



Campaign will aim to get county residents walking

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The **Ottawa County Wellness Coalition** is planning a community-wide campaign to promote walking called "**The Golden Shoe Campaign**," a six-month walking initiative that will launch in April 2007.

The initiative is in response to a recent survey that shocked many health care providers. In Ottawa County, 32 percent of children are classified "overweight" or "at risk of overweight." In addition, 57 percent of Ottawa County adults surveyed were either overweight or obese, said **Lisa Uganski**, the coalition chairperson. "Our goals are to provide a fun way for Ottawa County residents to be more physically active," **Uganski** said. "The campaign features designated walking routes in Grand Haven, Holland and Zeeland."

The coalition comprises 11 organizations including the city of Holland Recreation Division, Holland Hospital, Ottawa Area Intermediate School District and Zeeland Community Hospital.

Participants will get more than a healthy lifestyle, organizers say. As part of the promotional effort, every two weeks a "golden shoe" will be hidden along each identified route. Individuals who find the "shoe" will be awarded a certificate for free pair of new walking shoes, said **Rita Huron** from the **Ottawa County Health Department**, one of the initiative sponsors. There also will be a drawing for "wellness baskets," which include donated items from businesses along the routes.

The route in Holland begins at the Civic Center and extends east on Eighth Street, south on River Avenue, around Centennial Park, back to Eighth Street, east to College Avenue then west on Eighth Street back to the Civic Center.

Bev Littner Schroeder, prevention coordinator for the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, said child obesity has nearly tripled in the past 30 years.

"Obese children are more likely to have high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol and insulin levels. Obese children are more likely to grow up to become overweight adults," Littner Schroeder said. "We want to establish healthy habits early because they become part of a (healthy) lifestyle. Also kids who are physically active tend to make better nutritional choices.

"That's part of the focus of the golden shoe campaign," Littner Schroeder said. "That's why it's important."

For more information contact about how to sponsor the campaign or for route information contact **Rita Huron at the Ottawa County Health Department at (616) 393-5772** or send e-mail to rhuron@co.ottawa.mi.us.

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