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Major Progress in Walking at the 1-Year Anniversary of the U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking

(Sept. 7, 2016)—One year after the U.S. Surgeon General issued a national call to action to promote walking, *Salud America!*, Voices for Healthy Kids, and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership are celebrating new state-level and grassroots progress in creating walkable communities, and offering new resources for further action.

Grassroots changes are boosting walkability in neighborhoods across the nation.

Three grassroots case studies and videos by *Salud America!*, a national Latino childhood obesity prevention network funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and based at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, showcase change:

- [San Antonio, TX](#): Urban Designers Team with Neighbors to Get City Council to Bring More Walkable Streetscapes to Largely Latino Neighborhood
- [Denver, CO](#): Neighbors, Leaders Work Together to Turn Busy Street into a Pedestrian-Safe Destination in an 81% Latino Neighborhood
- [Kansas City, KS](#): Teen Leaders Bring a Walking and Fitness Trail to Local High School

Spurred on by the Surgeon General's call to action, several states and cities have also passed policies to further support walking and walkability.

Voices for Healthy Kids supported campaigns for Safe Routes to School efforts in Oregon and [Colorado](#), and supported advocacy efforts to add sidewalks—which spur a 6-8-percent increased investment in walking and biking—to the \$100 billion Los Angeles County Transportation Improvement Plan. In [Washington State](#), more than \$11 million in funding for Safe Routes to School was secured to increase safety for students walking and biking to school.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership also has developed a set of new resources to stimulate further success in creating walkable communities, including a [Guide to Creating a Walking Route Map](#), [Ideas for Incorporating Walking Into the Workday](#), a [Walkability Assessment Checklist](#), and a [Walking Meetings](#) facts sheet.

“We’re thrilled to see cities and states across the country take real action to make it easier for residents of all ages to walk to where they need to go. A brisk walk is a great form of physical activity, which is proven to reduce risk for disease and support positive mental health and

healthy aging,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., director of *Salud America!*. “We look forward to continuing to push for changes like these to advance walking and walkability.”

On Sept. 9, 2015, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy launched *Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* to recognize the importance of physical activity for people of all ages and abilities. It called on Americans to be more physically active through walking and calls on the nation to better support walking and walkability. Improving walkability means that communities are created or enhanced to make it safe and easy to walk and that pedestrian activity is encouraged for all people.

Watch a video about the 2015 call to action: <https://youtu.be/mq3DxArKAEo>.

Read more below about the *Salud America!* case studies:

Neighbors, Leaders Work Together to Turn Busy Street into a Pedestrian-Safe Destination in Colorado. Kids can’t play and people can’t walk on busy, unsafe streets. That’s why neighborhood leaders and residents like Paul D. López and Fany Mendez in the Denver, Colo., neighborhood of Westwood (81% Latino) worked together with organizations to tackle safety concerns on Morrison Road, an arterial street that ran through their neighborhood. Their efforts led to a pedestrian-activated traffic light, traffic calming features, medians, and aesthetically-pleasing infrastructure and landscaping to make the road more accessible to all. Read: <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/heroes/neighbors-leaders-work-together-to-turn-busy-street-into-a-pedestrian-safe-destination-in-colorado/>

Urban Designers and Residents Succeed in Getting More Walkable Streetscape from San Antonio City Council. Urban designers in the San Antonio, Texas neighborhood Dignowity Hill (75.16% Latino) learned about an upcoming street construction project that lacks walkable streetscape elements, and decided to act. The urban designers mobilized and empowered community members to get involved and request walkable streetscape elements, and the city responded by adding street trees, separated sidewalks, and landscaping. Today, through their recent project, Place Changing, the designers use “design activism” or “participatory design” processes to build urban literacy and equip residents with strategies to continue to get involved in city planning and development projects. Read: <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/heroes/urban-designers-and-residents-succeed-in-getting-more-walkable-streetscape-from-san-antonio-city-council/>
Watch: https://youtu.be/ngHlj6jUv_E

Teen Leaders Bring A Fitness Trail to Harmon High in Kansas City. What happens when youth are given the opportunity to lead their classmates toward a healthier school environment? The results might just amaze you! Teens involved in the 20-20 Leadership program at JC Harmon High School, a 58% Latino school in Kansas City, Kan., learned about the county’s high obesity rates—and they decided to do something about it. They developed plans for a healthy hub at Harmon High and later came up with the win-for-all solution of developing an outdoor fitness trail on school grounds. Now the school has a half-mile fitness trail and students plan to continue enhancing fitness opportunities by installing outdoor exercise equipment along the trail. Read: <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/heroes/teen-leaders-bring-a-fitness-trail-to-harmon-high-in-kansas-city-ks/>
Watch: https://youtu.be/luwie_w9slw

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Visit *Salud America!* on the web (<http://salud.to/saludamerica>) or social media (@SaludToday).

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Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a nonprofit network launched in 2007 that develops multimedia communications to educate and motivate its national online network—more than 50,000 kids, parents, teachers, academics, healthcare providers, and community leaders—to take action to reduce Latino childhood obesity and build a culture of health. The network was created and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and is directed by Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, a health disparities researcher and director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Visit *Salud America!* at <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/>. Follow *Salud America!* on social media via its @SaludToday handles on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [WordPress](#).

Voices for Healthy Kids is a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation working to ensure that the places where children live, learn, and play make it easy and enjoyable for them to eat healthy foods and be active. Visit www.voicesforhealthykids.org and follow along @Voices4HK.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a nonprofit organization that improves quality of life for kids and communities by promoting healthy living, safe infrastructure, and physical activity. Our mission is to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, to improve the health and wellbeing of kids of all races, income levels, and abilities, and to foster the creation of healthy communities for everyone. Visit www.saferoutespartnership.org and follow on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).