

NEWS

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Supervisors support better health through exercise

Each year, 1.2 million Americans suffer heart attacks, making cardiovascular disease the nation's leading cause of death. Heart disease is also the leading killer of men and women in San Bernardino County, causing more than 3,500 deaths in 2004.

More physical activity can help improve these statistics. That's why the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today designated the county as an official sponsor of the American Heart Association's "Start!" program, which encourages workplace-based walking programs as a means toward better health. As a result, the county will take an active role in encouraging county employees and county residents to create and participate in organized walking programs.

"The purpose behind Start! is to get Americans to become more physically active by walking," said Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales, who brought the issue before her fellow board members today. "By increasing awareness of the importance of physical activity to reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease, we can save thousands of lives each year."

Adults can gain up to two hours of life expectancy for every one hour of vigorous exercise, according to researchers. Regular walking also has many proven benefits for an individual's overall health: Brisk walking for 30 minutes a day can lower both bad cholesterol (LDL) levels and high blood pressure. It can also help individuals who are overweight achieve and maintain weight loss, and reduce their risk of stroke.

There are economic factors as well. Cardiovascular disease costs Americans \$431.8 billion a year in direct and indirect costs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that physically active people save \$330 per year in direct medical expenditures.

"Studies indicate that one of the best investments an employer can make is in the health of its employees," Supervisor Gonzales said. "By promoting a culture of physical activity, America can decrease healthcare costs, increase productivity, and improve the quality of life and longevity of the U.S. workforce."

"We are committed to doing our part in San Bernardino County," Supervisor Gonzales said.