Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department's eighth annual Walk to Health walking program kicks off June 1st. The program will last for 12 weeks. Residents of all ages in the SWNPHD eight-county service area are encouraged to participate in the Walk to Health program.

"I am excited for another year of Walk to Health," said Jamey Keen, public health nurse for Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. "We have quite a few veteran participants and always enjoy seeing them return from previous years as well as seeing new participants join. The benefits of being physically active are numerous."

"Major benefits include preventing heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the number one killer in America. Walking is one way that you can get the blood flowing and your heart pumping making the heart stronger. Physical activity and a healthy diet will help reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke," she added.

She further states that "the goal of the Walk to Health program is for participants to start consistently exercising or increase their current level of exercise and sustain the routine beyond the 12-week program. Be sure to check with your family physician prior to starting any new exercise program."

Participants will receive instructions upon registration. Weekly motivational tips and a monthly newsletter will be sent out via email or mailed to those without internet access.

The purpose of the weekly postcards and monthly newsletter is to provide education and encouragement to participants throughout the 12-week program.

After 12 weeks, participants will receive an ending evaluation form. Upon receipt of the evaluation form, the SWNPHD resident participants will receive a free t-shirt and be entered into a drawing for prizes.

Interested persons may request a sign up form by emailing nurse@swhealth.ne.gov. You may also register by calling 308-345-4223 or stop in at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department, 404 West 10th, (one block north of Arby's) in McCook.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties.