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PUBLIC HEALTH EMPLOYEE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM PROMOTING WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

Inaugural "Walking College" class will help strengthen local efforts to make communities more walkable and livable

PHOENIX – May 22, 2015 – Following a highly competitive selection process, America Walks, a national advocacy organization that promotes walking and walkable communities, has selected Linda Mohr-Strecker with Maricopa County Department of Public Health's Office of Nutrition and Physical Activity, as a recipient of its Walking College Fellowship.

The Fellowship will enable Mohr-Strecker and 24 other advocates from around the country to participate in a five-month training program designed to strengthen local efforts to make communities more walkable and livable (more information at <http://americawalks.org/news/>). "We are delighted to welcome Linda as a member of our inaugural Walking College class," said Ian Thomas, State and Local Program Director with America Walks. "This program was developed in response to the finding, from our recent survey of 532 local walking organizations, that access to technical assistance and a national peer network are among the most pressing needs for these groups."

Mohr-Strecker's work at public health focuses on fostering active living opportunities throughout Maricopa County. She is especially eager for the mentorship component and the long-term impact it can lead to. "Partnerships between organizations involved in health, urban development, and others are key to making this work possible," said Mohr-Strecker. "I look forward to learning from the diverse backgrounds of other Fellows and sharing this experience with my colleagues and other community stakeholders."

Mohr-Strecker will complete a six-module distance-education training program this summer, followed by a two-month independent study project in Maricopa County, and then attend the National Walking Summit in Washington, DC at the end of October.

The Walking College curriculum has been designed to expand the capacity of local advocates to be effective community change agents. Topics include the science behind the benefits of walking, evaluation of built environments, as well as communication skills and building relationships with stakeholders and decision makers. At the conclusion of the Walking College, Fellows will develop a Community Action Plan for implementation over the following 12-months.

About The Walking College: The Walking College is supported with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Every Body Walk! Collaborative. Mentoring will be provided by a dozen national leaders in the field, including representatives of AARP, the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, and the Alliance for Biking and Walking. More info at <http://www.americawalks.org/walking-college/>.

About America Walks: America Walks is the only national organization devoted exclusively to making America a great place to walk. America Walks consists of a network of more than 700 partner and allied organizations, working to increase walking and create more safe, accessible and inclusive places to walk. Programs include on-line technical assistance, community-based workshops, convenings such as the National Walking Summit, federal advocacy initiatives, and increasing financial resources for local action. America Walks also maintains the Every Body Walk! Collaborative, a national partnership focused on increasing the visibility of walking and cultivating consumer demand for more walkable places. More info at <http://www.americawalks.org>.

About MCDPH-ONPA: Maricopa County Department of Public Health's Office of Nutrition and Physical Activity promotes the availability of nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity for all residents of Maricopa County. This includes nutrition education in schools, increased access to locally-grown produce, and opportunities for enjoyable recreation around the Valley. More info at <http://www.eatwellmaricopa.org>.

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