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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health Partners with the Pennsylvania Department of Health on WalkWorks to Increase Physical Activity in Western PA**

**PITTSBURGH, Jan. 26** – The [University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health \(GSPH\)](#) Center for Public Health Practice and the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) have created WalkWorks, an effort to increase physical activity among people of all ages and abilities in Western Pennsylvania by developing community-based walking programs. The initiative will establish local walking routes and enhance social support for people who would like to increase their level of physical activity.

Areas slated for immediate implementation of the WalkWorks program include Cambria, Crawford, Greene, McKean, Venango and Washington counties, which have been identified as among those with the greatest burden of chronic disease in Pennsylvania.

“Ultimately, the goal is to promote change in local policies to encourage more people to walk,” said WalkWorks advisor George Huber, J.D., associate dean for public policy, GSPH. “We are building momentum and looking at policies at the local level that can be modified to support pedestrian transportation.”

WalkWorks aims to reduce barriers to and increase participation in physical activity for individuals of all ages and abilities.

“We have assembled a team of health educators, public health practitioners and researchers at GSPH to help local communities in our region identify and mark safe walking routes, promote the walking routes to community members and establish guided community-based walking groups,” said WalkWorks director Linda Duchak, Ed.M., C.H.E.S.

In their physical activity guidelines, the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends that adults aged 18 to 64 get at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, per week.

“This program can improve the health and quality of life of everyone in our communities. At the same time, it can help to lower our rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure,” said William J. McMahon, M.D., a retired physician in Washington County, Pennsylvania, a member of the Washington County WalkWorks coalition and a WalkWorks walking group leader.

Local sponsors of the WalkWorks program include the Center for Rural Health Practice of the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford; Greene County Human Services; Memorial Medical Center; Oil City Area YMCA; Titusville Area Hospital; and Washington County Health Partners.

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