



Creating Sustainable Programming

Lisa McHenry leads Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP) walks for the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, and the city of Mill Valley. This feature covers Lisa's ability to create HPHP programs that are able to function and thrive both within and outside of the First Saturday program context through a flexible people-centered approach. The success and sustainability of her programs are rooted in her dedication to providing both participants and staff leaders with environments that are welcoming, flexible, and personalized to fit everyone involved. For more information about Lisa's best practices, read the Q & A below.

1) What is your process for creating your HPHP programs? How do you tailor the content of these programs (or how you lead them) to fit the needs of those attending your program?

The process for creating HPHP programs begins with site visits, brainstorming and creativity. I find a path that looks interesting and I let it carry me away. I take notes on what I find fascinating such as birds, flora and fauna, and beautiful views. Then I hit the library, historical societies, and the Internet to research the location and uncover fun facts to share with our participants.

When creating programs it is important to remain flexible. One of the wonderful benefits of our HPHP programs is that they are free, all-inclusive, and require no pre-registration. However, this means that I have no idea how many people may show up, or how physically fit they may be. Therefore, I create programs that can be modified for participants on the spot. For example, if I get a group of seniors or people in rehabilitation I stay on an even path with opportunities to sit down and catch a breath if need be. For the more physically fit hikers we get off the path and head for uneven terrain. We want to encourage people to walk, and our recreation leaders are prepared to meet the needs of our participants no matter what their pace is.

2) When bringing on staff to help lead HPHP programs, how do you help them to become comfortable and find their place within the initiative?

New staff members are usually brought on a “walk along” where they can observe and experience all the components of a walk without the responsibility. They get a first aid kit, a walkie-talkie and a water bottle, and I have them take a turn setting the walk pace, being the ‘sweeper’ at the back of the group, and presenting some interpretive material.

3) What is your process for training staff to help with your HPHP programs?

I try to impart the best lessons that have been taught to me, and then work on what they can add or improve on. My B.S degree in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration from SFSU (GO GATORS!) has served me well and I teach them the programming process. In addition, I worked for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy as a historical interpreter for the Golden Gate Bridge Tours. They provided excellent training and templates that I still use and share with my staff.

4) What are some of the challenges that you have encountered when training your staff to help with HPHP programming?

A really big staffing challenge is how to reward the staff’s hard work when there aren’t a lot of resources for a program that has not many hours of work per month.

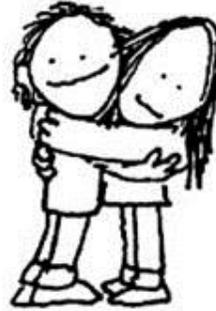
It can also be a challenge to teach them how to follow their own path. In addition to HPHP I am a musical theatre performer; therefore I am very gregarious and love to engage audiences. I encourage my co-leaders to find their own voice and not feel compelled to follow my style. HPHP can benefit from each leader’s unique viewpoint and it is my goal for us to work together to create high-quality, diverse programs that give the participants a greater variety of experiences.

5) Do you have any memorable quotes, pictures, or testimonies that you would like to share?

I enjoy ending our program with a closing circle and a quote. Here is one of my favorites:

HUG O' WAR

I will not play at tug o' war.
I'd rather play at hug o' war,
Where everyone hugs
Instead of tugs,
Where everyone giggles
And rolls on the rug,
Where everyone kisses,
And everyone grins,
And everyone cuddles,
And everyone wins.



Also, here is a letter from Linda Williams. She is my favorite HPHP ambassador and has lost 70 lbs. since I met her at our McLaren Park HPHP event.

Lisa "my dear and wonderful friend" besides the most earth connected person I've ever met in life

First let me say that I am so overwhelmed with the support and thanks I received from the HPHP walkers last Saturday. I could not speak enough about you because words cannot begin to express how meeting you and your sincerity about the love of walking inspired me to begin walking... to finally do what my doctor has been wanting me to do for years. I have lost almost 50 lbs. or more because you are the one who planted the seed to jump-start my heart with the LOVE of getting on walk trails and making it happen. "OK I ADMIT I'M HOOKED" Now I've said it. Along with my water aerobics classes this is the less I have weighed in 9 years my doctor told me. As I said to you once before I have a new respect for parks with walk trails. I not going to say that I had a small feeling that I was going to get lost, but the group of people that I walked with were all also leaders too. They said if we get where we are going together, we will find our way back together and that in itself made me feel so good and it is exactly what we did. I felt as if I knew these people all of my life, It felt like a family fun day out to walk. I could go on and on, but what I want to say is that I will be at Saturdays walk at Herons Head Park rain or shine...with bells on. and once I take those pics @ Herons Head I will be downloading and sending all of them to you so that you can distribute them to whoever would like to have them. Also you can tell people that they can bring their cameras and take pictures from my ipad they come out just as good. Please also bring some more pedometers and other information we have shared. Lisa thank you for giving me the opportunity to prove what I have learned from

you to other committed walkers with your awesome self !!! I am here for you and thank you so much for being there for me. Take care ...See you Saturday ... Love Ya !...

Healthy Parks Healthy Linda



6) Is there anything else that you would like to add that was not asked?

The benefits of walking in nature are immense and I look forward to the day when medical professionals will administer Park Rx as an alternative to medications.

I am incredibly grateful to James Wheeler (RPD Manager of Leisure Services) for continuing to be a champion for HPHP and using his resources to bring free programming to the public so we may help increase health and wellness in our communities. In addition, I want to thank all the part time staff, docents, and volunteers in every HPHP Bay Area program for committing your

time, energy, and passion to a program that does not provide full-time employment. You are all park heroes and we are truly lucky to have you on our team.

To learn more about Lisa's programs in Mill Valley and San Francisco, visit hphpbayarea.org.

Healthy Parks healthy People Nature Walks with Lisa

Location: Mill Valley Community Center (parking available)
180 Camino Alto Mill Valley CA 94941.

More specific directions are available online at www.cityofmillvalley.org
All walks start at 2:00PM, are free, and require no pre-registration.

<http://www.cityofmillvalley.org>

Location: San Francisco Recreation & Parks

Stow Lake (First Saturday of Month) at the Boathouse in Golden Gate Park
Lake Merced (Second Saturday of Month) at the Boathouse 1 Harding Road
McLaren Park (Third Saturday of Month) at University & Mansell
Herons Head (Fourth Saturday of Month) at Jennings Street off Cargo Way

All walks start at 10:00AM, are free, and require no pre-registration.

<http://sfrecrepark.org/hphp>