Need Some Exercise? Join This National Walking Movement for Black Women

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A walking movement called GirlTrek has energized African-American women across the United States to walk every day as a way to improve their health and lives in general. The nonprofit group sponsors walks during the week and also on the weekend in parks and through urban neighborhoods and now boasts more than 80,000 members across the country, The Washington Post reports.

GirlTrek doesn't entail fancy diets, gym equipment or expensive facilities. All members need to join is a pair of shoes and some motivation. Vanessa Garrison, an advocate for social justice, said she and a college friend, T. Morgan Dixon, cofounded GirlTrek because they were concerned about the health and lives of Black women. Both saw walking as a way to take time to care for themselves and "live our healthiest, most-fulfilled lives," Garrison said. As the two walked, they spread the word and invited other women to join them.

GirlTalk uses social media, more than 400 neighborhood-based volunteers and a wide array of public health partnerships to motivate African-American women to walk every day. Walking groups are organized in cities such as New Orleans, Houston, Memphis, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. By 2018, the movement hopes to inspire more than one million Black women to begin walking.

The group's website stresses, "This is not a fitness organization, this is a campaign for healing. This is not recreation. This is a lifestyle. We walk to heal our bodies, inspire our families, and to reclaim the streets of our neighborhoods. We believe in the discipline and power of walking to transform our lives, enliven our communities and restore our humanity."

Since its launch in 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama featured the group on her "Let's Move!" blog, and former surgeon general Regina Benjamin joined GirlTrek's board. Its membership includes black women of all ages from a variety of backgrounds.

To link up with the group, visit GirlTrek.com or check out the hashtag #GirlTrek to find the next walking event in your area. The group also organizes fun monthly challenges to help members build a healthy habit of daily exercise, hosts community-building events and encourages women to bring their families to participate.

Click here to learn more about the many health benefits of a walking workout.

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