



“Park Prescriptions Partnership Improves Community Health Outdoors”

Overview: Two county departments teamed up to implement Marin’s first Park Prescriptions Program resulting in significant health improvements in one Marin community.

Challenge: Leverage a new park to bring lasting health and wellness benefits to a local Marin community with high health needs.

Marin Community Foundation’s Portrait of Marin recognized Marin City residents to have some of the shortest lifespans in the county. Marin City Health and Wellness Center provided these additional facts about health in Marin City:

- Families Living in Poverty - 24%
- Life Expectancy - 78.6 years
- Adult Obesity – 60%
- Childhood Obesity – 38.9%

Background and Innovative Solution: Since 2013 Marin County Health and Human Services (H&HS) and Marin County Parks (MCP) have collaborated under Healthy Eating Active Living to share initiatives promoting health through outdoor activity. The departments have shared parks and nutrition marketing materials at events, invited each other to community meetings, held a health hub in a park (think outdoor food bank with hula hooping and access to important community resources), and made deep staff connections across departments.

Park Prescriptions (Park Rx) brings together public land agencies, healthcare providers, and community partners to encourage people to utilize parks, trails, and open space for the purpose of improving individual and community health. ParkRx programs give healthcare providers a new set of tools to utilize parks as free or low-cost resources that have been scientifically proven to improve mental, physical, and social health.

When George “Rocky” Graham Park was completed in 2015 it sat proudly in the middle of a community that had gone without a public park for 13 years. The Trust for Public Land had worked with the Marin City community for 3.5 years to design and construct a park that included attractive features for all ages including a level walking path with distance markers, adult exercise equipment, and artificial turf for year-round play.

Identifying the right mixture of partners has been a primary barrier to implementing Park Rx programs across the Bay Area. From 2014 to 2015, H&HS and Marin County Parks had considered various communities and healthcare networks in Marin. H&HS had developed a strong relationship with Marin City organizers while working on the CX3 campaign. Marin County Parks had developed a strong relationship with Marin City Community Services District while partnering on the use of two Measure A funding programs. These partners were at the table when the question was asked “How do we invite the community to enjoy their new park?”

The Park Rx model had potential to reverse negative health trends while connecting local residents to a new park that was close enough to become a part of daily life. H&HS brought the Marin City clinic to the table to discuss what a Park Rx program might look like. H&HS staff continued to play a critical role as convener. Within six months there was dedicated funding for a new health educator, critical staff to lead Park Rx and leverage existing park programming at the new park.

After one year of planning, a Park Rx program was born in Marin City, the first in Marin and a future model for the Bay Area.

Budget, Costs, Savings, and Leveraged Resources: \$50,000, the annual cost of a Health Educator, leveraged \$5,076,000 in capital improvements, existing services, programs, and staff. The project operates within existing budgets and resources.

Purpose	Amount
Park Planning and Construction	\$5,000,000
Park Staff and Maintenance	\$58,000 (annually)
Park Programming	\$18,000 (annually)
County Staff	\$0 (implemented with existing staff)
Health Educator	\$40,000-\$50,000 (annually)

Results:

"Patients are seeing actual results in the form of improved blood pressure and blood glucose levels, as well as decreased weight, and improved depression levels. Several participants are now leading some of the walks and groups themselves!" -Dr. Carianne Blomquist, D.O. (Chief Medical Officer, MCHWC)



- 16% decreased BMI by an average of 0.94
- 14.5% decreased blood pressure by an average of 12/4.5
- 7% decreased PHQ-9 by an average of 6 (9 questions)

"The motivation to exercise was hard to come by, but the Parks Prescription program helped me to lose 42 lbs...the physical and mental benefits helped me change my outlook and my life choices." – CH (patient)

The Marin City model has been recognized at the national and local level as a model Park Rx effort. In addition, the Marin City model inspired a similar program at Marin Community Clinics serving Canal Neighborhood and Novato residents.

Program Contacts:

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Optional Submission: Video (CD attached)