America Walks Launches "Walking College" training program

Washington, DC - America Walks, a national advocacy organization that promotes walking and walkable communities, awarded today 25 fellowships for the inaugural Walking College Fellowship training program.

These 25 advocates for walking and walkable communities hail from 22 different states and Palau. They represent large metropolitan areas such as Phoenix, Denver, and Louisville; cities, suburbs and towns of all sizes including Boise, ID, Burlington, VT, and Carrizozo, NM (population, 973); multiple-county rural areas; one island-nation; and a military base. About one-third are community advocates, another one-third are made up of public health and planning professionals, and the remainder include transportation and health care professionals, students and teachers/professors, and local elected officials.

The Fellowship will enable these advocates from around the country to participate in a five-month training program designed to strengthen local efforts to make communities more walkable and livable. "We are delighted to welcome our inaugural Walking College class," said Ian Thomas, State and Local Program Director with America Walks, "This program was developed in response to the finding, from our recent survey of 532 local walking organizations, that access to technical assistance and a national peer network are among the most pressing needs for these groups."

The Fellows will complete a six-module distance-education training program this summer, followed by a two-month independent study project, and then attend the National Walking Summit in Washington, DC at the end of October.

The Walking College curriculum has been designed to expand the capacity of local advocates to be effective community change agents. Topics include the science behind the benefits of walking, evaluation of built environments, as well as communication skills and building relationships with stakeholders and decision makers. At the conclusion of the
Walking College, Fellows will develop a Community Action Plan for implementation over the following 12-months.

About The Walking College: The Walking College is supported with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Every Body Walk! Collaborative. Mentoring will be provided by a dozen national leaders in the field, including representatives of AARP, the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, and the Alliance for Biking and Walking. More info. at www.americawalks.org/walking-college/.

About America Walks: America Walks is the only national organization devoted exclusively to making America a great place to walk. America Walks consists of a network of more than 700 partner and allied organizations, working to increase walking and create more safe, accessible and inclusive places to walk. Programs include on-line technical assistance, community-based workshops, convenings such as the National Walking Summit, federal advocacy initiatives, and increasing financial resources for local action. America Walks also maintains the Every Body Walk! Collaborative, a national partnership focused on increasing the visibility of walking and cultivating consumer demand for more walkable places. More info. at www.americawalks.org.

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