

# Write - then walk - your own exercise prescription

As the communications director for the Anderson Park District, I stumbled upon an article last month by the Associated Press that caught my attention.

The article described an unusual partnership taking place between physicians and hiking enthusiasts in New Hampshire.

The partnership involves a program where doctors write detailed, albeit symbolic, prescriptions for getting fit. Instead of saying to patients "You're supposed to exercise more," these doctors say "Walk this trail near your house twice a day."

In America where two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese, the idea is to promote healthier lifestyles by adding specific, personalized physical activity requirements as part of "doctor's orders." Studies show that the more concrete a doctor's advice, the more likely a patient is to heed it.

Although obesity may involve var-



**AMY MOLLETTE**

GUEST  
COLUMNIST

ious genetic, environmental, and behavioral factors, evidence continues to point toward sedentary lifestyles as a major contributor - and walking as the most healthful way out. I was drawn to this article because critical to reversing the obesity

trend is the access, opportunity, and affordability that is the nature of parks and recreation.

Partnerships involving parks and recreation agencies to improve health, like the one in New Hampshire, are nothing new. For years, the park district has been affiliated with the American Cancer Society, Mercy Hospital Anderson, the Anderson Senior Center, and other like-minded businesses and organizations with the overall goal of promoting healthy

lifestyle behaviors.

In the upcoming months, the APD will be endorsing the National Recreation and Parks Association's community mobilization campaign, Step Up to Health... It Starts In Parks. The campaign launches this year in order to reinforce the fact that parks and recreation departments play a dynamic and unique role to fostering livable communities and improving healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Let's not depend on these campaigns or on our doctors to convince us to live more active lifestyles. Let's take advantage of the quality parks and recreation system in our neighborhood and write our own exercise prescriptions now.

There are lots of places to start. I suggest checking out the Anderson Park District. Whether you participate in a program offered by the park district or just spend more time in the parks, it can be a fun way to get healthy. And the best part is that

these activities don't feel like taking medicine! (Personally, I've already registered for the spring Cornhole League and the Shotokan Karate class)

Visit the park district's Web site at [AndersonParks.com](http://AndersonParks.com) for information on parks and activities near you.

Then, consult your physician before beginning any new exercise program. In fact, the two of you could imitate the New Hampshire program and come up with your own personalized exercise prescription together.

Also, if you're a business or organization interested in promoting health and fitness, feel free to contact me to discuss how to join our team as a park district partner or sponsor!

See you in the parks!

Amy Mollette is communications director for Anderson Park District. You can reach her at [amollette@andersonparks.com](mailto:amollette@andersonparks.com).