

SENIOR SCAPE: A Walk in the Park

A Stroll in the Park for Aurora Seniors

By Jim Abram

It is that time of year again when you are contemplating embarking on your New Year's resolutions. Well, here is a wonderful idea: even though the current weather might not be the best, it is still time to think about keeping fit for the rest of the year.

If you are a senior aged 55+ living in Aurora and you are looking for friendship, fun and healthy exercise, join our Walking Club at the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

The goal is to promote seniors' health through enjoyable, non-competitive outdoor social activities. Walks are held on Wednesday mornings and are about an hour in length. Walking through green space is beneficial for both physical and mental health.

These popular walks travel the trail system at the Aurora Arboretum adjacent to the Aurora Seniors' Centre or at Sheppard's Bush and Vandorf Sideroad trails. These trails are scenic and safe trails, and are maintained in excellent condition to accommodate our group of walkers and our canine mascot, Ziggy!

Walking is one of the least expensive and most broadly accessible forms of physical activity. It is rarely associated with physical injury and can easily be adopted by people of all ages, including those who have never participated in physical activity.

Studies have shown that walking has higher levels of adherence than other forms of physical activity, possibly because it is convenient and overcomes many of the commonly perceived barriers to physical activity: lack of time, lack of money, lack of fitness or lack of skill. Walking is a particularly accessible form of physical activity: it is low-impact, appropriate for all age-groups and it is free. Not only is it a good way to get from A to B - brisk walking speed is about 3.5 miles (5 km) per hour - but walking can also help people to avoid weight gain over the long term.

Even slow walking burns around 114 calories per mile walked for someone weighing 200lb (91kg).

'Many of us are pretty fit from all the walking we do,' says Ruth Church, ASA Walking Club convenor, 'but some members found it a bit of a challenge when they first started. Our walks are open to all members of the Aurora Seniors' Centre and we really welcome new walkers. We start the walk at a slow pace appropriate to active seniors and work up to the longer distance and modestly faster pace. We don't want people to be put off by trying too much. We'd rather they felt encouraged that 'one day soon, I'll be walking with more and more confidence'.

The walking club is active all year round. As weather permits, we try some other trails as well. We do not walk if the trail gets icy or if the weather is bad. If in doubt, check with the Aurora Seniors' Centre Reception Desk 905-726-4767 early Wednesday morning.

We meet at the Centre at 9.30 a.m. and car pool to the starting location. No pre-registration is required, just show up. We are always looking for eager members to walk with us, so, come out and join us.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, email auroraseniors@rogers.com or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.