

ARIZONA

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE MANAGEMENT

Being outdoors has a plethora of positive impacts on the human body, from encouraging exercise to stress relief. The Prescription Parks and Trails (Park Rx) project is aimed at improving the physical and mental health of individuals and communities by giving healthcare providers new tools to inspire patients to utilize parks, trails, and open spaces in southern Arizona. A collaboration between healthcare providers, public land agencies, and community partners, Park Rx encourages patients to take proactive steps to improve their health and well-being by providing them with prescriptions to participate in outdoor activities.

The Park Rx project is coordinated by the BEYOND Foundation, an organization committed to improving the health and well-being of communities. BEYOND encourages community members to adopt a comprehensive approach to their health by following a health formula based on four key principles: exploring by getting outdoors and spending time in nature, moving by engaging in regular physical activity, nourishing by eating healthy foods and connecting with one another as a community.

The goal of the Park Rx project is to improve the physical and mental health of individuals and communities with a focus on low income, underserved areas in Tucson, AZ. In collaboration with health care providers, public land agencies, and community partners, Park Rx is assisting and encouraging people to utilize parks, trails, open spaces, and the trees throughout. Through community walking events, ranger led programs, and guided hikes, Park Rx is developing into a unified integration of nature and public health.

Park Rx is also giving health care providers a new set of tools to inspire patients to take proactive steps to improve their health and well-being by writing prescriptions to participate in outdoor activities. Most events, programs, and all walks are open to the public, whether a patient or not.



“Together We Move at Mercado San Agustin” – This event included Jazzercise, Zumba, Hula Fitness, dancing, a walk to the Mission Garden, Dequenes’s Community & Wellness Mobile Unit to take vitals, and drumming. *Photo Credit: BEYOND Foundation.*



“Witness the Fitness at El Pueblo Neighborhood Center” – A Park Rx event at El Pueblo Regional Neighborhood Center on January 13th included classes led by El Rio instructors in both Zumba and Tai Chi, as well as a jumping castle and an educational booth with health information. *Photo Credit: BEYOND Foundation.*

To date, Park Rx has hosted 21 walks/hikes and over 200 people participated in events from October to December 2017. The Park Rx team hopes to increase participation and partnerships in the local community and has the overall goal of expansion of the Park Rx programs to be available for prescription by any Tucson doctor.

Plans to replicate the Park Rx program in Maricopa County are currently underway.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, Urban and Community Forestry Program
<https://dffm.az.gov/forestry-community-forestry/urban-community-forestry>