

## Walking as a Practice Case Study Susan G. Komen

The field of “Walking as a Practice” includes numerous entry points that encourage, motivate, and energize walking behavior.

In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of organized walks and runs with distances of 1 mile, 5k, 10k, marathon, etc. designed to rally financial support and awareness for local, national, or global causes. Training for these events has become the impetus for hundreds of thousands of Americans to take to the streets, trails, and greenways. These folks are also active users of popular apps that track your route, your heart-rate and the number of calories you're burning to boost motivation and practice well beyond the race. These events are fun, motivating, and they support good causes - in short, they work on several levels.

One of the clear leaders in this movement of walking activity is the pink ribbon founding community, Susan G. Komen. According to [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org), “What was started with \$200 and a shoebox full of potential donor names has now grown into the world’s largest nonprofit source of funding for the fight against breast cancer. To date, we’ve invested more than \$2.6 billion in groundbreaking research, community health outreach, advocacy and programs in more than 30 countries.” As a result of those efforts, Susan G. Komen claims to have helped reduce death rates from breast cancer by 34 percent since 1990, and improve five-year survival rates for early stage cancers from 74 to 99 percent.

Melissa Aucoin, Director for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure® series, has been with the foundation for 14 years.

She’s passionate about the organization’s mission and its impact on breast cancer survival and awareness, and she sees the practice of walking as central to her work. “Living a healthy lifestyle reduce getting breast cancer.,” she notes, “Walking is an activity that serves the majority of fitness levels. It’s our way of engagement.”



- Founded: 1982
- Headquarters: Dallas, TX
- Website: [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)
- Mission: To save lives and end breast cancer forever by empowering others, ensuring quality care for all and investing in science to find the cures.
- Walking as a Practice typology: Causes and Social Justice, Personal Health and Connection



# AMERICA WALKS

Making America a Great Place to Walk

Melissa goes right into talking about the foundation's simple pathway of engagement. She says, "Our events offer a stair-step approach, making it inclusive to all fitness levels - including a 1 mile family walk, a 5k walk/run, a 10k event, a half-marathon, and a full marathon. From these entry-level events, many of our participants then choose to join our nationally acclaimed, 3-day 60-mile walk where the mission of the organization and connections made by foot become personally transformative and unforgettable." Many of Susan G. Komen's 60-mile walkers come back so inspired by their experience that they adopt long-distance walking as a leisure activity and personal practice.



With more than 100 affiliate organizations (mostly in the U.S.A. but a few international), 136 national races, 16 international races, and well over 1 million participants, Susan G. Komen has gone from a shoebox and a shoestring budget to events that attract 50,000 participants. In the coming years, they will likely continue to shape the landscape of walking for health, for connection, and for a cause.

**Action Item:** For more information about Komen or to join us at a Race or 3 Day, please visit [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org).