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Excela Health kicks off Walkingspree program in Westmoreland Mall

By [Mary Pickels](#), TRIBUNE-REVIEW
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Free Mall Walkers health programs will be held the fourth Thursday of each month in the Westmoreland Mall food court. For details, call 1-877-771-1234.

About the writer

Mary Pickels is a Tribune-review staff writer and can be reached at 724-836-5401 or via e-mail.

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By 8 a.m. Thursday, about 250 people stood in lines outside Westmoreland Mall in Hempfield.

The early birds were not seeking door-buster bargains.

Sporting workout clothing and tennis shoes, these Mall Walkers had come to invest in their health.

Yesterday marked the kickoff of a walking program sponsored by The Heart Center at Excela Health and the mall.

Moving among various stations, the walkers received free blood-pressure screenings and a heart-healthy breakfast, donated by Panera Bread.

They listened as cardiologist Dr. James Lynch discussed "Chest Pain and Heart Attack," and registered dietitian Dawn Davoli offered heart-smart eating tips.

They received free pedometers and learned how to track their daily steps through the online Walkingspree program.

Walkers can see their progress and compete for prizes based on accumulated steps.

"Twice around the upper or lower level of the mall is one mile," said Robin Jennings, Excela Health spokeswoman. "We want to encourage people to be more active, which transitions to better health."

According to the American Heart Association, people who walk briskly for 30 minutes at least five days a week can lower their risk for heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Recently retired from a warehouse position with SuperValu, Wayne Davis, 62, said he would like to exercise more consistently.

"I thought if I joined this, it might be an incentive. I would like to lose a little weight. In poor weather, I would come here. In better weather I could walk at Twin Lakes or Hempfield Park," he said.

"I have a golden retriever. He will enjoy (walking). It will help me and help him," the Lincoln Heights resident said. "I was already active, and I want to stay active. I'm still healthy, and I hope to remain that way."

Dorie Strickler said she has been walking at the mall five days a week for three years.

"I don't like walking when it's cold or windy," said Strickler, 69, of New Alexandria.

She said she typically walks for 40 to 50 minutes, and looks forward to trying a pedometer to monitor her steps.

Becky Stants, 63, and her husband, Skip Stants, 66, of Mt. Pleasant, often walk their dog in borough and township parks.

"We are campers. We like to stay healthy," said Becky Stants, a retired medical records clerk who has used a pedometer while walking in a parking lot on her lunch break.



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"This program gets people out. It's easy walking, steady walking, no hills," she said of the mall's terrain.

The Mall Walkers grew out of an Excelsa Health employee effort started last spring.

"We were looking at what gives one instant gratification and instant motivation," Jennings said. "The fact that it's Web-based allows you to look at activity, track food and create teams."

More than 1,000 Excelsa Health employees participate in the Walkingspre program.

"Some (employees) are on their feet a lot, while some may be more sedentary. This has built-in challenges," Jennings said.

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