**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Gregg County Extension Agent**

 ***Walk Across Texas!* begins soon**

For those wondering how to become more physically active, walking across Texas could be a good place to start. [*Walk Across Texas!*](https://walkacrosstexas.org/) is an eight-week community program delivered through a web-based platform to help people of various ages and abilities establish the habit of regular physical activity. A large-scale community Walk Across Texas! challenge is coming soon to Gregg County.

“*Walk Across Texas!* challenges teams to track and log mileage to virtually walk across the state of Texas — a distance of 832 miles,” said Michael Lopez, AgriLife Extension Program Specialist. Lopez said through a team-based approach, participants are engaged in a friendly competition to promote engagement during the program. Local sponsored events facilitated by AgriLife Extension county agents happen across the state, but the program allows for year-round participation.

Research shows the *Walk Across Texas!* program of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an effective way to begin and maintain a physical activity. A recent study published in [BMC Public Health](https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-7918-3), confirmed the effectiveness of the *Walk Across Texas!* program to increase and maintain physical activity over eight weeks, even among inactive or low-active participants.

“With the known difficulties many people face in just getting started with physical activity, one of the most encouraging findings from this study was *Walk Across Texas!* not only attracted participants from all physical activity levels, but also helped inactive and low-active participants become and remain physically active over the course of the program,” said Mark Faries, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Family and Community Health and principal investigator for the research.

Overall, the study results found that self-reported physical activity significantly improved from the first to the eighth week, increasing an average of nearly five miles per week, which translates to an additional 11,000 steps per week. Similar results were found for all activities levels, and improvements did not vary between gender, age, race or ethnicity.

A Gregg County-wide *Walk Across Texas!* challenge will begin on March 2nd and run through April 26th. Local businesses, civic groups, families and schools are encouraged to participate with the local challenge. To find out more about the program, potential participants can call Mandy Patrick, Gregg County Extension Agent at 903-236-8429 or visit the following website:

<https://walkacrosstexas.org>