

# Start A Movement!

## Personal and Organizational Wellness Graduate Capstone Project Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cluster Project

Denise Poudrier Normandin, MA, RD, LD, Plymouth State University and Sean Foy, MA, Personal Wellness Corporation

### Background

Physical inactivity significantly increases the risk of chronic disease (Lee et al., 2001).<sup>1</sup> There is abundant data on health promotion and the promotion of physical activity for overall health and well-being. Initiatives to increase social support for physical activity within organizations and communities, including school sites and worksites can effectively promote physical activity.

According to many health and fitness experts we need to think more creatively to reduce obesity rates and get people moving. "Many Americans have access to an abundance of relatively inexpensive, highly palatable food, and owing to technological advancements, physical activity has been engineered out of the lifestyles of many Americans," says Chris Melby, a professor and former department head at Colorado State University's Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. "More importantly, the push should come from all levels, from insurance groups to government to company CEOs to every one of us. It's time to change the lifestyle landscape. It will take all of us to do it."<sup>2</sup>

Social support in community settings is an example of a strategy that capitalizes on social networks to reinforce physical activity behavior. Behavioral and social approaches include creation of buddy systems, behavioral contracts between participants and program leaders, and formation of walking or other physical activity support groups (Lin, 2010).<sup>3</sup> Low levels of physical activity among young adults remains a serious nationwide problem, with 69% of Americans 18 to 24 years of age failing to meet the federal guidelines for physical activity in 2014 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015).<sup>4</sup> Online social networks, in particular, have become a highly attractive target for large scale health initiatives (Centola, 2013; Cobb and Graham, 2012);<sup>5,6</sup> However, there is insufficient knowledge about why online networks might be effective sources of social influence for improving physical activity levels, which is why this project/study is very timely and relevant.



### Project Goals

1. Students will utilize marketing and/or health knowledge to assess the user experience of an on-line/mobile platform to enhance program and product delivery mediums.
2. Students will identify a minimum of three marketing personas of the undergraduate population in an effort to build social connectedness by engaging in physical activity.
3. Students will assess current health and well-being concepts and share what resonates with them personally and their peer groups to inspire more engagement and movement.

### Methods

The Start A Movement cluster project proposal was submitted to the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cluster by Denise Normandin, a Plymouth State University (PSU) staff member and graduate degree candidate '17 in Personal and Organizational Wellness from the Department of Counselor Education and School Psychology.

The project was inspired from the capstone research conducted by Denise Normandin that examined how personal health and well-being behaviors patterns can be affected in positive ways by connecting physical activity with on-line social support networks. This research, along with lessons learned from our employee's participation in the 2016 On the Move Company Challenge and On the Move Monthly curriculum informed the project goals and desired outcomes. The On the Move initiative<sup>7</sup> was co-developed by WELCOA-Wellness Council of America and Sean Foy, Founder/President of Personal Wellness Corporation.



Robert Mills, PSU Marketing Student '19

The Start A Movement cluster project overarching theme was to move students minds, hearts and feet to realize their personal passion, purpose and plan for their lives. An opportunity to rise up and take a stand for a new way of thinking, moving and living, moving towards a life that is vibrant, energetic, connected, positive and "on the move". The participants in this project were challenged to flex their creative brains and imagine PSU as a place where everyone is moving more, sitting less and thriving. Students were inspired to be leaders, role-model healthy behaviors and encourage physical activity while working with the project advisor, Denise Normandin and National wellness partners.

WELCOA provided the participants in this project with unlimited access to the On the Move Monthly (OTMM) on-line/mobile platform while Coach Sean of Personal Wellness Corporation worked with the project advisor to develop and provide "live" webinars to the students relevant to the topics introduced in the workshops and the on-line platform. Sean Foy is a best-selling author, speaker, exercise physiologist and world-renowned health, fitness and behavior change expert. This project provided an opportunity for the students to consider their own personal health and wellness goals while supporting those around them.

The participants were recruited via campus email communications. The project brought together upper and lower classman from a variety of different majors/disciplines. Several of the students were athletes from our PSU men's and women's basketball teams and our track and field team. All participants in this project were introduced to the on-line platform, face-to-face educational workshops and focus group discussions.



### Project Outcomes

1. A total of n=65 undergraduate students (32 female and 33 male) participated in face-to-face workgroups and focus groups. One-third of the students voluntarily enrolled into the on-line/mobile On the Move Monthly platform.
2. The workshops, webinars and focus group discussions empowered students to fuel their potential, build social networks and set personal health and fitness goals while generating some friendly competition. The students collaborated while sharing ideas for future implementation of an On the Move University National Challenge. The key audiences identified that would benefit most from expanding social networks through the OTMM platform and educational workshops were freshman and sophomore students as part of first year experience and through existing student clubs/organizations.
3. Students shared what resonated with them personally and potentially that of their peer groups to inspire more engagement and movement. They liked the usability and mobile capabilities of platform. The "friendly" team challenges, tracking and sharing features provided motivation and built social support. The participants suggested considerations for future platform enhancements that may increase social support and engagement. The top three themes for the on-line platform enhancements included; adding a "move" scheduler, adding the capability to see what type of movement others are participating in so that like-minded individuals may be encouraged to connect and move together and the addition of a reflective journal section.

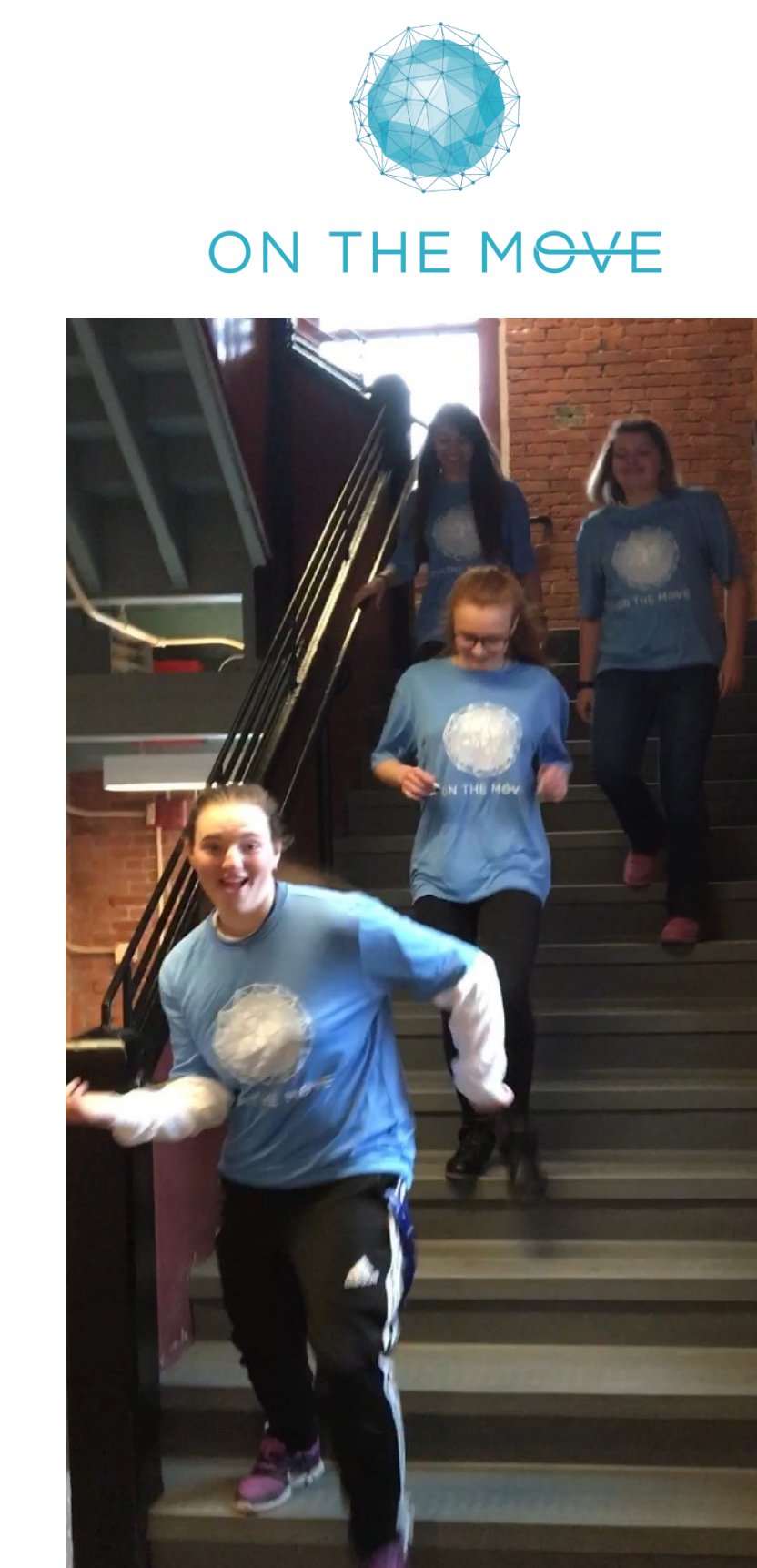
#### Student Testimonial

"The On the Move platform is a social media based way to get yourself, as well as your classmates, friends, teammates, etc. motivated to have a healthier lifestyle. I loved that I could connect my Fitbit to the platform. Using the platform motivated me because I was able to see my progress. I could see the numbers growing each week and I enjoyed being able to see what place I was in compared to other people. I am a very competitive person and it was a reminder to make sure I was to stay in the lead! The workshops allowed to bond my teams together and have another collaborating experience that was beneficial to our health."

- Kayla Wyland, PSU Elementary Education Student '17



Kayla Wyland #10  
PSU Women's Basketball



PSU Students On the Move

### Conclusions

We have learned from the literature that physical inactivity is directly related to increased risk of chronic diseases. We have also learned that health promotion efforts and the promotion of increased physical activity improve health and well-being. A strategy that capitalizes on social networks to reinforce physical activity behavior in community settings is social support.

The Start A Movement cluster project did just that! It provided an opportunity for the students to consider their own personal health and fitness goals and "why" these goals are important to them while supporting those around them. Students experienced collaboration, peer networking, social support and movement while participating in this real-life National wellness partnership with the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA). Students participated in meaningful discussions related to the On the Move on-line/mobile platform while sharing what resonated with them. More importantly, the students expressed considerations to engage current and future students.



PSU students participating in a Start A Movement workshop

Future considerations to engineer physical activity into the social norm and lifestyle of college campuses include; expanded opportunities through intramural, fitness, outdoor and club sports, support for a campus built environment that encourages community-based approaches to physical activity, further education through on-line social networks that provide educational curriculum from leading experts about the links between physical activity and increased learning capacity, good mental health and overall wellbeing. The topics from the On the Move Monthly curriculum and the on-line platform could be introduced through first year experience and/or through Healthy PSU health and wellness initiatives for all students, faculty and staff to promote school spirit, friendly competition and build social connectedness. The Start A Movement project enriched the well-being of the participants while building knowledge and experiences to enhance future programs and/or university engagements. PSU looks forward to continuing this National partnership and the momentum established to move more, sit less and thrive by implementing the On the Move University National Challenge at PSU in the fall of 2017.

### References

1. Lee, L.M., Rexrode, K.M., Cook, N.R., Manson, J.E., Buring, J.E., (2001). Physical activity and coronary heart disease in women – is "no pain, no gain" passe?" *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 285, 1447-1454
2. Los Angeles Daily News (2009). Melby, C. 'Swim upstream' on fitness efforts. Retrieved from: <http://www.dailynews.com/general-news/20091223/swim-upstream-on-fitness-efforts>
3. Lin, J.S., O'Connor, E., Whitlock, E.P., Beil, T.L. (2010). Behavioral counseling to promote physical activity and healthful diet to prevent cardiovascular disease in adults: a systematic review for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Vol. 153:11, pp 736-750.
4. National Center for Health Statistics. National Center for Health Statistics; Hyattsville, MD: 2015. Early Release of Selected Estimates Based on Data from the National Health Interview Survey, 2014.
5. Centola, D. (2013). Social media and the science of health behavior. *Circulation*. Vol. 127, pp. 2135-2144.
6. Cobb, N.K., Graham, A.L. (2012). Health behavior interventions in the age of Facebook. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Vol. 43, pp. 571-572.
7. WELCOA's On The Move Initiative – WELCOA. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2017, <https://www.welcoa.org/about/on-the-move-initiative/>