



Outdoor Recreation: The New PE!
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Living in Colorful Colorado is like living in a Vacationland. Can you keep this a secret? Colorado has more sunny days than almost anywhere else in the USA. Have you looked out the window? The great, big Colorado outdoors beckons you to come out and play. With all of the recreational activities that our state has to offer, why would anyone want to stay inside? We live in the most fantastic outdoor gym imaginable! Yet, sadly, Colorado is the only state that does not mandate PE classes in order for students to graduate from High School. So, outdoor recreational activities are the PE class of the future – and a sure-fire way to improve the health of our citizens. The Colorado Governor's Council for Physical Fitness, in conjunction with the National Forest Foundation and the American Recreation Coalition, is helping to create awareness of outdoor recreation as an arena for improving the overall health and fitness of Coloradans.

About the Colorado Governor's Council for Physical Fitness

The Colorado Governor's Council for Physical Fitness is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit organization established via executive order by the Governor in October of 1975. The mission of the Council is as follows:

To empower lifestyle change in citizens of all ages and abilities through promoting and sponsoring physical activities, and to act as a liaison for the Governor on fitness related issues.

The Council is celebrating Colorado's designation as "the fittest state," according to statistics compiled by Trust for America's Health, an advocacy group that promotes funding for public health programs. The Council also:

- Sponsors and promotes physical activity and sports events throughout the state through its signature program, "Shape Up Across Colorado," and other outreach efforts
- Educates Coloradoans about the health benefits of fitness and physical activity
- Recognizes individuals, organizations, businesses, and schools that make outstanding contributions in physical fitness, sports, and wellness

Nationally, our health situation is dire:

- Obesity continues to climb among American adults. More than 60 million Americans are considered obese and over 108 million adults are either obese or overweight. That means roughly three out of 5 Americans carry an unhealthy amount of excess weight.
- Only four states (Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, and Vermont) had obesity rates below 20% and three states (Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia) had rates greater than 30%.
- Physically inactive people are 200% more likely to develop coronary heart disease.
- Overweight or obese people are also at increased risk for high blood pressure, Type II diabetes, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, respiratory problems and some types of cancer.
- Inactivity and obesity are also associated with increased risk of depression, social stigmatization, poor body image and discrimination.

Colorado 2005 Fitness Report Card

- 13.7% of Colorado children ages 2-14 were considered overweight (Healthy People 2010 called for 5% or less)
- Colorado is below the national norm of 2 hours or less of video and TV viewing

- Only 17% of Colorado youth attend a PE class daily
- Colorado leads the U.S. with the lowest rates of overweight and obesity. According to 2005 data: 36.7% of adult Coloradans were overweight, versus 36.7 nationwide
17.8% of adult Coloradans were obese, versus 24.4% nationwide
- Women in Colorado were more likely to be obese (18.0%) than men (17.7%)
- Both Hispanics and Blacks and Blacks were more likely to be obese than Whites.
- 54% of Coloradans met recommended guidelines for moderate physical activity (30 min per day, 5 or more days per week) compared to 49.1% nationally. Men in Colorado were slightly more active 55.2% than women 53.6%

These statistics point out the importance of regular physical activity – and the need for us, the Colorado Governor’s Council for Physical Fitness. Our program, **Shape Up Across Colorado** (www.shapeupchallenge.org), is quite simple. Shape Up participants are given an activity card with a 400 square grid map of Colorado. The 400 squares represent the 400 mile distance across the state. For every 10 to 30 minutes of physical activity (depending on the level and intensity) the participant colors in one square. One square represents approximately 2,000 steps or one mile, which is equivalent to approximately 75 calories burned. The goal is for participants to color in five squares (10,000 steps or the equivalent in other physical activity) per day to reduce the risk of health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles.

Benefits of Shape Up

- Shape Up is a **statewide** initiative with participation by school kids in tiny rural towns to executives in Denver high rises.
- Shape Up’s goal is **consistent with the Surgeon General’s** recommendation of 10,000 steps per day for optimum physical health.
- The program also offers **variety** – 37 different physical activities, from gardening and walking to swimming and playing soccer – are suggested on the participant card.
- Participants are provided a **visual aid** in the activity card to assist them in reaching the 400 mile goal. Participants who reach the 400 mile goal are rewarded with a completion certificate.
- Shape Up is a program that is **accessible** to people of **all ages, ability levels and income brackets**. The program is **free** so that fitness is **affordable** for all participants. The only costs associated with Shape Up are optional merchandise purchases (T-shirts, hats and pedometers).
- **Grants** in the form of cash or equipment are awarded back to some participating schools.

Partnerships

The Colorado Governor’s Council also forges partnerships with organizations that share our same mission. Some of the partners we have teamed up with in an effort to promote physical activity in the outdoors are:

- COPAN www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/aboutCOPAN.html
- USTA www.intermountain.usta.com (Sue Burke – sburke@ita.usta.com)
- 9Health Fair “In the Classroom Program” www.9HealthFair.org (Connie Naumann – connie.naumann@9healthfair.org)
- Winter Feels Good www.winterfeelsgood.com (Mary Jo Tarallo – mjtarallo@thesnowtrade.org)
- Presidents Council on Physical Fitness and Sports www.fitness.gov