

Programming LifeTrail™

In the past, "fitness trails" have been built in parks and other outdoor areas to encourage exercise and fitness. These trails have not been used very heavily, primarily because:

- They weren't fun.
- They were designed for too young and/or too physically fit a user group.
- They assumed people would use the trail informally without any promotion, special events, contests, games, awards, and formal recreation programming done in conjunction with such trails.

There is evidence that older adults recognize the benefits of being physically fit and are interested in improving their health through fitness programs. Park and recreation professionals are challenged to strengthen this awareness and encourage individuals to engage in fitness activities. Research shows they use outdoor recreation areas, such as local park and walking trails, at a high or higher rate than the rest of the public. This guide was created to help ensure that LifeTrail is used by local citizens, especially older adults. The core concept is to market and promote LifeTrail as a fun, easy to use fitness system, which has the secondary benefit of creating an enjoyable setting for social interaction.

Why LifeTrail?

LifeTrail, designed primarily for older adults, includes cardio warm-ups, stretching, and strength and balance exercises. The attraction of LifeTrail is that it is free to use (versus high membership fees at local health facilities), it is fun and it was created to benefit specifically older adults and their fitness needs.

Before the Grand Opening

Before you open LifeTrail to the public, develop a presentation defining and describing LifeTrail, its importance to older adults, statistics regarding older adults in the local area, and the benefits of the activities that make up the Wellness Stations™. This presentation can include brochures, a LifeTrail instruction guide and a PowerPoint presentation. Contact agencies and businesses that share the same target market-older adults-to engage their support and partnership. Consider contacting your local Area Agency on Aging, representatives from the medical community, healthcare providers, HMOs, senior centers, rehabilitation clinics, physical educators, health departments, and disease specific organizations such as the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association and others.