



"I love this walking thing. I've been here every week that I could since I started.It made me enjoy walking so much that I don't mind going by myself."

-- Sound Steps walker

Healthy Aging Partnership

Sound Steps

2003 Evaluation Report



Report prepared by:

**University of Washington
Health Promotion Research Center**

Julie Walwick, MSW
Allen Cheadle, PhD
Sheryl Schwartz, MPA

For additional copies of this report or further information, please contact Julie Walwick at
(206) 616-3146 or walwick@u.washington.edu

This evaluation was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prevention Research Center Program, with a grant to the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center, Grant Number U48/CCU009654

Special thanks for their support of Sound Steps:

AARP
Seattle Parks & Recreation
Aging & Disability Services, Seattle Human Services Dept.
Comprehensive Health Education Foundation
Public Health – Seattle and King County
University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center

Healthy Aging Partnership

The Healthy Aging Partnership is a coalition of more than 30 not-for-profit and public organizations dedicated to helping older adults live longer, healthier lives. HAP's mission is to promote healthy aging through community partnerships and its vision is a supportive community that provides information and resources and fosters healthy choices for all people as we age.

Through its Senior Information Campaign, HAP promotes 1-888-4ELDERS as a toll-free, confidential source of information and assistance to seniors and their caregivers. By publicizing health messages on a wide range of topics, HAP helps ensure safer and more active lives for seniors. [Http://www.4elders.org](http://www.4elders.org) offers detailed online resources and links for older adults and the people who care for them.

2003 Contributing Partners

AARP	Public Health – Seattle & King County
Aging & Disability Services, Seattle Human Services Department	Seattle Parks & Recreation
Comprehensive Health Education Foundation	Senior Services of Seattle/King County
ElderHealth Northwest	Snohomish County Long-Term Care & Aging
Harborview Medical Center	United Way of King County
King County Executive's Office	UW Health Promotion Research Center
Providence Health System	Washington Dental Service Foundation

2003 Community Partners

African-American Elders Project	SEA MAR, Latino Senior Information & Assistance
Asian Counseling and Referral Service	Seattle Housing Authority
Evergreen Healthcare	Seattle Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens
Fremont Public Association	Senior Care, Overlake Medical Center
Group Health Cooperative	UW Northwest Geriatric Education Center
King County Housing Authority	UW Stroke Prevention Center at Harborview
King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse & Dependency Services	Visiting Nurse Services of the Northwest
Kitsap County Division of Aging & Long-Term Care	Washington Association of Housing and Services for the Aging
Nikkei Concerns	WA State Dept. of Health, Office of Health Promotion
Pierce County Aging & Long Term Care	

Table of Contents

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
FULL REPORT	
OVERVIEW.....	1
WHO WERE SOUND STEPPERS?.....	2
REASONS FOR JOINING.....	7
IMPLEMENTATION.....	8
BENEFITS.....	11
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	15
CONCLUSIONS.....	22
REFERENCES.....	22
APPENDIX.....	23

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2003, the Healthy Aging Partnership – with special contributions from AARP and Seattle Parks & Recreation – sponsored Sound Steps, a program designed to promote walking among older adults. Sound Steps was implemented on a pilot basis at seven Seattle Parks and Recreation Community Centers from June through August of 2003. To evaluate the effectiveness of the Sound Steps program, the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) collected both qualitative and quantitative information from the participants.

Implementation of Sound Steps

Primary responsibility for implementing the program at each of the sites rested with Seattle Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program staff, with details of implementation varying at each center. Key program elements included initial registration and “goody bags” (including an electronic pedometer), organized walks at least once a week at each community center, monthly walking logs, an educational brochure, incentive gifts to encourage continued walking, and a celebration at the end of the program at each participating site.

Benefits from Sound Steps

What was the impact of Sound Steps? Both qualitative and quantitative data point to increased walking, which was the primary goal of the program. Below are other ways that Sound Steps made a difference in participants’ lives.

Increasing physical activity. Many people reported that having some kind of organized program made a difference in getting them to walk more. Filling out the monthly walking logs also motivated many walkers, even if they did not turn them in. The monthly logs likely underestimated how much participants truly walked over the course of the summer, since many regular walkers reported they did not turn them in or fill them out completely. However, the results of the logs that were received did show an increase in activity as compared to baseline.

Health improvements. A number of walkers reported noticeable improvement in their health and stamina over the course of the summer. People found it much easier to walk a longer distance. They experienced fewer chest pains on inclines, decreased back pain, more energy, better sleep, and boosted spirits.

Community Building. People were very enthusiastic about having the program in their neighborhood. They did not want to drive (or drive far) for a walking program. They were also excited about getting to know their neighborhoods better, discovering new places to walk, and getting to know other people who live in the neighborhood. Many people connected with new walking partners, as well as making new friends to meet for lunch or to see a movie. They also expressed a great deal of pride in their own neighborhood.

Increased exposure to Parks & Recreation Programs. A theme heard from staff, organized walkers and people who walked on their own was one of learning about existing programs and seeing new faces at the community centers. Exposure to community programs not only enhances

Executive Summary

the likelihood that these older adults will be more physically active; it also addresses the increased need in older age to avoid social isolation.

Recommendations

Volunteers. The original vision of Sound Steps was to be primarily led by volunteers, with minimal involvement by the Parks & Recreation staff. This worked very well at one community center. Based on that example, and other suggestions from walkers and staff, the following are suggestions to build a volunteer program:

- Start recruiting early from existing Parks & Recreation programs.
- Have a variety of concrete tasks for volunteers (e.g., registration, lead walks, welcome walkers, and check-in phone calls to walkers).
- Keep the program and job duties simple.
- Have a large pool of volunteers so no one person carries the entire burden of the program.
- Empower the older adults to make it their program.

Alleviating Parks & Recreation staff burden. Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program staff were instrumental in implementing Sound Steps and in making this pilot program a success. However, Sound Steps was overwhelming, due in part to the short lead time. They all rose to the challenge and did an amazing job, given the short lead time. Bringing staff into the planning process early and using their wealth of knowledge about implementing programs would help to garner ownership of the program and provide sufficient notice to schedule Sound Steps and recruit volunteers.

Walking partners. Many people joined Sound Steps to walk with other people and find a partner with whom they could continue to walk outside of the organized walks. Suggestions from participants to improve this aspect included: 1) pairing people up with another walker or two with similar walking capabilities; 2) having a formal introduction period at the first meeting; and 3) creating a community center participant contact list to share people's names, phone numbers and days they would like to walk right at the beginning of the program.

Managing different ability levels. Another major concern raised was accommodating the different fitness levels Sound Steps participants. Slower walkers were intimidated by those who walked faster, and the faster walkers were not challenged enough to return. Sound Steppers suggested possible ways to meet the needs of slower walkers: 1) walks could be graded for fitness levels and maps indicating hills could be provided; and 2) formally breaking into smaller groups and letting people rank themselves as to which group would be appropriate.

Increasing participation. Recruitment for this pilot was a success with close to 500 participants signing up during the one-week registration period in May. Walkers suggested they could become ambassadors for the program to spread the word next year by talking to neighborhood councils, faith communities, and neighbors.

2003 SOUND STEPS EVALUATION

FULL REPORT

In the summer of 2003, the Healthy Aging Partnership – with special contributions from AARP and Seattle Parks & Recreation – sponsored Sound Steps, a program designed to promote walking among older adults. Sound Steps was implemented on a pilot basis at seven Seattle Parks and Recreation Community Centers from June through August of 2003. Key program elements included initial registration and “goody bags” (including an electronic pedometer), organized walks at least once a week at each community center, monthly walking logs, an educational brochure, incentive gifts to encourage continued walking, and a celebration at the end of the program at each participating site.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sound Steps program, the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC) collected both qualitative and quantitative information from the participants. The Sound Steps evaluation team developed a baseline questionnaire, which was used at registration to gather the following information: activity level, walking level, health status, social contact status, how participants heard about Sound Steps, reasons for signing up for Sound Steps, and general demographic information about the participants such as age, marital status, income level and ethnicity. The team also developed monthly walking logs to be completed by participants to assess change in the level of walking over the summer.

In addition to these quantitative instruments, HPRC conducted six focus groups of organized walkers from six of the community centers and interviewed 53 individuals from the following groups: 1) Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program staff; 2) Parks & Recreation Community Center Coordinators; 3) Sound Steps volunteers; 4) walkers who did not participate in organized walks; and 5) people who left the program.

The report below describes Sound Steps including an overview, description of the walkers, and how the program was carried out. The main outcomes or benefits of Sound Steps and recommendations for improving the program are delineated in the final sections.

Overview of Sound Steps

HAP, a well-established coalition of some 35 Seattle-area not-for-profit and public organizations dedicated to the health and well being of older adults, had long targeted promotion of physical activity as a goal. However, its efforts had primarily focused on encouraging such activity through publicity and seminars for senior-care professionals, rather than implementing actual programs. Spurred by interest from AARP, one of HAP’s member agencies, the Partnership decided to make Sound Steps its first venture into developing and implementing a community-based program for older adults. The following is a brief description of the program activities and locations.

Program description. Sound Steps provided options for the walkers. Participants could walk on their own, walk with organized walks from their community center, and walk with friends, neighbors, or other Sound Steppers outside of the organized walks. Weekly walks were arranged at each of the sites, led either by a volunteer or by the Seattle Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program staff. At registration, participants were supplied with monthly walking logs to track the amount they walked each day. The initial bag of incentives given to walkers included a pedometer, a neck wallet with a name tag and a brochure about the benefits of walking, among other items. Each month, participants were given a gift, such as a hand exerciser or first aid kit, when they turned in their completed monthly logs.

Program locations. Sound Steps was originally intended to be implemented at six Seattle Parks and Recreation Community Centers. A seventh site was added due to a high level of interest among older adults active at Jefferson Community Center, and few people registered at the nearby Rainier Community Center. This may in part be because Rainier does not have a well developed Senior Adult program. Also, the community center at Rainier was closed the week of registration as they were refinishing their floors, forcing registration to take place in the parking lot outside the building.

In addition to these community center sites, the program was adopted by an activities director at an assisted living facility in West Seattle and implemented with the residents in this facility. This program included many frail older adults who were able to walk only a short distance. Sound Steps provided a means for the activities director to connect with community programs that augmented what she was already doing with the residents. Each week, she arranged to have a van take residents to Alki beach and helped them partner with someone who walked at the same pace. She reported that the opportunity to get out of the assisted living facility and socialize with each other deepened their relationships. One of the women who has dementia brightened up one day, and said “I used to live up there.” The activities director described it as: “the glazed look went out of her eyes and she seemed to remember things again.” She felt that this type of program could prove useful for other assisted living facilities. Activity directors are often short on resources, therefore benefit greatly from partnering with existing programs.

An all ages fibromyalgia walking group at Northgate Mall also adopted the Sound Steps program.

Who were the Sound Steppers and why did they join?

One concern with a program like Sound Steps is whether or not it was simply “preaching to the choir.” In order to determine if this was true of Sound Steps, we compared the activity level of the program participants with the Washington State Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data (see Table 1). The BRFSS is a telephone survey developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the mid 1980’s and is used to monitor health risk behaviors of adults on a state-by-state basis in order to provide information for planning and evaluating health promotion and disease prevention programs. In general, people who signed up for Sound Steps reported better health status than the population of Washington as a whole and

tended to be a little more active. However, Sound Steps did attract people who reported not being active at all (11%) and only 18% of Sound Steppers (age 65+) met the surgeon general’s recommendation for activity level¹, comparable to the 21% from the BRFSS survey for Washington state. The middle category, “Active, but doesn’t meet surgeon general criteria,” included anyone who had done any amount of physical activity. This could be as little as walking once a week for 20 minutes.

TABLE 1: Health status & physical activity level comparisons

	Sound Steps (Age 50 +) n = 427	Sound Steps (Age 65 +) n = 261	BRFSS WA State (Age 65 +)	BRFSS National Data (Age 65 +)
General Health Status				
Excellent	11%	10%	10%	11%
Very Good	42%	44%	30%	24%
Good	38%	39%	37%	34%
Fair	8%	7%	16%	21%
Poor	1%	0%	7%	10%
Age				
Under 65	29%	n/a	n/a	n/a
65-74	40%	56%	58%	57%
75+	31%	44%	42%	43%
Gender				
Female	83%	80%	66%	65%
Male	17%	20%	34%	35%
Activity Level				
Inactive	12%	11%	24%	37%
Active, but doesn’t meet surgeon general criteria	69%	71%	55%	47%
Active, meets surgeon general criteria	19%	18%	21%	16%

Table 2 provides further detail by community center about activity and walking level at baseline, as well as their primary activity. Walking was by far the most common activity among these older adults.

¹ A 1996 report of the Surgeon General recommended that people of all ages get a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity (e.g., brisk walking), at least 10 minutes at a time, and at least 5 days a week.

TABLE 2: *Types and levels of physical activity*

	Alki	Garfield	Jefferson	Loyal Heights	Meadowbrook	Queen Anne	Rainier	Overall Total
Actual Baseline registration forms received	93	43	35	63	69	110	14	427
Activity level at registration								
Not active at all	13%	28%	4%	13%	9%	7%	9%	12%
Active but does not meet surgeon general's recommendation	68%	62%	86%	60%	79%	69%	73%	69%
Active and meets surgeon general's recommendation	19%	10%	11%	27%	12%	24%	18%	19%
Walking level at registration								
Does not walk at all	19%	18%	25%	18%	16%	12%	9%	17%
Walks but does not meet surgeon general's recommendation	66%	69%	68%	53%	72%	62%	64%	64%
Walks and meets surgeon general's recommendation	15%	13%	7%	29%	12%	26%	27%	19%
Primary type of physical activity								
Walking	58%	69%	58%	57%	67%	56%	46%	59%
Gardening	13%	14%	8%	15%	11%	12%	9%	12%
Aerobics	12%	0%	25%	6%	8%	9%	27%	10%
Weight training	3%	0%	0%	9%	3%	7%	0%	4%
Swimming	3%	0%	0%	2%	6%	6%	0%	4%
Water aerobics	1%	3%	0%	2%	0%	7%	0%	3%
Stationary bike	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%	3%	9%	2%
Bicycling	3%	0%	0%	4%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Golf	1%	3%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Yoga	3%	3%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Jogging/Running	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Other	1%	7%	0%	4%	0%	0%	9%	2%

The average age of the Sound Steppers was 70 (Table 3), with the oldest being 98 years old. Eight participants were 90 years old or older. The program attracted more women than men (83%). This reflects both the demographics of Seattle area older adults, and the fact that women are more likely than men to join social programs.

TABLE 3: Demographics

	Alki	Garfield	Jefferson	Loyal Heights	Meadowbrook	Queen Anne	Rainier	Overall Total
Actual Numbers registered	93	43	35	63	69	110	14	427
Age								
Under 55	7%	10%	16%	4%	6%	5%	0%	7%
55-64	16%	41%	16%	26%	19%	21%	22%	22%
65-74	35%	31%	42%	49%	44%	40%	44%	40%
75 or older	43%	18%	26%	22%	30%	33%	33%	31%
Average age (Standard deviation)	73 (11.6)	66 (8.7)	69 (11.5)	69 (8.1)	69 (8.7)	70 (9.4)	70 (9.6)	70 (9.9)
Gender								
Female	82%	79%	73%	89%	81%	85%	79%	83%
Male	19%	21%	27%	11%	19%	15%	21%	17%
Marital Status								
Married/living with partner	37%	33%	63%	51%	35%	40%	60%	41%
Widowed	39%	13%	13%	26%	15%	24%	10%	24%
Divorced	17%	26%	8%	18%	29%	23%	20%	21%
Single/never married	7%	28%	17%	5%	21%	13%	10%	14%
Income								
Under \$10,000	2%	16%	17%	16%	10%	9%	0%	10%
\$10,000 to \$20,000	12%	19%	22%	24%	32%	18%	38%	21%
\$20,000 to \$30,000	16%	25%	39%	20%	26%	22%	0%	22%
Over \$30,000	71%	41%	22%	40%	32%	52%	63%	48%
Race								
White	99%	32%	4%	95%	90%	97%	67%	82%
African American	0%	62%	12%	2%	3%	0%	0%	7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%	3%	81%	0%	3%	1%	33%	8%
Latino	0%	3%	4%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Multi-ethnic	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%	2%	0%	1%

Using census data, Table 4 compares racial/ethnic identity of Seattle’s population who are age 50+ to that of Sound Steps.

TABLE 4: Race/ethnicity comparisons to Seattle

	Seattle	Sound Steps
White	76%	82%
African American	8%	7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	13%	8%
Latino	2%	1%
Multi-ethnic	1%	1%

Table 5 provides a further breakdown by community center of the baseline self-reported health status and satisfaction with social life.

TABLE 5: Health & social life status

	Alki (n=93)	Garfield (n=43)	Jefferson (n=35)	Loyal Heights (n=63)	Meadowbrook (n=69)	Queen Anne (n=110)	Rainier (n=14)	Overall Total (n=427)
General health status								
Excellent	8%	5%	16%	10%	15%	16%	0%	11%
Very Good	51%	43%	38%	41%	32%	41%	36%	41%
Good	34%	38%	38%	38%	45%	34%	64%	38%
Fair	4%	12%	9%	10%	9%	9%	0%	8%
Poor	3%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Social life								
Excellent	10%	7%	3%	7%	10%	17%	0%	10%
Very Good	31%	38%	38%	32%	29%	31%	36%	32%
Good	43%	36%	47%	42%	43%	33%	64%	40%
Fair	14%	14%	9%	15%	13%	17%	0%	14%
Poor	1%	5%	3%	5%	4%	2%	0%	3%

Reasons for Joining Sound Steps

The baseline registration form identified some reasons why people were interested in joining Sounds Steps, with “health improvement” chosen most frequently (see Table 6). Other items mentioned frequently related to health, including losing weight, feeling less tired with exercise, helping mood and mental alertness. Participants also identified loving to walk and an opportunity to socialize as motivations for signing up for Sound Steps. [Participants were asked to check all reasons that apply.]

TABLE 6: Reasons for Joining Sound Steps

	Alki (n=93)	Garfield (n=43)	Jefferson (n=35)	Loyal Heights (n=63)	Meadowbrook (n=69)	Queen Anne (n=110)	Rainier (n=14)	Overall Total (n=427)
Why did you decide to participate in Sound Steps?								
Improving my health	72%	71%	60%	78%	77%	72%	57%	72%
Trying to lose weight	34%	52%	29%	51%	59%	44%	21%	44%
Exercising makes me feel less tired	37%	43%	29%	32%	45%	38%	21%	37%
Exercising helps my mood	36%	38%	29%	44%	54%	41%	21%	41%
Exercising makes me more mentally alert	28%	36%	29%	40%	46%	36%	36%	36%
Opportunity to socialize	37%	36%	23%	44%	46%	33%	7%	37%
I love to walk	34%	48%	20%	37%	51%	38%	14%	38%
My children are encouraging me to walk	13%	14%	3%	5%	7%	4%	7%	8%
My friends or spouse are encouraging me to walk	14%	14%	6%	13%	12%	9%	7%	12%
My health care provider has recommended walking	22%	24%	17%	22%	28%	18%	21%	22%

In addition to these motivating factors, focus groups and interviews identified aspects of the program that walkers found inviting. They include:

Free: Sound Steppers appreciated that there was no charge for participating in this program. For some, cost would have been a barrier.

Gifts: Although not the first thing mentioned when asked why they joined Sound Steps, many people spoke of enjoying getting the free gifts and incentives. Some admitted to having joined to get the pedometer, however, there were lots of complaints about the pedometers not working

very well. One person referred to them as the “free quality.” In addition to not working well, many of the older adults had some difficulty figuring out how to set them up and one man complained that they did not come with any instructions. On the other hand, for many others the pedometers motivated them to walk more. Those who liked to keep track of steps were encouraged to increase the number of steps over time.

It's surprising. You don't realize how far you've walked until you read that (pedometer). And so that does kind of spur you on too.

Neighborhoods: The convenient location in the neighborhood was also a significant draw for people. Many mentioned that they didn't see a point to drive somewhere to be able to walk.

Walking partners: They liked the idea of meeting neighbors who they could continue to walk with, even after the program ended.

Something to do: Some participants signed up for Sound Steps to have another focus in their lives and to get themselves out of the house. Again, this social aspect is important given that social isolation is a significant concern for older adults.

It sounded like a good idea and I felt like I needed something to do besides watching soap operas. I needed something to do to get out of the house.

At the time I signed up my mother was in the nursing home and I was spending most of the day there and walking around with the wheelchairs. I felt like I needed to get out and do something else. And she died right before I came to the group. My original reason was to get out and doing something away from the nursing home.

Implementation of Sound Steps

Primary responsibility for implementing the program at each of the sites rested with Seattle Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program staff, with details of implementation varying at each center. One site utilized a pool of volunteers recruited from an exercise class at the community center to register participants and to organize and lead the walks. A couple of sites had individual volunteer walk leaders who took primary responsibility for organizing weekly walks. One site engaged volunteers to assist with the walks led by the staff person, primarily to make sure that everyone had a walking partner and to provide options for the pace of the walks. Other sites were led by the Senior Adult Program staff members.

Registration was targeted for a one-week period in late May, although new participants could continue to register throughout the summer. During registration week, staff or volunteers were available for three hours each afternoon to register new participants and hand out incentive bags. Because the staff had booked their schedules months in advance, registration week was challenging. The site that used volunteers to register walkers had the least burden on staff time during that week. Another site had a designated senior activities room, with the staff person on site regularly, making it easy to register people. The other four sites required substantial time for program staff to be away from their usual routine during that week.

The original intent of Sound Steps was to be volunteer driven. Unfortunately due to lack of advanced notice and the difficulties finding volunteers, this did not work well at all the sites. This will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

As mentioned earlier, Sound Steps walkers had options to walk on their own; walk with organized walks from their community center; and walk with friends, neighbors, or other Sound Steppers outside of the organized walks. Weekly walks were arranged at each of the sites, led either by a volunteer or by Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program staff.

At registration, participants were supplied with walking logs. These walking logs had been developed primarily as a tool to measure the amount people walked but were also viewed as a potential incentive to encourage participants to walk more. In interviews and focus groups, walkers mentioned that even when they turned them in, they hadn't recorded all the times they had actually walked. Others reported that they walked but didn't turn them in at all. For those who used the walking logs, however, they were a significant motivator. Many people asked if they could continue receiving new monthly logs and wanted to continue to use them, even if they weren't turning them in. Simply having the visual reminder of how much they had walked helped to increase their activity level. Those who already walked regularly seemed less inclined to use the logs. Although in the end this tool provided minimal empirical data on the amounts people walked, it did appear to be an inexpensive incentive to remind people to get out and walk.

The days that are all blank -- you see it. If you don't have it in black and white, you don't realize you haven't done it. Definitely an inspiration.

For some reason those (walking logs) inspired me more than my little calendar. We all have calendars...filled with doctor's appointments. This one has a purpose.

The walking logs aren't really helpful. We're already walking a lot and even forget to fill it out sometimes.

Those who walked regularly with the community center group looked forward to these walks. The focus group participants often mentioned that the scheduled walking routine motivated them to be active. One of the volunteers mentioned that it was important for the participants to have some assurance that the program would continue so they could count on it as a part of their routine. He felt that people would be more likely to get involved if it was an ongoing program.

I like the routine, I like the regularity because I do walk. I walk to the post office just to give myself some motivation, but that's kind of hit and miss. So the regularity is helpful.

I find that I am more committed when I have a set time and a group to walk with. I am not good about walking by myself. I'll say I'm going to walk 30 minutes and then turn around and go back and I find myself going 20 minutes. If I say 20 minutes, I'll make it 10.

Well, I don't miss many pool classes and they are scheduled.

Three Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Programs staff developed walking maps for their neighborhoods that included distances of the walks. They spent significant time developing the maps, walking or driving through the neighborhoods to make sure that there were not major hills, road construction, or other barriers. Walkers found the maps useful and some mentioned continuing to use them on their own.

Participants were enthusiastic about being outside, getting to know new parks in their neighborhood and getting fresh air. Some credited fresh air and walking to sleeping better at night. They were much less interested in walking in malls, particularly during the months when the weather is good. One woman also spoke about how walking outside encourages her to go further than walking on a treadmill.

The treadmill is very different than an outdoor walk. On a treadmill you can stop anytime. When you are outside and have walked 10 blocks from your car, the only way you are going to get back to your car is to walk.

Participants enjoyed the flexibility of the program, including the ability to walk on their own or to come and go from the weekly walks. Summers are busy with vacations and visitors and they found it difficult to make a commitment every single week. They also liked the fact that walking could be done anywhere, even on vacation. Participants also appreciated when the organized walks accommodated different levels of walking ability and provided options for shorter walks. This worked to varying degrees and was noted as both a positive aspect to the program, as well as an area to be improved which will be discussed later.

When we first started you gave the message 'Do what you can.' If you can't go that far, do what you can and come back to the starting point. ... I think that was good for me because I can't always do the whole thing, but I do what I can be comfortable with. ...If you are out there walking, it's good for you.

... that's the joy of it, being able to be here when we want and not worry that it is going to interfere with other things we do in the summer. So it has been really relaxed and that's good.

Walkers frequently spoke of how much easier it was to walk with other people than to walk by themselves. Time went by much more quickly and they were more likely to walk farther and longer if they had a companion. The commitment to others in the group that they would show up each week helped keep walkers motivated to return. They looked out for one another and noticed when someone was missing. They spoke of the camaraderie that developed over the summer and how they looked forward to the weekly walk. Many people also felt safer walking with others. Older adults often feel isolated due to safety issues, and being a visible presence on the street with other older adults was very empowering.

It's more fun when you are visiting, the time goes by so much quicker. When I'm alone, I cheat.

On Friday I really look forward to coming here. It really lifts my spirits – the beautiful scenery and the camaraderie of all of the girls and the guys.

And this is a very social time, too, which I like. You always end up walking with other people and chatting. You kind of forget sometimes to look at the yards. It is nice.

If people weren't going to come, I wouldn't come for an hour and walk by myself. I intend to, but my intentions aren't always the same as my actions.

What does it is the social aspect, and being committed to a schedule where others expect to see you.

In addition to the organized group walks, people made connections with each other and walked together other times during the week. This aspect could be developed further and deserves more attention next year. The walkers made helpful suggestions regarding this, which are discussed later under the recommendation section. Many people, including those who left the program, said they were attracted to Sound Steps because they hoped to meet a walking partner in the neighborhood. One woman mentioned that because of Sound Steps, she made it a point to call a number of her neighbors to ask if they would join her for walks. This social aspect of the program is particularly important since 63% of the Sound Steppers were single, widowed, or divorced, and 47% of the Sound Steppers lived alone.

I liked it because you met more people in neighborhood and you could get together with them and walk at other times. I've been in groups where you meet in different parts of town and you get together and meet, but then they are in their direction and I'm in mine. This is a lot easier to get together with other people.

I am walking more, being outside, getting fresh air, meeting different people. And I remeet my (walking) partner here. [They had worked together years ago.]

And I met one of the gals here and we've been walking Green Lake on Tuesdays. And we have a couple of other ladies who are going to be joining us and we are going to try to keep it up.

Walkers from at least three of the sites have made a commitment to continue walking as a group on their own as fall and winter approaches. They did not seem overly concerned about the inevitable rain and damp weather. They were interested in continuing with outdoor walks, rather than moving into the malls. A few Sound Steppers were also mall walkers, but on the whole people seemed to prefer walking outside. Most neighborhoods in Seattle do not have indoor malls nearby.

Benefits from Sound Steps

What was the impact of Sound Steps? Both qualitative and quantitative data point to increased walking, which was the primary goal of the program. Walkers also spoke of health

improvements. Other benefits included community building and increased exposure to Seattle Parks and Recreation programs.

Increasing physical activity

A significant number of people joined Sound Steps because they needed a jump start to return to a routine of walking and being physically active after having been inactive for a number of years. Some had been active when they were younger, but had gotten out of the routine and needed something organized to motivate them to return to that routine. Others had health concerns they wanted to address by being more physically active. This theme emerged from both the focus groups and the individual interviews with people who had not turned in walking logs. Many people reported that having some kind of organized program made a difference in getting them to walk more. For some Sound Steppers, the weekly scheduled walks inspired them to be more active.

Well, I needed to get on the road to losing weight and getting healthy. I've got really bad arthritis and I know that walking is the one of the best exercises I can do. ...I've had years and years of putting on a half pound at a time... I had been walking before, but not sticking with the program. ... And I just really wanted to walk. I really wanted to be active.

I had walked for 18 years straight but in the last 5 years I had stopped and was out of shape, so when I heard about it, I thought it was a good idea to get back in shape. I did all my exercises, but walking does the most for me.

I just knew I would need to have some motivation to start walking again, because I knew I wasn't going to do it on my own.

So now we walk 20-30 minutes every day so this program really boosted my wife and she's gotten me going to walk every day. It's on the calendar every day.

Filling out the monthly walking logs motivated many walkers, even if they did not turn them in. Walkers who had not walked with the group, nor turned in any walking logs, talked about having the calendar on their refrigerator as a useful reminder.

They (monthly logs) made you get out and walk, especially on the days when there was nothing recorded. I would make sure I went out to the store or something.

As mentioned earlier, the monthly logs did not accurately show how much participants truly walked over the summer, since many regular walkers reported that they did not turn them in or fill them out completely. However, the results of the logs that were received did show an increase in activity as compared to baseline. Of those who indicated at baseline that they had not walked at all, 41% turned in at least one or more walking logs indicating that they had become active walkers. It is very likely that this percentage is higher given that many people reported that they didn't turn in logs. Previous walkers, either meeting the surgeon general's recommendation or not at baseline, showed a modest increase both in the amount they walked each day and in the number of times walked per week. Table 7 reflects those changes, with

self-identified walkers at baseline increasing their average minutes per day from 30 to 39 minutes, and their average number of times they walked per week from 3.75 to 4.19.

TABLE 7: Walking changes from baseline*

		Baseline	
		Non-walkers (n=27)	Previous walkers (n=134)
Minutes per day	Baseline	0	30
	Monthly logs	41	39
Times per week	Baseline	0	3.75
	Monthly logs	3.1	4.19

* Based on an average of walkers who turned in at least one monthly log.

Table 8 provides another analysis of the monthly logs. These numbers reflect the percentage of previous walkers who either increased or decreased the number of times and the length of time they walked. This table does not include those who had not walked at all at baseline.

TABLE 8: Changes for baseline walkers (n=134)*

	Decreased	No change	Increased
Minutes per day	36%	1%	63%
Days per week	40%	2%	58%

*Based on self-identified walkers at baseline. Does not include former non-walkers.

Some participants said they shifted from not liking to walk before joining Sound Steps to enjoying it now, and are consequently walking more on their own. They joined Sound Steps because they knew it was good for their health and they were encouraged by others around them.

I love this walking thing. I've been here every week that I could since I started. And then on top of that, I've started walking another hour every Saturday and Sunday too on my own. This was the first time I've ever walked by myself, since I started this program. It made me enjoy walking so much that I don't mind going by myself.

And I've been trying to entice my wife to walk with me, but 15 years ago, she wouldn't walk. Since we came down here, joined this group, she started walking. Now she gets me out. Now she enjoys it.

I hated walking, I hated walking. I was forced to do it. We've been doing it for a couple years, but it is this summer that I've actually said, 'we better go for a walk.' I enjoy it.

I hope it continues too, because I know that walking is the best form of exercise and I have plenty of time but I don't do it, and so this group, the structured time meeting every Thursday has gotten me to do it. And I've done it a little more frequently on my own, and now I do it Tuesday also.

Health improvements from Sound Steps

A number of people reported noticeable improvement in their health and stamina over the course of the summer. People found it much easier to walk a longer distance. They experienced fewer chest pains on inclines, decreased back pain, more energy, better sleep, and boosted spirits.

I normally have a lot of trouble sleeping, but days I walk a lot, I sleep. It really makes a difference. Exercise itself doesn't seem to do it. The long walking does -- you'll sleep better.

You meet people, it boosts your spirit up, and if you have cholesterol or whatever, it helps you. And it strengthens your bones and it just relaxes your mind. And if you get tired you always can sit down and relax yourself. It really relaxes your whole body. On Wednesday, you can't wait until Thursday gets here. And you get up and that makes you ready to go. Speeds you, gives you a good heart rate.

There's been a big improvement in breathing since walking this summer. I'm an ex-smoker -- no more chest pains on inclines. (Reported formerly feeling pain with slight inclines)

I walk faster now than I used to. When I go out walking with my husband, I used to straggle behind.

Community Building

People were very enthusiastic about having the program in their neighborhood. They did not want to drive (or drive far) for a walking program. They were also excited about getting to know their neighborhoods better, discovering new places to walk, and getting to know other people who live in the neighborhood. Many people connected with new walking partners, as well as making new friends to meet for lunch or to see a movie. They also expressed a great deal of pride in their own neighborhood. The Garfield group felt particularly excited to have something positive happening in their community. They felt that by walking together, they were reclaiming their neighborhood.

... we were excited when we got the flyer from Garfield that something was happening in our own community. ...It's just a pleasure meeting all the people....We just have a lot of fun out there on the street. Plus you get a good workout, you get the exercise. Very, very healthy and I hope that the program continues.

It's nice meeting people in the community that you didn't know. Because we all live around close but we never knew each other. And I enjoy walking in our community seeing houses that you haven't seen. ... And we're doing it for the community.

And people start giving us a hand. People in the neighborhood cheer us on.

I've lived here for 50 years and just discovered the park in the neighborhood. And you go down that path and you see nature at its best. So it really is nice to get familiar with your neighborhood.

It's really nice because there are a lot of people who live here and you'd never meet them any other way. Especially around Wedgwood, the best people on the earth are around here.

Increased exposure to Parks & Recreation Programs

Seattle Parks & Recreation offers many fine programs specifically designed for older adults. A theme heard from staff, organized walkers, and people who walked on their own was one of learning about existing programs and seeing new faces at the community centers. At four out of the seven community centers, a vast majority of the walkers had never participated in any Parks and Recreation programs previously. One Senior Adult Program's staff member reported that Sound Steps built a senior program at one of her community centers that previously had very little participation. Many older adults were very excited to learn about other programs offered, particularly exercise classes, line dancing and other walking programs. Exposure to community programs not only enhances the likelihood that these older adults will be more physically active; it also addresses the increased need in older age to avoid social isolation.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations from staff and participants emerged from the focus groups and interviews which could improve the program in the future. These included suggestions regarding the use of volunteers, managing different activity levels, ways to strengthen the buddy system, and reducing the burden on staff.

Volunteers

The original vision of Sound Steps was to be primarily led by volunteers, with minimal involvement by the Parks & Recreation staff. This worked very well at Alki, in which the Senior Adult Program Staff person asked for volunteers from her entire exercise class with whom she had built a nice rapport. Elements that kept volunteers involved at Alki included:

- 1) Having a pool of volunteers at the community center so that no one individual felt they needed to carry all the responsibility. Volunteers shared the role of leading weekly walks.

- 2) Engaging the volunteers from the ground up by having them register participants. This involvement built ownership in the program. Because they lived in the neighborhood, they were naturals for welcoming people into the program. The staff person at Alki reported:

They knew the people... came from the community. One of my volunteers, a former nurse, helped register two women who had just lost their husbands. She kept in touch with them to make sure they were ok. She has made a point of this. When the volunteers registered the people got the human stories. The people who came to walk, they had a story to tell. They felt more of a rapport with a senior who has gone through this already.

- 3) Having concrete roles for the volunteers (e.g., sign up sheet for hours to register, welcoming new people as they come, making sure everyone has a walking partner).
- 4) Having confidence in the volunteer's ability to make things happen.
- 5) A simple program. This group all met at the community center, and then dispersed into smaller groups depending on where, how far and how fast they wanted to walk. There was enough structure to make walkers feel welcomed each week and know there was someone they could turn to who was in charge, but it was not complicated.

A volunteer at Alki felt she got a lot out of the experience, including meeting a new friend and walking partner. "Welcoming the people made me feel more open to people." She saw people feel good about what they were doing and improve over the course of the summer; she found this very satisfying.

For adults over 65, volunteering has been shown to lower depression levels (Musick & Wilson, 2003). This is in part a result of the increased social contact through volunteering, and is also a positive response to the frequently diminished roles of older adults. Empowering the older adults as volunteers is an important secondary benefit to Sound Steps.

Other sites also used volunteers. Two community centers had volunteers lead the organized walks each week, which decreased the burden on the Parks & Recreation staff person at those sites. The numbers participating in these walks dwindled more dramatically at these two centers over the summer, because not having a pool of volunteers made it difficult to accommodate the various levels of walkers. At one of the sites, the volunteer leader also questioned whether or not she would do it again next year because she had not been challenged physically by the walks. Had there been more volunteers, she may have felt more satisfied with the experience.

Another community center where the staff person led the walks, volunteers helped by walking with slower walkers and making sure that everyone had a partner and was welcomed.

At one of the community centers, the Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program staff person chose to lead the walks in order to develop relationships with new seniors with the goal of building a senior program at that center. She did not feel burdened by the responsibility, because it served a dual purpose for her. From this group, she informally identified natural

leaders and asked them to lead the faster subgroups when there were slower walkers for her to attend to.

Many of the Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program staff spoke of the challenge of finding good volunteers, particularly without having had much lead time. They expressed concerns pertaining to the level of expertise about fitness and health, level of natural leadership ability, and busy schedules, especially during the summer months.

The following are suggestions for building a volunteer program.

Recruiting volunteers

- Put the word out at all classes through Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Programs. Let people know their help is needed. Demonstrating to older adults that they have the skills and ability to take on the task gives them the message that you have confidence in them. Volunteers come from building relationships over time.
- Start recruiting in the fall for next summer. Get people involved early.
- Connect with senior centers that are in close proximity to the community center sites. This partnership could provide volunteers to implement the program
- Other potential sources for volunteers: Group Health Cooperative Silver Sneakers or Lifetime Fitness Program; Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens list of volunteers; neighborhood churches and community groups; advertise for volunteers in local newspapers.

Concrete tasks for volunteers

- Have a sign up sheet with a distinct list of tasks that are needed (for example, times and dates needed to register people for the program; dates that need walk leaders)
- Have volunteers register walkers so that they make contact with the seniors from the get go. Volunteers could also be used to make phone calls to check in on and encourage walkers throughout the program. Think of it as seniors building connections with other seniors in the neighborhood.
- Use volunteers in a variety of ways on the walks. They can lead groups, make sure that everyone has a partner, or walk with those who aren't walking with someone.

Keeping volunteers comfortable

- Provide or offer volunteer leaders a cell phone if there is a concern about what to do in an emergency.
- Have a large enough pool of volunteers so that they can rotate responsibilities from week to week, decreasing any one person's burden.

- Keep it simple. Empower the older adults to make it their program. Walking is not a complicated physical activity and can be done by most able-bodied older adults.
- Build in incentives for volunteers; for example, a gift certificate to buy walking shoes. Food is also always a good incentive.
- Form a committee of seniors at each center to spearhead the program. This committee could be the pool of volunteers that are needed to make sure that no one individual feels an undue burden.

Alleviating the burden on Parks & Recreation Staff

Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program staff were instrumental in implementing Sound Steps and in making this pilot program a success. There was almost no burden at all on other Parks & Recreation community center staff due to the commitment of the Senior Adult Program staff. However, Sound Steps was overwhelming for many Senior Adult Program staff, due in part to the short lead time. They all rose to the challenge and did an amazing job, given that they had little advance notice about the work that would be required.

As mentioned earlier, the difficulty faced in recruiting volunteers shifted the original conception for implementing the program. In the future, some of this burden may be alleviated by having more time to consider ways to develop a pool of volunteers, as mentioned above. In addition, the Sound Steps Action Team could bring Parks and Recreation Senior Adult Program staff into the process early by inviting them to some of the planning meetings. They have a wealth of knowledge about implementing programs for older adults, and their experience could contribute to a rich discussion about possible ways to carry out the program. Also, because they work on the program's front lines, it is important for them to feel ownership of it, and for everyone to be on the same page regarding the intent of the program.

The Senior Adult Programs summer schedule is booked months in advance; therefore, any new programs must be in their schedules as early as January. As a consequence of not having previously scheduled time for Sound Steps, registration week was particularly difficult for staff. Queen Anne was the only site with a designated room for Senior Adult Programs, which made it relatively easy for the staff person to be there to register people. At the other sites, the program staff had to spend hours at the site, away from their other work. Volunteers could be enlisted to help with the process, as discussed above.

Because Senior Adult Program staff are not on-site at each of the community centers, it was difficult to distribute the incentives when monthly logs were turned in. Perhaps this burden was unnecessary because once engaged in Sound Steps, participants appeared to be motivated by the social aspect or by increasing their walk time rather than incentive gifts.

As previously mentioned, three of the sites mapped out walks in their neighborhoods for the participants. These maps included distances and focal points in the neighborhood. The program staff drove the neighborhood to make sure there were no barriers for the walkers. This took a substantial amount of time and effort; and feedback from the walkers indicated that this was effort well-spent because the maps were very useful and were used outside of the

organized walks. The Sound Steps Action Team might consider ways to support program staff by having maps prepared prior to the implementation of the program. HAP partner, Public Health - Seattle & King County is in the process of making this a reality at the six original community centers.

Walking partners

As mentioned earlier, many people joined Sound Steps because they wanted to walk with other people and to find a partner with whom they could continue to walk outside of the organized walks. In addition to health concerns that made it difficult to walk, not finding a walking partner was brought up most frequently as the reason people stopped participating in Sound Steps. Because this was a significant reason to participate, Sound Steps could provide some guidance about organizing this more formally. Suggestions from participants included: 1) pairing people up with another walker or two with similar walking capabilities; 2) having an introduction period at the first meeting where people discussed what they hoped to get out of the program; and 3) creating a community center participant contact list to share people's names, phone numbers and days they would like to walk right at the beginning of the program. The woman who introduced this idea felt this would have the additional benefit of helping to remember people's names from week to week.

Managing different ability levels

Another major concern raised was accommodating the different fitness levels Sound Steps participants. Often the ends of the continuum – the fastest walkers and the slowest ones – were quickly weeded out from organized weekly walks. Slower walkers were intimidated by those who walked faster, and the faster walkers were not challenged enough to return. Given the goal of the program was to increase physical activity levels among sedentary older adults, concern of losing slower walkers is salient. Most, if not all, sites tried to address this by breaking into two or three walking groups based on walking speed. This worked for some people, as noted earlier. But even with this, many people referred to examples of those who were not well- served by the organized walks.

The first group had power-walkers in it, and I just couldn't keep up. They were younger. And I wasn't even going to come back the second time, but those who were so energetic didn't come the second time. Finding somebody who is patient and compatible is really important.

My mother did it once and then she was just exhausted. And she was with the slowest group. She used to be a faster walker. ... We did a little bit of other walking. Her health hasn't been so good. But I know that she was sort of backing away when we came back [to the community center after the walk]. I think that you want people to be successful and to have a pace that will allow them to feel good about the fact that they participated.

I could not keep up the first day. One woman never came back; it was too much for her. That's when my friend & I decided to break off and hence forth walk together. ... I have some cardiac limitations.

Almost everyone in here are pretty fast walkers. And I think you are looking for people with more health issues, you are going to have to have a slower walking group than this group. Way too fast. After my surgery, I would never have been able to keep up.

My wife likes to walk too, but she is afraid she can't keep up. She's slower than me and I'm always the last one in the walk. So we get out in the evenings and walk.

Focus group participants suggested possible ways to meet the needs of slower walkers. They suggested walks could be graded for fitness levels and maps indicating hills could be provided. They encouraged formally breaking into smaller groups and letting people rank themselves as to which group would be appropriate. Perhaps over the course of the summer, as their ability progressed, they could move into a faster group. To a certain extent this was tried this summer, but insufficient numbers of volunteers may have made it difficult to accommodate the varying ability levels. Walkers suggested conveying, both in the literature advertising the program and at the walks, that walking only three blocks is a fine goal for some people. People want to feel successful. Finally, focus group participants recommended that a walk coordinator make sure that everyone has a walking partner. They noted on the organized walks at Green Lake (not a Sound Steps walk), walkers are paired up with another person who walks at the same pace.

We need grades where people can place themselves in a fitness level. Have walks that are fitted to those fitness levels.

It would be nice to do something for the people who can only walk a few blocks and making them feel comfortable with that.

We'd get a lot more people out if they knew we were only going to go a few blocks.

Accommodating different ability levels should be explored further by the Sound Steps Action Team. Should Sound Steps appeal to all levels of walkers, or should it target a certain ability level? If it is open to a wide variety of walking abilities, what are ways to insure that this doesn't eventually filter out the slowest and fastest ends of the spectrum? By accommodating varying abilities, will more structure be required and hence more reliance on trained staff?

One of the Parks & Recreation staff indicated that the mailings through Valpak and AARP generated more than a thousand phone calls to the Parks & Recreation Senior Adult Program office. She reported that many of these were from frail older adults or others who would require more one-on-one care had they come to the organized walks. For instance, some of those calling were blind. The Action Team might consider either how to respond to these requests or whether to clarify the characteristics of the target group.

Increasing participation in Sound Steps

Sound Steps was not intended to accommodate the large numbers of people age 50 and older who live in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the participating community centers. Table 10 in the appendix uses census data to compare the number of Sound Steppers from each of the zip codes of participating community centers to the number of people age 50 and older

who live in those zip codes. The range is from 0.15% to 1.14%, with an overall average of Sound Steps reaching 0.41% of the population in those zip codes. These small percentages may point to the need for an increase in the number of cost-effective physical activity programs; the potential for further collaboration among organizations such as senior centers, community centers, healthcare organizations, churches, and other community groups; and increasing the capacity of existing programs, such as Sound Steps, through the development of an older adult volunteer base.

The baseline registration collected information about how people heard about Sound Steps. (See Table 9). At three of the sites, word of mouth brought in over 50% of the participants. Those were also the three sites in which a greater number of the participants appeared to have previously been involved in Parks & Recreation programs. The program staff person at one of those sites made many phone calls, encouraging people to register for the program. At another of those three sites, the volunteer leader called many of her friends and acquaintances. The third site was the one at which there was a pool of volunteers recruited from an exercise class. It is likely that these volunteers also put out the word to recruit people. Also, the assisted living facility was connected with that third site which included about 20% of the participants registered at that site. Those participants all learned about the program through the activities director at their residence.

Two other significant recruitment methods included postcards sent by AARP and a Sound Steps Valpak coupon. AARP sent 5,000 postcards to members in the zip codes immediately surrounding the community center hosts of Sound Steps. The Valpak coupon went out to all Seattle residents. Both mailings were significant for reaching people who were not previously involved in Parks & Recreation programs. In a couple of neighborhoods, neighborhood newspaper articles were effective for reaching people.

TABLE 9: Recruiting Sound Steps Participants

	Alki (n=93)	Garfield (n=43)	Jefferson (n=35)	Loyal Heights (n=63)	Meadowbrook (n=69)	Queen Anne (n=110)	Rainier (n=14)	Overall Total (n=427)
How did you hear about Sound Steps?								
Someone told me about it	62%	33%	69%	25%	25%	54%	29%	45%
Postcard in the mail	14%	31%	0%	25%	30%	12%	14%	18%
ValPak coupon	10%	29%	0%	30%	28%	9%	21%	17%
Newspaper article	7%	5%	0%	22%	19%	9%	0%	11%
Phone call to 1-888-4ELDERS	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Flyer/Brochure	5%	7%	3%	13%	6%	17%	0%	9%
Poster	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%

During focus groups and interviews, walkers and staff proposed ways to encourage sedentary older adults to become more physically active. Food and refreshments are always a draw. One group talked about coordinating with other community center programs, such as water aerobics; seniors already at the center could take part in other activities. They suggested connecting with senior centers or assisted living facilities to see if they could supply transportation to the community center for walks.

The walkers also discussed ways in which they as current Sound Steppers could act as ambassadors for the program. Simply being a visible presence in the neighborhood helps to plant the seed for others to join. They spoke of inviting their neighbors and talking about the program at neighborhood council meetings or in their faith communities.

I think one of the greatest things we have done, is when walking in the neighborhood [with name badges] people look at us and it kind of gives people the idea, 'I wonder what they are doing?' Next time when they see the thing, they might put the two together.

After we see how well it is working for us, we've been doing it... then invite neighbors.

We could all be recruiters.

Conclusion

Sound Steps was a successful three month pilot walking program during the summer of 2003. Many older adults increased the amount they walked, created new ties with their neighbors and community, and improved their health and stamina. This evaluation highlights those successes as well as the areas that deserve more attention. Sound Steps has great potential to build on the seeds that were planted during the summer of 2003 and increase its scope, geographic reach, and viability in the coming years.

References

- Musick, MA & Wilson, J (2003). Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups. *Social Science & Medicine*, 56(2): 259-69.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1996). Physical activity and health: A report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

APPENDIX

TABLE 10: *Comparison of older adult population to Sound Steps registrants*

	Alki	Garfield	Jefferson	Loyal Heights	Meadowbrook	Queen Anne	Rainier	Overall Total
Sound Steppers registered	93	43	35	63	69	110	14	427
Number of people age 50 + living in the zip code of the community center site	6,783	6,035	5,595	8,123	10,358	4,556	11,098	52,548
Sound Steppers living in the zip code of the community center**	50	22²	12	35	27³	52⁴	17⁵	215
Percent of older adults in zip code who registered for Sound Steps	0.74%	0.36%	0.21%	0.43%	0.26%	1.14%	0.15%	0.41%

** Some participants registered at one community center but lived in the zip code of another. These are noted below in the footnotes.

² One participant was registered at Jefferson

³ One participant was registered at Queen Anne

⁴ Two participants were registered at Loyal Heights

⁵ Two participants were registered at Garfield and five were registered at Jefferson

DIAGRAM A: *Numbers of walking logs received*

