

# Zebulon Parks & Recreation From Trail Development to Health Initiative

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

### BUILD CONNECTIONS

Ties you have with others are assets. Actively reach out to new and existing partners to share your goals and increase traction of your efforts.

### SEEK FEEDBACK AND CREATIVITY

It may take a variety of approaches to attract the people you want to engage. If you're not sure if a program or idea will stick, don't shy away from first asking those individuals if the idea is a good one.

### HAVE FUN

Sponsor a variety of fun activities to attract new users and promote use of facilities and programs.

**In the Town of Zebulon**, moving feet are happy feet! Zebulon Parks and Recreation Department (ZPRD) leaders initially envisioned a paved trail that would provide



a central and safe place for families to walk and ride their bikes, while connecting the park to surrounding neighborhoods, but they recognized that the needs were greater. When ZPRD received Healthy Places, Active Spaces funding, sixteen percent of Zebulon residents lived below the poverty level, with limited resources and unreliable transportation. Accessibility and affordability of recreational opportunities would be critical in promoting healthy, active living among youth and their families.

Leaders also learned that access to affordable fresh and healthy foods was lacking in part because local farmers did not have outlets for selling produce and the majority of local restaurants are fast food.

ZPRD quickly recognized that a healthy town initiative was in order. The ZPRD health initiative includes diverse programming in the park to attract new users such as Movin' and Groovin' outdoor fitness classes; Super Hero Day which encourages children to be super heroes of healthy living; Market on the Lawn farmer's market; and Churches on the Move which opens up the community center for church youth groups to use. They incorporate trail use into existing programs, like the preschool program, add signs to promote its use, and designed one of the trails to loop around the baseball and basketball areas so that parents could exercise while watching their children practice or play a game. Resources were also created, such as the Eastern Wake Play Space Map, designed to help people find ways to get moving in Eastern Wake County.

The trail was a spark that ignited interest in other opportunities for making physical activity *and* healthy eating easier. This is evidenced by their newly established youth council, 30-plus partnerships developed to help further these efforts and additional funding leveraged to enhance other parks and increase opportunities for active living and healthy eating in Zebulon. The momentum continues as Parks and Recreation leaders explore new opportunities, look for additional resources and strengthen partnerships.



**A grant-funded initiative to increase active living and healthy eating for underserved youth in Wake County. Administered by the Community and Clinical Connections for Prevention and Health Branch in the NC Division of Public Health and the N.C. Public Health Foundation. Funding provided by the John Rex Endowment.**

*"At our church, we are concerned about the total man: spirit, soul and body. I not only participate in these activities, but also encourage others in the community to do so. Previously, there was very little to do for youth and elderly citizens. My entire family utilizes the community park...the trails are wide enough for our double passenger stroller. We also held our first church picnic at the community park which was a huge success. The walking trails and community center, in my opinion, are now the life of the community." - Pastor Troy Brown*



## Survey Says...

The findings of an annual survey of park users revealed that:

- The majority of respondents indicated that the trails were the park amenity used most, playgrounds were a close second.
- 93% of respondents are interested in seeing a greenway system established in the Town of Zebulon.
- 98% of respondents stated they would visit a farmer's market in Zebulon. This result was supported with the well attended Market on the Lawn event held at the Town Municipal Complex.
- 83% of families responding to the survey stated they have increased their physical activity over the past year.



**"Love, love, love farmer's markets and not driving to Raleigh or Wendell would be awesome!"**  
- respondent to annual ZPRD survey.

## Lasting Impact

- Use of the walking trail continues to be popular
- ZPRD will continue to promote existing parks, facilities, and programs
- Utilize the walking trail at Community Park with ZPRD programs
- Continue to work closely with Eastern Wake Advocates for Health in Action
- Maintain existing partnerships for community outreach
- Continue to reach out to additional community organizations to promote and implement ongoing and new programs and opportunities
- Staff and Board are committed to seeking further capital improvements such as greenways.

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Let's Move Cities, Towns and Counties initiative recipients: Bronze Medal in Model Food Service for identifying all food vendors and contractors for municipally- or county-owned or operated venues that serve food, along with the dates when their contracts can be amended or renegotiated; and Bronze Medal in Active Kids at Play: for mapping all play spaces.
- 2014 John Rex Endowment Healthy Communities Grant recipient
- Media coverage
- Youth Council gets proposal approved by town board



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