



Forging a Trail to Family Fitness Graham County Schools

Graham County Schools are the Black Knights. Knights are known to fight for worthy reasons. A community assessment revealed a just cause for concern - 58% of Graham County adults were overweight or obese and 57% of the students were at risk for or already overweight. A lack of both resources and supportive physical activity environment compounded the problem. No community park or playground existed. City sidewalks were limited, and no walking trail was easily accessible to all.

Change was called for and the School Health Advisory Council served as the catalyst. Similar to knights of the round table, the SHAC pulled together all potential partners that had a stake in the well-being of Graham County. The goal was to improve quality of life by promoting the value of healthy lifestyles among children and families. The project would be two-pronged: 1) establish a trail with fitness stations for the community to share and 2) develop a health promotion education campaign.

In many communities, schools are the heart, serving as the common place around which the community can gather. That common ground led to the idea to establish the walking trail between the middle and high schools in Robbinsville.

The community rallied for the cause bringing together the Graham County Commissioners and Health Department, the Town of Robbinsville, Tallulah Health Center, Cherokee Choices, and Stanly Furniture as partners. The Forestry Service laid out the trail. Volunteer and in-kind labor was provided by county and town employees, inmates, school staff, students, and families. They joined forces with the faith-based World Changers for trail work days.

The group conquered the challenge of resources. Graham County was able to secure an Eat Smart Move More NC Community Grant; two Diabetes Translation and Control Project Grants; and funding from Project One Accord - a Safe Schools, Healthy Students CDC Project to create the trail and fitness

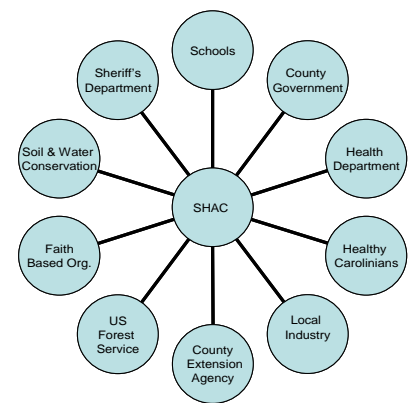
stations. They applied for a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC Foundation grant to pave the trail. A Sun Safety Grant allowed for the planting of trees and building of a shelter for an outdoor classroom.

Education was the final key to "build it and they will come". Teachers received training on how to incorporate activity into classroom lessons. Schools signed up for the President's Challenge Physical Activity Program and students participated in a Murphy to Manteo walk-a-thon. All schools participated in fall health fairs. Staff joined walking programs, an activity competition, and nutrition classes with a cooking demo and shared meal. Families completed monthly challenges tracking food and activity.

The Graham County Black Knights recognized a need, laid a plan, mobilized resources and answered the charge. They succeeded in reaching their goals and valiantly served in forging a trail to fitness for Graham County children and their families.



Graham County Black Knights



Community shares trail with fitness stations

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