

Jumpstart your Week with a Monday Mile

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Physical activity has numerous health benefits and is an essential part of living a healthy life. Walking, for example, can help build stronger bones and muscles, increase balance, mobility, and flexibility, and lower blood pressure. Your mind also benefits from physical activity. Movement throughout the day can help sharpen focus, increase critical thinking skills and creativity, and reduce stress. The Monday Mile is a simple and easy way to start your week off right and get in your daily physical activity. Local communities, workplaces, and schools can use the Monday Mile to promote physical wellness and social connection among their residents, employees, and students.

What is the Monday Mile?

The Monday Mile is a part of Move-It Monday, an international campaign that encourages physical activity, wellness, and community cohesion.¹ The Monday Mile encourages people to start their week actively by walking a mile every Monday. It is a fun and approachable way to help people set fitness goals, get in daily exercise, and jumpstart the week. The initiative began in Onondaga County in 2012 with the support of the Onondaga County Executive Office and Syracuse Mayor's Office. It expanded to Madison County in 2016 with the support of the Madison County Rural Health Council (MCRHC). There are now 30 Monday Miles throughout Onondaga and Madison counties, plus one mile on the AMOS Health & Hope campus in Managua, Nicaragua. If you'd like to learn more about the Monday Mile, visit <https://www.moveitmonday.org/mondaymile/>.

Why Monday?

Research shows that people view Monday as a day for a fresh start and are more likely to start diet and exercise programs, quit smoking, and schedule doctor's appointments on Monday than any other day.² A Monday start helps you carry out your healthy intentions for the week. Getting students, residents, or employees active at the start of the week can help to create a productive and positive environment. The Monday Mile can be used to schedule walking meetings at your workplace or incorporated into physical education classes in schools. The best part is, Monday is always around the corner, giving you a chance every week to recommit to a healthy habit. Using Monday as a tool to be active can help you maintain a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Where are the Monday Mile Routes?

The Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse University has partnered with Syracuse City Parks, Onondaga County Parks, and the Madison County Rural Health Council to create 30 Monday Mile routes in Central New York. To find the Monday Mile routes, visit:

<http://lernercenter.syr.edu/healthy-monday-syracuse/programs/move-it-monday-monday-mile/>. If you are not from the area, don't worry! You don't need a physical route to walk a Monday Mile. It takes the average person 20 minutes to walk one mile. You can start your watches and get moving, no matter where you are!

How Madison County, NY Made Monday Active

In 2016, the Madison County, NY Rural Health Council (MCRHC)³ expressed interest in the Monday Mile program because of its goal to decrease obesity by facilitating physical activity and access to recreation space. Due to its rural nature, Madison County community members reported a lack of parks and recreation spaces to engage in physical activity. In response, the MCRHC and the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse created the *Live Well Committee* to address these issues. The *Live Well Committee* is comprised of people who live throughout Madison County. By working with them to develop Monday Miles, we hoped to increase opportunities for Madison County residents to be active.

Stockbridge: The First Madison County Monday Mile

To determine where the first Monday Mile should be located, MCRHC identified priority neighborhoods with high childhood obesity. Stockbridge was among the top ten school districts for childhood obesity. Lerner Center representatives and members of the *Live Well Committee* met with the Stockbridge superintendent, principals, and teachers to pitch the development of a Monday Mile. They walked areas around the school to determine the best location for a Monday Mile route. After receiving approval from the Board to develop a Monday Mile on the school grounds, the Lerner Center worked with the *Live Well Committee* and the Stockbridge school to create signage. Physical Education teachers regularly use the Monday Mile for their classes throughout the year.



Expanding County Wide

To expand routes beyond Stockbridge to other parts of Madison County, the *Live Well Committee* worked with local town and village boards, town supervisors, and village mayors. To install signage, the *Live Well Committee* and the head of the village or town worked with their Department of Public Works (DPW). The DPW has been responsive to the Committee's needs and mindful of concerns, such as sign pollution and discerning New York State property lines from village and town lines. Community members were also key stakeholders in the development and success of the Monday Miles. Volunteers have stepped up to lead the development and installation of routes throughout the county. For example, a community representative from the town of Stockbridge, NY helped to move the approval process forward by contacting Stockbridge school officials. A committee member from the village of Morrisville, NY knew the Mayor and began discussing the benefits of a Monday Mile in their village. The community network is essential in making the Monday Miles a success because local community members are the experts about their community. The Monday Mile has improved community cohesion within Madison County, as members have joined together through the *Live Well Committee* under the shared goal of making Madison County a healthier place to live.



Spreading the Word

Awareness of the Monday Miles has grown organically through word-of-mouth throughout the community. Community members have proven to be important in promoting the Monday Miles. Members of the *Live Well Committee* have strong connections to their communities. Their fellow community members know the committee members and trust them. Residents believe the committee is acting for the betterment of their community and the county.

Other marketing strategies that the *Live Well Committee* has used to promote the Monday Miles include flyers in libraries, schools, hospitals, and shared community spaces, newspaper articles, social media, the Healthy Monday Syracuse and MCRHC websites, and community events.

Madison County Monday Mile Day

In September 2018, the MCRHC celebrated their Monday Mile walking program with healthy snacks, prizes, and group Monday Miles. Monday Mile Day served to increase awareness about the routes and to motivate community members to get outside and get moving. Participants were encouraged to walk the Monday Mile and complete a survey about their usage of the routes. Twelve people signed up to be Monday Mile Group Leaders. These leaders will be responsible for organizing a weekly Monday Mile walk in their community with the aim of increasing usage of the routes, physical activity, and social connection.

How to Create a Monday Mile Route in your Community, Workplace, or School

Starting a Monday Mile in your community, workplace, or school is easy! Just follow these simple steps:

1. *Identify a 1-mile route.* Routes can be indoors or outdoors. Ask yourself:
 - Is the route familiar to your community?
 - Is the route safe?
 - Is the route frequently used?
 - Does the route have cultural or historical significance (you can use this to build interest!)
2. *Establish a starting time & location*
 - Schedule a walking meeting.
 - Start a walking club.
 - Make it a weekly family, workplace, or school tradition.
3. *Establish Monday Mile Signage*
 - Contact the Lerner Center for signage templates and suggestions (lerner@syr.edu).
 - Reach out to local organizations who may be interested in helping to promote physical activity or community building. Consider schools, hospitals, libraries, or your local parks department.
 - Walk the established route and determine where signage could go.
 - Talk with your town board or public officials to create an action plan.
4. *Recruit walkers.* Spread the word to get the community involved.
 - Send an office or school-wide email.
 - Use social media **#MondayMile**.
 - Invite neighbors, friends, and colleagues.

Go the Extra Mile by Making Sure the Route is Accessible and Inclusive

We encourage you to consider the accessibility and inclusivity of your Monday Miles. Is the route unobstructed, well-lit, relatively flat, and wide enough for people of all abilities? Does it have a stable surface? For more information, visit the Inclusive recreation Resource Center.⁵

Learn more about how to start your own Monday Mile with our Monday Mile Toolkit:

<http://www.moveitmonday.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Monday-Mile-Toolkit-2015.pdf>.

Endnotes

1. To learn more about Move-It Monday, visit: <https://www.moveitmonday.org/about/>.
2. Fry, J. & Neff, R. (2010). *Healthy Monday: Two Literature Reviews*. Accessed Jan. 25, 2019 via https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/_pdf/projects/HM/healthymondayreport.pdf.
3. To learn more about the Madison County Rural Health Council, visit <http://www.mcruralhealthcouncil.org/monday-mile/>.
4. Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion. Move-It Monday and Monday Miles. <http://lernercenter.syr.edu/healthy-monday-syracuse/programs/move-it-monday-monday-mile/>.
5. Inclusive Recreation Resource Center. <https://inclusiverec.org/inclusion-u-online>

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The mission of the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse University is to improve population health through applied research and evaluation, education, engaged service, and advocating for evidence-based policy and practice change.

