



PARKS AND RECREATION

PRESS RELEASE

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MAYORS ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO COMBAT HEART DISEASE & STROKE

Mayors to lead in physical activities

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – September 23, 2022 – The City of Athens Parks and Recreation Department has announced Mayors Perkinson and Gentry are joining more than sixty other mayors in a nationwide initiative to reduce heart disease and stroke, the nation’s No. 1 killer, by encouraging residents to get up and get moving. Mayors Perkinson and Gentry are kicking off the city’s first annual “Move with the Mayor™” series of physical activity offerings aimed to foster community and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease across the city.

“Being physically active can have numerous benefits, such as reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke,” said Mayor Perkinson. “Still, it can be hard to fit physical activity into our daily routines. That’s why I’m hosting a series of physical activity events for the residents of our great city of Athens, to show that fitting 30 minutes of activity, into even a hectic daily schedule, is possible and can be incredibly rewarding.”

Move with the Mayor™, a partnership between the City of Athens and McMinn County, and the National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention, encourages residents to join the Mayor in being physically active for at least 30 minutes a day, throughout the Challenge.

“Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S., killing approximately 655,000 people each year. It does not have to be that way because three of every four people can prevent it through healthy diets, living smoke-free and increased physical activity, such as walking,” says John Clymer, executive director of the National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention.

“Seventy-one million Americans do not get enough physical activity in their daily lives, and that increases their risk for heart disease and stroke,” said Clymer. “And by getting up, getting out, and walking more — perhaps from one meeting to another or other ways in their daily lives — a person can reduce his or her risk and have a longer, more active lifestyle.”

Mayor Gentry agrees and says his goal is to motivate all of McMinn County residents to walk or move to improve their cardiovascular health.

“I just want to offer some encouragement to those who have been considering increasing their physical activity levels. It is absolutely a win, win. I personally have seen the benefits of finding a physical activity and making it part of my daily routine. Many forms of heart disease, diabetes and other illnesses do not have to be part of your future. A healthier community will have a healthier future,” said Mayor Gentry.

Research shows that moving for just 30 minutes a day can help combat high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, three of the biggest risk factors for heart disease affecting about 48% of all Americans.

About half (45%) of U.S. adults (about 108 million Americans) have high blood pressure, the CDC reports. But hypertension doesn't just affect adults. An estimated 1.3 million of U.S. youth ages 12-19 (1 in 25 children) currently have hypertension. The leading cause for children is obesity, and, in many cases, hypertension in both youth and adults is preventable through increased physical activity. According to the U.S. government guidelines, children ages 6-17 should get at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day and should limit the amount of sedentary time spent in front of screens, such as tablets and televisions; adults, meanwhile, should aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity movement a week. Additionally, all Americans can benefit from eating more balanced diets filled with heart-healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.

“Mayors around the country recognize that by helping people to become more active in their everyday lives, they can help people have healthier and more vibrant lives,” said Clymer.

Mayors Perkinson and Gentry kick-off the Move with the Mayor™ physical activity challenge for McMinn Countians and community leaders. The challenge starts on September 29 at 1pm following the United Way Campaign Kickoff at the Athens-McMinn Family YMCA.

To get your school, business, or organization involved, contact Brianna Baker at bbaker@athenstn.gov.

The City of Athens is a full-service municipality nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and has garnered a reputation as the “Friendly City.”

For more information, please contact the Office of Parks & Recreation at (423) 744-2700 extension 3.

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