy changes had to happen to make these trails a reality.”

The Saint Louis University Prevention Research Center is one of 33 centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the country, and the only one in Missouri. It partners with community-based coalitions and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to prevent chronic diseases in low-income, rural parts of the state, improve individual and community health within Missouri and eliminate health disparities. Now in its 10th year of operation, the center focuses mainly on environmental factors that prevent chronic diseases.

Saint Louis University School of Public Health is one of only 36 fully accredited schools of public health in the United States and the nation's only School of Public Health sponsored by a Jesuit university.

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Editor's Note: To arrange an interview, call Nancy Solomon, Saint Louis University media relations, at (314) 977-8017.