

FCS SPOTLIGHT

Northeast Region

by Jocinda Jackson and Carolyn Robinson

The East Carroll Parish Healthy Communities Coalition hosted their community forum on August 23rd, 2022 at The First Missionary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall. The coalition talked through improvements for East Carroll Parish and ways to make the parish healthier through implementing different projects to help lower obesity rates. The walking trail located behind the only hospital in the entire parish was a highlighted topic at the forum. Community members shared ideas back and forth about projects they could develop at the trail and from this, Walk-A-Mile Day was created.

Walk-A-Mile Day is a day for physical activity in East Carroll Parish at The Lakeside Walking Trail. It is a day for the community to come out and utilize the trail and learn about the importance of physical activity. However, there were steps that needed to be followed before the event was official. The coalition decided to make the day a permanent day in East Carroll Parish by creating and presenting a proclamation to local government, the Town of Lake Providence, the hospital board and installing permanent fitness signage at the trail.

On September 13th, the coalition stood before the East Carroll Parish Police Jury and presented a proclamation for Walk-A-Mile Day, and it was voted on and approved the same day. On September 27th, the coalition stood before the East Carroll Parish Hospital Board and went over the details of Walk-A-Mile Day, presented signage ideas, discussed liabilities and asked for their partnership. The Hospital Board loved the idea and approved the idea the same day while also agreeing to partner with us on a yearly basis for the event. On September 28th, the coalition stood before

The Town of Lake Providence and presented a proclamation where it was also approved the same day. Within two weeks, the coalition had received support from the entire parish for Walk-A-Mile Day. It was confirmed that the event would be observed on a yearly basis, specifically on the fourth Wednesday of October.

After everything was approved, the coalition immediately reached out to community partners to finish the planning. Temporary signage was developed to display at the event to give community members a feel of what the actual signage would look like. The coalition also decided to preview last year's door-to-door survey results around the walking trail, adding a "Data Walk" event to the Walk-A-Mile Day activities. The results were from the door-to-door survey conducted in East Carroll Parish in 2021. The Data Walk was led by members of the youth coalition also known as, HYPE (Healthy Young People Empowerment) while other HYPE members led youth groups to their stations at the event.

Community members were able to walk around the trail and read survey results about safety and more in the community. Local government came out and showed their support. Mayor Bell opened the event with prayer and kind words to the community. The East Carroll Parish Police Jury, Town of Lake Providence & The East Carroll Parish School Board came out and supported the event by walking a mile and participating in all activities at the trail for the day. Youth and other community members participated in food demos hosted by the 4-H Junior Leaders. We also asked Carolyn E. Robinson and Theresa Sammons, both Southern University Agents, to participate by showing a food demo. Being that the month of "Walk A Mile Day" was the month to focus on fruits, Carolyn and Theresa planned to prepare fruit cups and discuss the importance and benefits of fruits. Carolyn discussed the lesson while Theresa prepared physical activities. Other physical activity sessions were hosted by Richland Parish LSU AgCenter Nutrition Agent Brittney Newsome, and a Grow a Row/physical activity presentation was developed by the Northeast Region Food Systems Coordinator, Cecilia Stevens. Health screenings were provided by Louisiana Delta Community College, and a jump rope activity was led by Lakeisha Curley (a dedicated coalition member and fitness instructor). A silly walking track activity was led by The East Carroll Parish Library and the Walk-A-Mile activity was led by The East Carroll Parish Healthy Communities Adult Coalition!

Over 100 community members were able to come out including 5th graders from Southside Elementary & Briarfield Academy. The coalition plans to make the event bigger each year by including more community partnerships and thinking through creative ways to extend the event. Permanent signage will be installed at a later date and the coalition will host a ribbon cutting event to highlight the hard work they've done and recognize community partners. We are excited about the many changes that are happening in East Carroll Parish, and we cannot wait to see the many ways the event will continue to grow over the years.

