

## Polk Fit Challenge: Better With Friends

By: Michele Trofatter and Buffy Ashmore

It's that time again. Time to gather your co-workers, family members, or friends and get your team ready for this year's Polk Fit Challenge! The goal of the event is to encourage daily active living by challenging community members to participate and compete in a fun and friendly way.

Last October, Polk Fit, Fresh and Friendly had more than 300 people who either work or live in Polk County participate in the month long challenge to be physically active. This year, thanks to a generous sponsorship from the Polk County Community Foundation, the Lois Miner Barrick Fund at the Foundation, and Polk County Community Foundation Board Initiative funds, , the month-long event will again be free to the community and include a special emphasis on youth.

Many positive and encouraging stories came from the Challenge last year and highlight the benefits of the event. An anonymous participant reported, "The Polk Fit Challenge in 2017 was at once a blessing and a real challenge. While I lead an active life, it is almost completely indoors. The Challenge gave me reason and excuse to get outside and spend time exercising in nature. The greatest benefit, though, was in the opportunity it gave of spending time with friends. Indeed, my best friend and I spent hours walking and talking together, more time than we ever usually get in a week. I am very much looking forward to enjoying that sharing time again this October!"

Jim Bross, Saint Luke's Hospital CEO, writes, "I don't have a particularly inspirational testimonial story, although our teammates and their engagement and commitment to healthy lifestyles are enough inspiration for me daily."

Warren Ashmore, Fire Chief at Landrum Area Fire District, notes, "Since participating in the PF3 Challenge last year, our department has adopted an exercise policy that enables the staff to participate in free fitness memberships to area gyms as a perk to keeping healthy and fit. Currently, we have 15 participating."

Jessica Raines remarks, "During last year's challenge my 10 year old son, Gideon, got into the challenge and wanted to out walk everyone on our team daily. We even continued the challenge when we were in Alaska."

At its core, the Challenge will remain the same this year; teams will have up to six members. Our on-line Challenge Runner program will keep up with minutes and show the leaderboard each day.

Most of all, we are very excited to offer three divisions to the Challenge this year: the Adult Division, the Youth Division, and the Family Division. The Youth Division will be for teams made up solely of 17 and under, and the Family Division will be for families or other organizations that want to have teams comprised of kids and adults.

Another exciting addition to this year's Challenge is the opportunity to get a FREE t-shirt, available to the first 300 adults and 150 youth to register online. Everyone is encouraged to not wait and register NOW!

We are encouraging everyone to form their own teams and team names. Awards for creative team names will be awarded again this year. Other notable awards will go to the teams with the most active minutes and organizations with greatest participation.

Don't worry if you're new to the community or aren't sure how to get on a team; we will be placing anyone who signs up individually on community-based teams-hence our theme for this year 'Better with Friends!'"

The Kick-off Event for The Polk Fit Challenge will be on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Stearns Park in Columbus. There will be a live DJ on site, physical fitness activities, FREE food and the opportunity to sign-up or ask questions about the Challenge. Participants will also be able to pick-up their t-shirts, if applicable.

For more information or to register for the Challenge, log on to [www.polkfit.com](http://www.polkfit.com) or contact Buffy Ashmore at 828-894-8271 ext. 222.

PF3 is a group of 120+ community members, leaders and health professionals working together to plan and implement effective strategies to promote wellness in our community. PF3 welcomes any individual who is interested in joining us to make our community a healthier place for all. For more information and a complete list of 2018 meeting dates, please visit our website at <http://www.polkfitfreshandfriendly.org>.