

America Walks - Best Practices for Hosting a Virtual Walking Event
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>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for being here and welcome to today's America Walks Webinar on Best Practices For Hosting a Virtual Walking Event. I'm Arlis Reynolds, a City Council member in Costa Mesa, California. I'm a graduate of the America Walks Walking College, class of 2019, and I'm honored now to serve on the board of America Walks. Thanks to the Walking College, I've become a huge advocate for walkability and community engagement. So I'm thrilled to be able to participate in today's conversation about virtual walking events for our communities. I'm here with America Walks communications manager, Kelsey. I'll be your host and moderator today and Kelsey will be running the technical details behind the scenes. Before we get started, I want to thank our sponsors including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for making these great events possible for us here at America Walks. We also want to thank all of you who have attended and donated to make sure our webinar program and other programs continue to thrive. These programs allow us to directly support local grassroots activism at the neighborhood level. So if you like this content and you're a regular guest, please consider making a donation toward our webinars. One quick note about the technology, you should see a control panel like this on your screen. That's where we'll be on the look-out throughout the panelist presentations for your questions for our panelists. After our presentations, we'll kick off a Q&A session. So please enter any questions that come to mind right there. If you'd like to use closed captioning today, the link is in the chat box. So we have three fantastic presenters today. Bryan Romey manages outreach and communications as deputy director for WalkBoston, a nonprofit pedestrian advocacy group making walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment, and vibrant communities. Anthony Fleg is a family medicine

physician at UNM's Department of Medicine. Anthony serves as a partnership director of the Native Health Initiative and has dedicated much of his career to improving health in indigenous communities. Bryan Romey is a program coordinator at Walk With a Doc, an international nonprofit with a mission to inspire communities through movement and conversation with physician-led walking groups. He helps healthcare professionals launch the Walk With a Doc program in their communities and supports more than 500 active Walk With a Doc programs around the world. So today's webinar focuses on a year that urged us into focusing on the vast power and potential for virtual convenience and events to connect people from all walks of life around walking, moving, and advocating for healthy people-first communities. Our three panelists have relevant and recent hands-on experience and knowledge around developing virtual walking and moving events. From the retrospective technical details to the future implementation and vision of what virtual convenience might mean for inclusion and improving community input, we'll cover the full range of best practices for hosting virtual events that promote physical activity and mobility for all people. Thanks so much for all of you for being here. I'm going to turn things over to Brendan now and we'll get started. Brendan, take it away.

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: All right. Thanks a lot. I'm going to talk to you today about our WalkBoston's Beat the Bay State event which took place last November and will take place this November. It was a 900-mile team challenge to walk or run around the entire state of Massachusetts. We set a low entry fee of \$20 per person with no limits on team size. And you could walk and run wherever you are. We had an honor system tracking with no need to sync a Garmin or fitness tracker. The real idea was we didn't want that to be a limiting factor if people didn't have a tracking device. You could also earn badges as you go and team icons moved you along the route as you logged the miles. So first off, we had a real late start on this. We announced it at our annual meeting in September which meant it was only five weeks before the event. Way shorter timeline that we would've preferred for announcing an event. So we prioritized really asking people to create teams because we figured the way we could get the most participation was to have teams and getting people to encourage their friends, family members, coworkers to participate with them. So we reached out to our existing supporters, individual donors, corporate sponsors, and partner organizations to see if they could create a team. Separately we thought it would be important to do outreach specifically to running clubs here in Massachusetts. There's a strong running community within running clubs. So we thought that would be another great growth opportunity for teams. We didn't do a real hard push for sponsorship or fundraising around it because we just wanted participants and we didn't have -- we hadn't done this before. So we couldn't lean back on last year to show as proof of concept to sponsors. So this first year was really about proof of concept. So during the event, logging miles, we actually used a virtual challenge option through a website called RunSignUp. It was solely honor system tracking. You didn't have to track it through a Garmin or fitness tracker. Because we weren't concerned about times. It wasn't like a 5k where you need to specifically track your time and competing against people. This is just about distance. There were a couple times where people messed up and they put a much higher number but it was easy to fix on the back end. You could also submit any time throughout the month. So even if you weren't someone who did an activity and then

immediately logged it, you could do it once a week. You could do it two times during the month. Understandably your team's distance would not get logged until you logged your miles and rolled up for your team. The route was made by us. I did not have any GIS experiences. I used it on my maps on Google and exported that file to RunSignUp. I did play with the route a little bit to make it exactly 900 miles. It had not been that when I first mapped it and I moved some points around. As you can see, Massachusetts also has islands off the sub coast. Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Since this was a walking/running challenge, we said, you know what? When you got to this point in the map, all of the sudden you were on a ferry. You took the ferry over to the islands. And I think this is one of the most fun pieces for me at least in creating was creating badges for the event for checkpoints along the way. It was either for a number of activities completed, the distance you went, or official state symbols like you can find a list of the official beverage of Massachusetts was cranberry juice. So we created a cranberry one when you were down around the south coast of Massachusetts with a cranberry box. We had the ferries off Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard and we had the team mileage when you hit the different points. We had a recurring 30-mile badge. Every time someone logged a total of 30 miles, they got a badge that specifically referenced our sponsor. We made sure to -- with a month-long challenge, one of the challenges I think is to be that steady drum beat of communication. I sent a weekly e-mail to captains every Wednesday and then we had an e-mail that went out to all participants on Fridays. That just alerted them to how the event was going and where teams were ranked. And we also gave some tips that people were sending us links about walking and running challenges and different places to go in Massachusetts so we carried that information too. And people loved it. People were sharing their photos of where they were going, what they were doing, how they were participating, and it was great. So we also asked them to give us some feedback too at the end. We had a 6-year-old who his grandmother asked him to write in about his experience. He didn't like going walking early in the morning. He watches TV when they don't go but he walked weekly with his mom, grandmother, and sister. Also a team from our state Department of Transportation took part from MassDOT. And they were able to have some of those conversations not just work-related anymore, the things they used to have in the office. But since they weren't seeing each other except for specific work Zooms, they weren't having that anymore. So they were able to find that again through this competition. So we had set a goal of 200, 250 people. We had 451 which was really exciting. We also had 31 teams. 18 of them completed 900 miles. Some did it multiple times, which was something we did not exactly. As you can see, we have some pretty big teams here. This greater Framingham Growlers, 47 team members, they hit 900 miles in five days. They ended up doing the 900-mile loop five times. We did not expect that to happen. But it was awesome. It was great. They were very excited and it was a great team to have. We also had 12 states represented. If we had had an in-person 5K, there's no way we'd have people from kind of all over the country. So we're really excited to do this again this year. We may add an in-person 5K to kick off the month events but our beat the bay is here to stay.

WalkBoston.org/baystate. That's it for me. I'm going to hand it off to Anthony right now.

>> ANTHONY FLEG: Thanks, Brendan. I am excited to be with you all today. And we'll just say from the land of New Mexico a big welcome. If everyone wants to stretch

for a moment. We might not be able to walk together but we can at least move a little bit. Get a good stretch. I know we have Walk With a Doc coming up here. This will be stretch with a doc. My name is Anthony. I'm a family physician here in New Mexico and I believe in people-first communities. I believe in movement as medicine, all forms, all speeds, I really do prescribe movement as a primary way of healing. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about running medicine and some of our kind of work and lessons learned during the pandemic. We empower families and communities to really holistic sense of wellness, mind, body, and spirit. And we do it through movement. And just kind of a brief land acknowledgement. I'm here in New Mexico. New Mexico is traditional and particularly Albuquerque where I am, traditional territory and home of the Tewa people, descendants of current Pueblo tribes and just important to acknowledge the land that I'm on. I'm married into a Navajo family. I'm originally an east coaster from Baltimore. And I just wanted to start with this picture. You might have kind of noticed the logo of Running Medicine is very different and invokes for all of us probably some different ideas of what we might mean about running medicine. But in Native American communities, running is seen as sacred, as spiritual. It's integrated into ceremonies. In this picture is actually my daughter a few months back going through a puberty ceremony, and central to the ceremony where she's moving from being a girl to entering womanhood is running. Running, she was actually just in this picture finishing a run. She ran three times a day for the four-day ceremony. Dressed traditionally, in COVID mask and all. But movement is seen as very sacred, and so that's a different starting place than just movement as calories burned and something that she can upload and sync to your device. As one of our participants said, yes, we have historical trauma, but we have historical gifts and running is one of those gifts. Running is something. And again, maybe not for everyone on this call, but definitely in many tribes and definitely the tribes of the southwest US, running is very central to culture and ceremony and community. Just going to show you some pictures. I think one thing at the outset of when I decided Running Medicine was an idea worth pursuing and creating was to create fun and create a group that if you just look at this picture, it doesn't look like a lot of our walking and running groups. It's people of all sizes, ages, abilities, we're not wearing the runners -- I'm a runner, so I can make fun of us runners. We're not wearing the tight shorts and the intimidating look that would make someone turn the other way. People ask me as a doc, is Running Medicine a disease prevention program? And I say, nope. We're a life promotion program. We're really trying to be the opposite of anything related to disease. We're trying to show people what true wellness might look like for them. We describe ourselves as all the things here. A place for intergenerational play. We're a program of a larger nonprofit which is for anyone out there thinking of starting a work from the ground up, a strategic way to align yourself with, it could be a city government, it could be a nonprofit, but something that might be able to give you an infrastructure and ability to generate funding differently than being just a sports organization. So pre-pandemic we averaged about 500 people signing up per season. We have a few sites both in an urban setting and then in some of our tribal communities. You participate -- most of the sites are free, and the site in Albuquerque that charges, it's \$15 for a whole season and we aim to be able to give participants a couple hundred dollars back for their \$15. So similar to the previous presentation, like making sure that we get away from the pay-to-play rules of where we price people out

of movement. And that really doesn't need to be, particularly for walking, running, and activities that don't cost a whole lot to put on events. Maybe even less so in kind of a hybrid and virtual world that we not only are in but may kind of evolve to kind of have as a model for events. Our folks tell us that they're getting a lot out of Running Medicine, not just from the physical, fitter, faster, and maybe losing weight, whatever their goals are, but mentally, spiritually, and also a social connectedness. And I think, again, similar to Brendan's presentation, the importance of building community around movement. It's a really underrecognized part, an important part of why we do movement work. During COVID I thought of these three words. Creativity, flexibility, and of course safety. Before COVID, it was get as many people as I could, usually Running Medicine group of about 100 people of all ages and backgrounds coming together to walk and run and youth over here and their parents getting time for themselves. Now it's really more first and foremost, I have to create an environment with our leaders around safety. How are we keeping people safe, particularly Native American communities that have been disproportionately affected by COVID. How do we show that we're not about sport first, but we're about safety first? And then being creative and being flexible. So we've done multiple versions of this event here. This one happened much earlier in the pandemic. We just did one actually with America Walks as a partner a month ago but creating community through movement. The idea is to get many different organizations, about 80 different organizations partnering to put on a virtual event that crosses states and countries. We had about 15 countries represented and 40 states in one of the first ones where we're carefully looking at who is participating. And just using some creativity and idea around Facebook Live and ways you can put things on live stream on to YouTube to create community and do it through movement even if it's virtual. Something like this, a bingo board where we came up with ways to incentivize not just the running, but you might see on here, like try a new healthy dish, family board game night. So you can really think of a bingo kind of concept for your own movement work. Incorporating more than just kind of a traditional mileage covered. We've incorporated by Zoom high intensity interval training. That's been an exciting thing that we weren't doing before COVID and honestly COVID kind of helped us get into offering yoga, some different things. Lots of good graphic design, by the way, as well. That's important to have people who can make stuff actually look exciting. Some warmup weekend. So my kind of concluding thoughts, just from our work in general, movement absolutely is medicine for mind, body, spirit, and also the social connection part that I mentioned. Running and walking, great ways to get people to the table in an inclusive way, particularly if we are really intentional about including all levels, abilities, and make that a part of the culture as opposed to the fastest people get the most attention and the awards and the way it kind of plays out at a local race. Rediscovering the sacredness of play, and for us adults, guess what? That makes our kids the teachers because they're the ones who teach us how to remember how to play again. The power of we. We have about 200 partners that range from health organizations, fitness organizations, schools, community groups, people that are interested in healthy food systems. We are really creating an entire web to support our work. Creating an inclusive, loving, and fun environment, allow some great things to happen. If you're in a community where there's cultural aspects to running but maybe even just the culture of being a Bostonian or being a member of your community in

different ways. Farming, for instance, could be a culture that a community holds proudly. Really incorporating that into the work that you do. During the pandemic, again, safety first. Movement second. That's just kind of key. You have to have a little bit more thinking about how to take an idea to get people moving, but how do we do it in a way that both connects them but also keeps everyone safe and we all have different local kind of rules that we're playing by there but that's really important to reiterate. As a family physician, I don't want to put anyone's health at risk during the pandemic just for the sake of getting them moving. I think a shift more toward wellness and in some of what I'm kind of sensing, my community is less interested in some ways of things that are more competitive, even like a virtual race than they are just trying to get moving again and trying to get into some healthy habits. Trying to figure out how to walk and run with a mask on. So you might sense and you might want to poll your community. If your goal is to set up a race, make sure your community cares about a race before you put a lot of time and energy and potentially money into that. Maybe they don't. Maybe they need something very different. Like texting groups of 10 to 15 people that encourage each other. That might be more where people are at with the pandemic. Providing opportunities for everyone. Have some options. As we have figured out that people who don't feel comfortable yet coming to an in-person, even small group with mask on, walk or run, they might do well to have that someone each day recording a Facebook live stretch-out so they can move from their own home. Those with and without internet access. Those on social media versus those who are not. Just important things to consider. You don't want inadvertently to lose parts of your community because you've created an environment that's not inclusive to all of the different ways that people may want to participate and really to see those as all equally valid. So I hope that was informative and maybe gave you some ideas. If you have any thoughts or ideas for kind of partnering, questions, you're welcome to reach out to me. And I think with that, I'm going to turn it over to the Walk With a Doc program and Bryan.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: All righty. Thank you, Dr. Anthony. I appreciate the stretch with a doc. That's a great way to get us warmed up for Walk With a Doc. So just a little bit about Walk With a Doc. We help host physician-led walking groups in communities all throughout the world. They are free for patients and community members. Anybody that wants to attend. Most of our groups happen at least once a month, some more frequently, and really our founding cardiologist started this program to get his patients up and moving, but it's really transformed into a lot more than that. At the bottom there, those four components, obviously the exercise, but also health education. So each of our doctors will give a short health talk at the beginning of each event. Social connection is really what we found to be the glue that keeps our groups together and gets people to show up in the first place. And Anthony talked about that a lot too so just being able to chat with people, meet others in your community while you get exercise together. And the fourth component is nature. Just getting outside, some fresh air, some sunshine. People really enjoy that and a lot of health benefits to it too. Typically in-person events, COVID hits and like every other organization, we have to pivot to the virtual world. So two things I wanted to talk about today. The first being our virtual Walk With a Doc series. The second being virtual walk challenges that we've done. So our virtual walk series, obviously groups of 20, 30, 40 people meeting in person was not safe to do during the pandemic. But we still wanted to keep that same structure having

free events where people can learn health information, get some exercise, and connect with each other. So we started doing these weekly virtual events where doctor gives a short health talk and people can either take a walk while they watch on their cell phones or they can take a walk afterwards if they're on a computer. They're posted live at a certain day and time but people can tune in afterwards if they're not free at that time. And it's kind of been fun. It's given us the opportunity to reach out to some celebrities. Dr. Sanjay Gupta did a video. We had the CDC do a video a couple weeks ago. I'll play a few, a few seconds of this. So after watching people walk, we started a Walk With a Doc Facebook group that we should've done a long, long time ago. That's been a lot of fun for people to just -- different groups around the country, around the world to be able to chat with each other. We'll have somebody in Denver that two feet of snow and they're walking out in the mountains, share a picture, and that same day somebody in Brazil walking along the beach sharing a picture. So it's just fun for people to be able to connect with each other. Then some of our Walk With a Doc groups also pivoted to their own virtual series. Those sort of have a little bit more intimate feel to them. They're smaller groups. 10 to 15 people. They have the opportunity to do them through Zoom and Facebook live to where they can actually chat with each other while they walk. I've had the chance to participate in a few of those. Normally I don't have the time to drive to Massachusetts or anywhere for our actual Walk With a Doc events but it's been fun to do you know in with those groups from a distance. Then the second thing I wanted to talk about, so in 2019 we hosted our first fundraising walk which we plan to do as an annual in-person event, charge a registration fee. And 2019 it was basically walk as far as you can in a day. We had some people that did 5 miles. Some people did 50 miles. I was somewhere in between. Definitely wasn't one of those crazies that went 50 miles but we had about a dozen people that did. And so we were planning to do that again in the spring of 2020. COVID didn't let that happen. So we pivoted to the virtual world and in November, we got on a platform called Racery. They strictly do virtual events. We chose Mt. Kilimanjaro as our route. It was 44 miles long. We spent two weeks virtually trekking through Mt. Kilimanjaro and the coolest part about this platform is this automatic activity conversion. So I've been part of some other virtual events in the past where sometimes they post like a sheet that says if you do yoga for 45 minutes, here's the calculation of how you can put that in as miles. The really cool thing about Racery is it does it all automatically. So I do 30 minutes of yoga, I put that in the platform, and it automatically converts that into walking miles. So that was really great for people, if the weather is not great outside, they can do some indoor activities or maybe it's not necessarily safe for me to walk in my neighborhood. People could do -- you're not going to walk 44 miles on your own necessarily. But you could shovel snow or rake leaves or just all kinds of different activities on there that allows people of different abilities and ages to get involved. We had a guy in Virginia who reached out to us and said his daughter is paraplegic and was just wondering if this was a type of event that she could do. And we said of course, any activity, any type of movement that she can do will automatically be converted into walking miles. It was a lot of fun. We had 500 people. We also, keeping with that education component, we had our physicians film Basecamp videos where people could check in each day, get a little pep talk from our physician, health info too. So that was fun. And then the social connection, we did a Zoom Live kickoff event. And we had the Facebook group going

and Racery also had a chat option where people can like activities and comment and share pictures and all of that. So that was a lot of fun. I mentioned there was a registration fee. People could donate on top of that if they wanted to get T-shirts. I have my shirt on here. Medals. Things like that. It was very successful and we actually got interest from a sponsor, Fresh Avocados, Love One Today, who wanted to put on an event like this and wanted to sponsor the whole thing which allowed us to make the event free for up to a thousand people. We ended up getting a lot of interest. I think we ended up having 1200 that signed up, and for this one we -- same thing. We did a two-week route and we chose the Grand Canyon which was roughly 70 miles. That was obviously a little more -- it was about 5 miles a day is what it broke down to. So we ended up doing teams for this one, teams of one to five people. We had a few people who did the whole thing on their own, 5 miles a day. And then others teamed up with three, four, five people and split up the miles amongst the team. So a lot of great interest from that. Racery made it really cool where people automatically got e-mails and they got a bib that they could print out. They got postcards. And if it's okay, just for maybe a minute -- hopefully you guys can still see this. Just wanted to go to our Grand Canyon Racery page here. These are all our teams along the route. If I go over to mine, my last activity on here, there's cool street views where I can see exactly where I was in the Grand Canyon at that point. I don't think I can show you the activity conversion right now since the event as closed, but essentially I'd go in here, I'd type in yard work or I'd click yard work, put in 30 minutes, and it would say you got 1.5 miles for that. A lot of fun. We were able to reach a lot of new people. I think roughly two-thirds of the people who signed up we never connected with before. So they either didn't have Walk With a Doc in their community. I mentioned it was very flexible and accessible for all kinds of different people. We had families that have relatives in different parts of the country that during the pandemic they weren't able to be with each other for holidays and things of that nature. So families had a lot of great time bringing their family together for this. Yeah. I think that's it. Those are some quotes we got. I won't read those to you but people really enjoyed it, and we did too. Thank you.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Brendan, Anthony, Bryan, thanks so much for those presentations. We'll all come on camera now. I want to start with a question. It's been, choose your advection, a tough year. You guys have made the best of it with these events that you shared and the work you're doing. If you could quickly share one of your favorite memories, stories from participants or memories from setting up these events. What would that favorite memory be?

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: I'll go first. I think one of the favorite memories I had, when I was looking at the people who had signed up for the race, we had a 6-year-old in the registration. We also had an 82-year-old. So I just really thought that was awesome that the event was appealing to different ends of the age spectrum. And we ended up having 19 people over 70 that were participating as well. So I thought that was great. Because there was a lot of hesitation. Initially that's like, oh, no, this is just going to be about people trying to get the most miles and we're going to get ultra-marathoners who are just going to kick people's butts. But it actually got a wide range of people.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: Yeah. I echo that. Exactly what Brendan said. Just different types of people from different places, different backgrounds that all have the opportunity

to participate. We did have ultra-marathoners that finished these races in a day or two, and other people that they just really needed a push to do something and we've heard countless stories of people who were so thankful that they were inspired to get up and move and have the opportunity to connect with others at a time when it was hard to do so. Lots of great feedback.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Anthony, favorite memory to share?

>> ANTHONY FLEG: Yeah. It's a good question. Just last night we had Running Medicine out at a park and a group of adults that I was stretching out were talking about just kind of feeling exhausted and there was a moment of communal, like we were all agreeing that's just a part of a lot of dealing with a year of pandemic living is, but then started talking about and hearing them kind of give testimonials about how simply having a group come out and walk and run with was kind of an anti-burn-out, anti-exhaustion for them. And some really just kind of heartfelt things seemed like needed to get off people's chest and they probably didn't feel comfortable sharing it in their workplace, and maybe not even at home. But after a good sweat, a lot of things are able to kind of flow out that you maybe otherwise keep very bottled in.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Yeah. The value of movement. We've had a few questions on the technical tools that you used. Brendan, there was a question about the platform. Bryan, there's a question about Racery and whether it's free. So I'm going to ask you each to elaborate on the platforms you use, which were most effective? And of course, would you recommend those platforms for groups who want to set up their own virtual events? Brendan, do you want to start?

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: Yeah. We used a website called runsignup.com. It was pretty straightforward. Easy enough to use. I had used it before as a director for my running club so I had experience using that. And they, like all of us, had to kind of adapt during COVID in March so they transitioned to start using a virtual challenge platform. So they were kind of adding stuff on the fly as race directors were asking. It was runsignup.com. The service fee was built into the registration cost. So as people signed up, they paid the registration. So it was free on the back end for the organizer in setting it up.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: Yeah, for us, we used Racery obviously, and Racery did charge a fee per participant to be able to access the platform. Different pricing. I think it really depended how long your event was, and depending on if you wanted sponsors' logos, if you wanted to customize some of those features. Our registration fee was \$35 for the first fundraising event. Obviously free for the second one. And yeah, we really enjoy it. It's very simple. We looked at some other platforms that have a lot of like bells and whistles and all of that. Especially with our participants, for the most part being of the older generation, we wanted something that's very simple so they click their activity, they put the amount of time. They hit enter. And that's all they need. So it worked out well for us. And one thing. I did want to introduce my teammate Rachel is on the call here too. So she just wanted to pop in. She was kind of one of the masterminds behind our virtual events too. So just wanted to introduce her.

>> Hi, everyone, I'm here. I think by voice. I don't think you can see me but happy to answer any questions and thanks for sharing the screen with me.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Great. Welcome, Rachel. Anthony --

>> ANTHONY FLEG: I would just add don't let the technology be a hindrance is my

very simple kind of recommendation and prescription I guess. I have a buddy who his life is professional trail running and race stuff. He was actually saying because we initially were just using a Google doc form that anyone can use for free for people to track their participation and he thought it worked better than what he had spent a lot of money and time on. So I'd say also to potentially have, if just the web is not going to work for everyone, have something that people could potentially print out old school and mark up or send in by an e-mail. Have some options for people that are using technology in different ways or less than maybe -- [audio cutting out]

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Thank you, Anthony. I wanted to dig in a little bit more on that topic of inclusivity. You talked about the intergenerational aspect of the groups and really trying to be open to folks who maybe couldn't walk or run long distances. Can you talk a little bit more, and same question to the others just about the most effective ways to make sure these events are as inclusive as possible, physical abilities, internet access, and other potential limitations?

>> ANTHONY FLEG: I'll use a very specific example. Our team was about to do a 100-mile challenge for the month of December, and it sounds great, or it may or may not sound great to you all. But my immediate alarm bells that went off was what about the person who at best can do a mile a day? Are we saying that the more miles, the better? No, that's not the message we want at all. So we created I think in that case 25, 50, and 100-mile options. And in our seasons where we kind of have -- we call the medicine miles. People are tracking their miles, because I think pretty clearly once you start tracking something, you're dedicating to it in a different way. But I have people create what you think is your meaningful mile. So one person over a four-week span may want to cover 10 miles, and another person may want to cover 300. And it's actually the bar is you assume people will be able to give themselves a challenge for whatever their ability and speed level and lifestyle and other limitations. But you don't set it for them and you don't inadvertently put people who are slower and unable to do numbers of miles, you don't make them feel in any way less than -- you don't want to cater I guess inadvertently to the most able, the younger, and the fittest crowd.

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: Yeah, I think building on that, that's kind of one reason we didn't cap the team size. Because we're like, you know what? If your team is only going to do one, two, three miles a day, that's fine. Get other people to do the team with you. Because you know, as a big team as well, that is going to raise your mileage total. You'll probably have more fun too. So I think that was a big thing. One thing we want to do for this year is to make it in case that entry fee was a hindrance to some people participating, one thing we want to do is do a little bit more corporate outreach and corporate sponsorship and as part of that be similar to what Bryan had, have corporate sponsor, a sponsor, either Boys and Girls Club group or another local group that could then have their members take part.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: Yeah, I agree with what both those guys said. Walk With a Doc, we're getting people started with their first steps. We really just want people to get up and move, whether that's a mile a day or 10 miles a day. Anywhere in between. We wanted everyone to feel welcome and not intimidated. I think both these groups here do a good job of letting people feel welcome and included and not intimidated by the traditional running club or anything like that. So that was part of the reason why we decided to do teams for our second round so that people could -- the people that did

want to do a full 70 miles, some of them even did it a couple times. There was an option for them. But at the same time people that could do a mile or less a day, whether that's walking or other activities that they're comfortable with, they had the option to do that.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Great. You all talked about some specific challenges, the bingo card and the badges, ways to keep people engaged throughout the process. And I think you all mentioned continuing to do something similar in the future. So could you talk about what you found were the most effective ways to recruit people to participate and then keep them motivated and engaged?

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: I think one thing that was useful for us with the team aspect is trying to really give those team captains ownership of their team and motivating their participants. So like sending an e-mail just to the team captains and being very specific and being very encouraging of them as like a great part of this event. I think that was helpful for us because we got a lot of good feedback from the captains as well of different things they're hearing from their participants that I don't think we would've necessarily heard of with a 400-person individual event.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: Yeah, I recently promoted through newsletter and social media and all of that. We also tried to reach out to a lot of partners of ours including America Walks by getting some of our partners to help promote for us and get their network of people involved. So that was pretty successful. And as far as -- I don't know that the bling and the swag and all of that was necessarily something that got people to sign up, but I think it was a good bonus both for our participants, you get a postcard that says great job, keep up the great work, encouraging them. But it was great for our sponsor too to get some recognition for the event that they were sponsoring.

>> ANTHONY FLEG: I feel like in our current virtual world, we have to create -- we have to do like -- I like the idea of having a set of team captains, and in our case we have kind of similar structure that are people who you know you can, for instance, because we're doing in-person programming, people I can expect that are following rules and that I can make sure if they're not following rules, that I have someone I can reach out to. But also more than, say, the traditional event where someone gets on a megaphone and tries to create community. I don't think any of our efforts can really do that. I think we need small groups to have connection to motivate themselves. If the group isn't cohesive themselves, then Bryan and Brendan and me are wasting our time because we're not going to be able through the flashiest e-mail, the best selfie video we post on YouTube, none of it is going to work if the person doesn't have a team that they're working with. And honestly, for those who are listening and wanting to think about in-person small group, found just a group that created a group text and each day one person from the group, not, again, me or someone in leadership, send out an inspirational idea or quote for the day and checking in with each other works probably better to keep people engaged than anything we did from a more organizational perspective.

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: One other thing that reminded me when Anthony said that. We had teams that were very competitive with each other that there was a group of advocates that were like really neck and neck with the state DOT and there was some great trash talking, let's put it that way. And I just thought that was an awesome add-on to our event that I was not expecting at all.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Great. I want to share a couple comments that we've seen come in through the chat, just notes. There's a group in Minnesota that shared that their walking host commits to always walking with the slowest walker in the group so that no one finds themselves walking alone. And there was another suggestion about a virtual walking event connecting community gardens or front yard gardens in a community. So lots of different ideas for different things. We had a few questions for the doctors come in related to movement and nutrition. There was a question about dietary approaches that you recommend through the programs. What are you guys sharing through the walking events or virtual events regarding nutrition?

>> This is Rachel. Can you guys hear me? I wanted to share the event we did, the Grand Canyon event where we partnered with Love One Today Fresh Avocados. Really aligned with our brand because you can't go wrong promoting eating more fruits and vegetables. So we took that opportunity to promote consumption of more fruits and vegetables. It's one of the opportunities, one of the dietary pushes that we made.

>> ANTHONY FLEG: When I said earlier that I think running and walking are great ways to get people to the table, I didn't actually mean necessarily a food table but maybe I did. They're great ways to start to be able to talk about and model other things, again, doing some small in-person stuff, just having fresh fruit at every event, like Cutie oranges, something that's pretty easy to do even in a pandemic I think is a great start. Trying to incorporate healthy food. We have a healthy cooking series that we're adding into and going to bring some seeds out to help encourage people to grow more of their own food. So I think the two are a great mix just for overall creating healthier people and healthier communities. The food element and the movement element.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: A few of our doctors in some of those videos we shared through the challenge and the adventure, a few videos on nutrition. There was one on plant-based diet, one on fiber, and a few on avocados and some of the things related to that. Heart healthy foods. So trying to sprinkle in some nutrition along the way.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: There were a couple COVID-related questions. What size of groups do you recommend when people are walking in groups? And what is your response to questions about should people wear their mask while they're walking or running, or is it okay not to when they're outside?

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: That's a tough question. From a headquarters standpoint, we're leaving it up to our local groups for their communities to decide what they think is best. We are slowly seeing some of our in-person Walk With a Doc groups starting up again, and we're sending them recommendations on wearing a mask, keeping your distance, still following some of the same guidelines but being safe as Anthony said earlier. Safety first, movement second. We want both of those. So that's kind of the stance that we're taking.

>> ANTHONY FLEG: I'll just say both to take your local and state guidelines very much seriously. I think there are in the more competitive sports realm right now folks that are really trying to just push sport and not safety at all, and I don't think that's a good idea. In New Mexico where we're very still strict on a lot of the guidelines, we're saying wear a mask. I can't tell you as a medical professional that there's significant evidence that we're, if we're out in an open space, that we're really at risk of passing or contracting COVID, but that's not for me to question. Right now it's an important time to show the people that I'm passing that I'm taking their health seriously and to follow the

rules. So I'd say even if your state says you can exercise outside without a mask, if you do a little bit of polling and people are less likely to come out because you're saying a no-mask mentality, versus you could double the size of people that come out, which I know in the pandemic doubling the size isn't necessarily great, but if you put them into separate pods, you can get more participation if you show you're taking safety more seriously, even than what your local guidelines allow. I think you'd be smart to show you're going to take even more precautions than what is kind of allowed.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Great. Thank you. There's one more question here. Brendan, you mentioned some friendly competition with the state DOT. There's a question for all panelists about partnering. Have any of you partnered with your local transportation department regarding walking or multi-modal transportation?

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: Yeah. WalkBoston definitely has through all of our other work, and for this competition itself, we had a team of people from the MBTA which is our transit agency. MassDOT, the state Department of Transportation, and a number of people that work for the city of Boston in transportation and public works and stuff like that. Yeah.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: Great. We are close to the end of the hour so I want to pose one last question for our panelists that I think 500 or so or more folks listening in, many of whom may want to host their first virtual walking event. What is your number one or top two recommendations for someone planning to start their first virtual walking event? We'll start with Bryan.

>> BRYAN ROMNEY: Yeah, I guess from our standpoint we still wanted to focus on our mission and not deviate from that. So I mentioned a dozen times exercise, education, social connection, and nature. So we really wanted to figure out a solution that still allowed us to accomplish our mission and get people moving in that direction, no pun intended. So that, and I guess just have fun with it. Make it however you want. It doesn't have to be a big event with hundreds of people. It can be a small event and every person that's impacted by it is great. Just getting people connected together now more than ever, it's important for us to be physically active but socially connected and just connect with each other. Just have fun.

>> BRENDAN KEARNEY: Yeah, I think my thing is don't make too many options when the person is signing up, so it's very simple to have them sign up and not get frustrated when they're doing it. The one other thing is we did have like an optional, you could buy a hat or buy a buff and just remember that since it's not an in-person 5K that you will be doing the fulfillment. So as long as you keep that in mind, that's fine. I had lots of trips to the post office.

>> ANTHONY FLEG: I would say be patient. Be okay if your numbers aren't exactly what you as a team had a goal for. Be more focused that you're starting maybe some people in a really positive direction, maybe even just the group of organizers needed something to boost morale and something to rally behind. So be patient if you don't see after a year of the pandemic, it's really hard honestly to have a great pulse on where people are at with their interest in getting moving right now. They may be trying to keep the lights from being shut off, and there's a lot of other competing things that if we can do some good by getting folks moving, great. But have fun with it, as was said, and just take whatever happens as it's a success, it's better than it didn't happen at all.

>> ARLIS REYNOLDS: I think we all felt the benefits of your 5-second stretch. Even

just a tiny bit of movement is great. Be patient, keep it simple, have fun. Thank you all so much for sharing your experiences with this panel here. Very important topic, of course, and thank you to everyone in our audience for attending and participating with us. I want to close out with again a thanks to our sponsors. If you enjoyed today's discussion, please consider playing a part in keeping more content like this coming your way by making a donation, even a \$20 donation goes a long way. And if you can't donate, please do share our content with folk that you think would benefit from it as well. I want to let you know about our next webinar. It is titled the Notorious MUTCD, Why Fixing a Federal Manual is Critical to Safety, Equity and Climate. The manual of uniform traffic control devices which dictates the design of every street in the United States from crosswalks to speed limits, bike lanes, and more, is up for revision, but the proposed draft continues to prioritize speed over safety, equity, and climate. So next week you'll hear from a panel of experts on why the MUTCD matters, what's wrong with it, and what needs to be done next and how you can help make a difference. That webinar is scheduled for Monday, April 26th at 2:00 p.m. eastern, 11:00 pacific. So thank you again for joining us today. It's always a pleasure to spend time with this group, this community. And please keep a look-out for the survey e-mail so you can tell us your feedback on this webinar. We really do value and pay attention to the feedback so please do provide honest input. Thank you again to Bryan, Brendan, Anthony for your time and the work you're doing across the country and even across the globe with your events and your work and your advice. Thank you. Have a great day, everyone. And we'll see you next time.