

## Overweight + Inactivity = Increased Risk of Chronic Disease

- Excessive weight and inactivity are consistently linked with increased incidence of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, and colon cancer.
- Eighty percent of American adults do not meet physical activity recommendations.
- Only 27% of students in grades 9–12 engage in recommended amounts of moderate-intensity physical activity.

## AgriLife Extension's Response

- The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service developed *Walk Across Texas!* It is a fun fitness program created to help participants adopt the habit of regular physical activity. The program is now celebrating its 20th anniversary.
- Teams of up to eight family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors walk together or individually



for eight weeks each year. Some also attend extension classes and receive information on nutrition, exercise, weight loss, and other health topics.

- Teams compete to see who can walk the 832 miles "across Texas" first, and all participants are recognized for their achievements.
- Since 1996, more than 133,000 Texans have completed the program to significantly increase their physical activity level.

## Economic Impacts

- Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can permanently or temporarily delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in 58% of people.
- Over the lifetime of the 7,875 participants who completed the program in 2015, an estimated 1,704 could prevent the onset of diabetes through sustained levels of physical activity.
- The average annual health care cost (age-adjusted) for people without diabetes is \$5,853. The average annual cost for people with diabetes is \$13,741.
- The estimated potential lifetime health care cost savings are \$70,815 for females and \$64,115 for males. When avoidance of lost wages is included, the potential lifetime economic benefit for 2015 participants who completed the program is \$125.8 million.
- Participants are also expected to benefit through reduced incidence, severity, and health care costs of other chronic diseases that are linked to excessive weight and inactivity.