

Be Active WV Mini-Grant Program 2020 Success Story

WILLIAMSON HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER, INC. Storybook Walking Trail

What Public Health Problem Was Addressed?

According to the County Health Rankings, 2 out of 5 adults in Mingo County self-reported to be physically inactive or have no leisure time physical activity, and nearly a third of the population reports fair or poor health. The role of the built environment, such as trails, sidewalks, parks, and gyms, is important for encouraging physical activity in communities. Williamson Health and Wellness, Inc. and Healthy in the Hills Network, recognized that residents lack safe and accessible places to walk and weren't aware of the trails that currently exist in Mingo County. Many of the recreation facilities are underutilized or not accessible to the general public. They also recognized a need to start changing health habits at an early age by incorporating physical activity as part of the school day and beyond.

What Approach Did They Take?

To improve access and awareness of opportunities for physical activity in Mingo County, Williamson Health and Wellness, Inc. worked with a student led health ambassadors program at Williamson PK-8 School to improve signage and establish a Storybook Walking Trail. The health ambassador student group led discussions and engaged in the process of designing the trail signs and reviewing books to use along the trail. Williamson Health & Wellness Center maintenance staff constructed the boxes and Fresh Start Mingo County crew members dug and cemented the posts into the holes to install the book boxes.

What Were The Results?

The Storybook Walking Trail improved about a half a mile of trails by adding 18 storybook boxes to engage participants and encourage trail use. Two teachers are committed to using the trail during the 2020-2021 school year as an active learning component during the school day. They anticipate 150+ students, in at least 8 classrooms, will increase physical activity during the school day by using the Storybook Trails during the school year. Additionally, Health Ambassadors were briefed on social determinants of health (SDOH) by health center outreach team at Williamson Health & Wellness Center. The students (5th to 8th grade) were tasked with talking to their peers in informal settings and report back with their own and their peers' views, needs, and wants. The health center team used the responses to add to the Community Health Needs Assessment. A summary of responses revealed high priority issues such as transportation, food access, healthcare, and community engagement.

What's Next?

Williamson Health & Wellness Center and the Healthy in the Hills Network are excited about the success of the project to increase active living/working in collaboration with the youth and teachers at Williamson PK-8. The youth Health Ambassadors brought enthusiasm to the project with ideas that inspired everyone involved. The youth leadership will be long-lasting in our community and the health center and school partnership will continue to work together to make improvements to the trail. A second Storybook Walking Trail is being created at Kermit Community Park based on the success of this project.



“With the lift of a box lid, the Wolfpack Walk provides teachers the opportunity to take their classrooms outside and incorporate physical activity into every day learning. The space between each box provides short physical and mental health breaks for the students.”

-Amy Dearfield Hannah, Community Resource Network Director

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