

'Find Your Path to a Healthier You' kicks off first Dewey event

By Special to the E-E

DEWEY — The Walk This Weigh committee will host its first annual "Find Your Path to a Healthier You" event to help improve the health and fitness of Washington County from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. April 28 in Dewey.

The free and noncompetitive event will be held at the OSU Extension Office on Bulldogger Road. The walking route will meander around the streets of Dewey including downtown. The event will have three sections including a two-mile walking route, a wheelchair route, a four-mile jogging route and a three-mile cycling route.

A free bike inspection for kids with Adventure Bicycle will be held the morning of the event at the event location.

Individuals that complete the free event will receive a McDonald's pedometer. Participants will receive T-shirts provided by the Washington County Health Department and be entered into \$100 cash drawing. Booths will be set up for participants to receive free blood glucose testing, nutrition and health tips, blood pressure screenings and much more.

The organizer of the event, Gale Mills, Family and Consumer Science Educator from the Washington County OSU Cooperative Extension Office is pleased to be able to hold this event in the city of Dewey.

"I am hoping for a large turnout from the residents here and all of Washington County, said Mills. "I am encouraging all families to come enjoy this event by participating in exercise that will strengthen your hearts and your entire body. "

The Dewey event is an outgrowth of the Bartlesville Walk This Weigh event. This past school year, Mills has been working with fifth grade students at Dewey Elementary, since the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, to improve their health by following sound nutrition advice and participating in physical activity daily funded by a grant from the American Heart Association.

"Another way these students and all residents of Dewey can improve their health is to come join in this event," said Mills.

Walk This Weigh is designed to improve the health of all the residents of Oklahoma by raising public awareness through a fun and innovative approach to reducing individual weight and increasing physical activity levels; implementing healthy community design and smart growth strategies; and advocating for nutritional and physical activity policies and standards in schools, worksites, healthcare systems, and governmental entities.

"The message is simple," said Larry Olmstead, Turning Point Initiative Director. "Walk This Weigh Oklahoma encourages you to walk at least 30 minutes a day, three times a week, minimize food intake, eat more fruits and vegetables and enjoy a healthier life.

McDonald's of Oklahoma has been involved with Walk this Weigh since its beginning two years ago and has helped provide over 25,000 Oklahomans with pedometers to help monitor their daily activity. They have also provided bottled water at community walking events, and continue to develop their menu to promote balanced, active lifestyles.

"In many cases we will need to change our attitudes and lifestyles. Many of these health problems we see today can be prevented or reduced by proper nutrition and exercise," said Health Educator Renetta Harrison.

Three of the leading causes of death in Oklahoma are heart disease, stroke and arteriosclerosis. However, local health officials say the good news is something can be done to help prevent many of those deaths, and they are taking the first step toward health.

The Oklahoma Turning Point Council, local businesses, schools, and non-profits are partnering with the Walk This Weigh Oklahoma initiative to make a difference in their personal health and to improve their communities. Some reasons why local organizations and businesses are joining the efforts to improve health include:

In Oklahoma, approximately 43 percent of the adults report no leisure time physical activity.

Thirteen percent of children and adolescents are now overweight or obese, which represents more than a doubling in the last 30 years.

More than 15 percent of our youth are considered obese and about 33 percent of all children under age 18 are at high-risk for Type 2 diabetes.

Almost 80 percent of Oklahomans are eating fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

For more information regarding this event or partner participation call Washington County Health Department at (918) 335-3005 or Gale Mills with OSU Extension in Washington County at (918) 534-2216.