

## **Problem Assessment**

Upon review of concerns and suggestions from department heads and various city boards including the Pedestrian & Bicycle Board, Environmental Review Board, and Keep Winter Park Beautiful Board, city officials discovered a need to incorporate several initiatives into the city's strategic plan and charged city management with accomplishing the tasks at hand. Strategic initiatives that were considered high priority included: maintaining a safe and healthy environment, providing extensive recreational opportunities for all ages, assuring bicycle and pedestrian safety, maintaining 10 acres of park space per 1,000 residents and aggressively pursuing the city's "green" plan. In an effort to address these areas of concern and proceed with strategic initiatives, city leadership reached out to nurture a partnership with the Winter Park Health Foundation (WPHF), a private, not-for-profit organization supporting programs that improve the health of youth, older adults and the community-at-large. The foundation helped to conduct research and provide education on health issues affecting these groups. As a long-trusted community leader on health care issues, the WPHF serves as a partner in addressing health issues impacting Winter Park and Central Florida. Their work is dedicated to helping develop the healthiest community in the country, a goal that fits perfectly with many of the initiatives outlined by Winter Park officials as they pursue the city's strategic plan. For several years now, the City of Winter Park has worked diligently to nurture their relationship with the WPHF and form a partnership that has been instrumental in achieving many common goals.

## **Program Implementation**

In 2007, the WPHF launched their "Healthy Communities" initiative in an effort to inspire community projects that would change the environment and/or culture in ways that encouraged healthy behaviors. City officials from departments including Administration, Parks &

Recreation, Public Safety, Community Redevelopment and Planning submitted ideas that would assist in promoting physical activity and safe, healthy lifestyles in Winter Park. The partnership between the city and the WPHF soon blossomed and by keeping the goals and objectives of both organizations top of mind, the following projects were completed.

In June 2007, Winter Park' Fire-Rescue Department received a \$25,000 grant from WPHF to purchase two **Auto Pulse devices** which provide automatic, life-saving CPR. Serving as a launching pad to increase awareness and demonstrate demand, future grant opportunities allowed for Auto Pulse Devices to be placed on all of Winter Park's fire-rescue response vehicles.

In September 2007, the City of Winter Park broke ground on their new **Howell Branch Preserve**, located just northwest of downtown Winter Park, to create a passive recreation facility for residents and visitors. Less than one year later, in May 2008, the city hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new 10.38 acre preserve which is surrounded by wetlands and natural habitat. The property was purchased by the city in October 2004, through a Land Acquisition Grant Fund of \$856,000 which was awarded by Florida Communities Trust and facilitated by the Trust for Public Lands. The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program subsequently provided grant funding in the amount of \$200,000 for development of the preserve, and both grants were matched by donations from several organizations including the WPHF.

In the fall of 2007, the city partnered with WPHF, Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, Central Florida YMCA and Winter Park Memorial Hospital to create a "**Healthy Fun & Fitness Guide to Winter Park.**" The 2' x 3' folded brochure serves as a tool to direct residents and visitors to all biking/walking trails as well as recreational parks and a variety of outdoor fitness options.

During the third quarter of 2008, the city installed **34 dual bicycle racks** along the easterly side streets of Park Avenue in the central business district and in various parks throughout the city. The project was funded by a \$26,400 “Think-Act-Be Healthy” Community Project Grant that was awarded to the city by the WPHF in July 2008.

During the fourth quarter of 2008, the WPHF approved a \$5,000 grant for the city’s Fire-Rescue Department (WPFDR) to conduct a **fall analysis study**. This was the first step in developing an effective fall-prevention program for area older adults. Each year, the WPFDR averages 360 calls on “short falls” (falls from less than one story), the most frequent type of call it receives. The grant from WPHF enabled the department to analyze emergency medical service patient care reports from 2005 to 2007 in order to determine fall locations, causes, specific injuries and ages of individuals so that fall-prevention programs could be initiated.

In January 2009, the city’s Parks & Recreation Department hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new **Lake Island Fitness Experience (LIFE)** along the 1.5 mile lakefront walkway in Lake Island Park, a serene park encompassing 23-acres of beautiful scenery, sports and recreation facilities, and an extra-large playground just west of the central business district. LIFE is an outdoor fitness station that features nine pieces of equipment positioned in a circular pattern for convenience to all users. This project was paid for in part by a \$14,000 grant awarded to the city by the WPHF, and the foundation’s input was crucial in creating a fitness station which benefits health-conscious citizens of all ages.

## **Tangible Results**

The partnership between the City of Winter Park and the Winter Park Health Foundation has served to help complete many initiatives in the city's strategic plan to create a better quality of life for residents and visitors. Results from each initiative include:

**Auto Pulse Devices:** Provide automatic, life-saving CPR. According to Fire-Rescue Chief, Jim White, "the equipment improves the survivability of those patients found in cardiac arrest by performing mechanical CPR compressions." This equipment is crucial to assist in saving lives.

**Howell Branch Preserve:** What was previously an overgrown basin has been turned into one of Winter Park's most attractive outdoor recreation facilities with walkways, nature boardwalk, state-of-the-art playground and a picnic pavilion which has been booked each weekend with 120 functions since the grand opening.

**Healthy Fun & Fitness Guide to Winter Park:** 2,000 guides have been distributed to Winter Park residents and visitors from various Winter Park locations including City Hall, Community Center, Winter Park Public Library, Welcome Center and the Winter Park Health Foundation.

**Dual Bicycle Racks:** The installation of 300 strategically-located bike racks has served to encourage riders to visit locations in areas that are often perceived to have parking difficulties. Encouraging bike riding also achieves to assist in the city's "green" initiatives by promoting environmental protection efforts. The new bicycle racks provide a pedestrian/bicycle-friendly atmosphere and enhance the appearance of the city's downtown streets without interfering with pedestrian traffic.

**Fall Analysis Study:** As a result of the study, the WPHF awarded a grant to the Senior Resource Alliance to coordinate a multi-faceted falls-prevention pilot program which includes

in-home assessments, balance classes, home modification tips, nutrition counseling, medication management services and regular meetings with the Central Florida Falls Prevention Coalition.

**Lake Island Fitness Experience (LIFE):** The use of the 1.5 mile Lake Island Fitness Trail has increased 30 percent since the grand opening of the LIFE fitness equipment. This project was deemed so unique and successful that the equipment manufacturer, Landscape Structures, Inc., filmed their company's promotional workout video from the Winter Park LIFE location.

### **Lessons Learned**

The most important lessons learned throughout the years of partnership between the City of Winter Park and the Winter Park Health Foundation include: 1. The importance of working with organizations that have similar goals and objectives in order to achieve the city's mission. 2. To value recommendations from city boards and to implement their ideas and objectives into the city's strategic plan.

According to Debbie Watson, Vice President of WPHF, "As the Winter Park Health Foundation strives to make Winter Park the healthiest community in the U.S., we realize it is a task we can't take on alone. We have found an important and dedicated partner on this mission in the City of Winter Park. City officials at all levels have stepped forward with ideas and support for community projects that change the environment or culture in ways that encourage healthy behaviors, ranging from fitness trails to community gardens. The result is a perfect private/public partnership. The city has developed and proposed ideas that have received Foundation funding. The city then maintains the projects and develops programs around them. Together we are building a healthier place for Winter Park residents to live, work and play."