



A guide to planning your own National ParkRx Day celebration on April 23rd, 2017



Basics

What is National ParkRx Day?

National ParkRx Day is a day celebrated across the United States to promote the growing movement of prescribing parks and nature to patients to improve human health. Additionally, National ParkRx Day encourages everyone to start seeing visits to parks and public lands as very important parts of their health. In September 2015, the U.S. Surgeon General released a call to action to promote walking and walkable communities. National ParkRx Day builds on this call to action and provides citizens with parks and green spaces to support public health.

The four main goals of National ParkRx Day are:

- **To amplify** the visibility and viability of the ParkRx movement in parks and communities across the nation.
- **To celebrate** existing ParkRx programs and practitioners across the country.
- **To serve** as a catalyst to bring together local health providers, park agencies, community leaders, and nonprofits to begin dialogue and momentum to develop their own ParkRx programs for improvement of their communities.
- **To increase** the relevance of parks for all people; how people can connect with parks daily for their improved physical, mental, and spiritual health and create a new generation of park stewards.

When is National ParkRx Day?

In 2017, National ParkRx Day will be held on Sunday, April 23rd. This is the last day of National Park Week, which runs from April 15th to April 23rd. All national park units will have free admission during these weekends, and people are encouraged to find their parks no matter where they are, and whether they are local, regional, state, or national parks.

Who is organizing National ParkRx Day? Can my agency or organization join?

The National Park Service's Office of Public Health is organizing National ParkRx Day in collaboration with the National ParkRx Initiative, which is a coalition of health providers, public land agencies, national nonprofits, and community organizations offering park prescriptions programs across the nation. The National ParkRx Initiative is co-led by The Institute at the Golden Gate, the National Park Service, and the National Recreation and Park Association.

National ParkRx Day events happening both in-person and over the internet can be organized by health providers, any park agency (see "Appendix" for broad definition of park), local leaders, and other local environmental and community nonprofits. The organizers do not need to be affiliated with the National Park Service, as there are many ParkRx programs based in local and regional parks and health agencies. At the minimum, in-person events should involve health-related activities and connect with existing and new health providers. For programming ideas, see the "Suggested Activities" section. **The only requirement is that you register your National ParkRx Day event at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParkRx2017> and look for communication guidance on the National ParkRx website at www.ParkRx.org.**

Where is National ParkRx Day being celebrated?

ParkRx Day is a national celebration with activities taking place in parks and green spaces around the country. Park managers, community leaders and health care organizations are encouraged to highlight the work they are doing currently to deliver park experiences as a healing tool and to promote understanding and excitement for future efforts. National ParkRx Day events will be occurring in parks across the country (see "Appendix" for the broad definition of a park).

Last year, forty events were held across the country, including signature events with the US Surgeon General, the National Park Service (NPS) Director, and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) President and CEO as well as with important state, regional, and local dignitaries.

Why celebrate National ParkRx Day?

Every agency involved or interested in being involved in a park prescription program is encouraged to celebrate National ParkRx Day to:

- **Inspire individual action:** Host an event in a park to promote visitation and renewed awareness of local green space and give the visitors a dose of the health benefits of nature.
- **Educate the community:** Celebrate National ParkRx Day to raise awareness and understanding.
- **Connect our health care system:** Have a health care provider highlight the health benefits of nature to show the importance of integrating nature-based medicine into practice.
- **Start culture change:** The link between human health and ecological health is not new knowledge, but the burgeoning movement of the health care sector prescribing parks to highlight this link is. This growing movement shows that park prescriptions have the potential to shift human health care to include nature-based interventions.



Hosting your own celebration

Register your National ParkRx Day celebration

Please register your National ParkRx Day event at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParkRx2017> and look for communication guidance on the National ParkRx website at www.ParkRx.org. Go to <http://www.parkrx.org/resources/communications> for free communication tools.

Suggested Celebrations

Involvement in National ParkRx Day can span the gamut from virtual celebrations to large, public celebrations. Agencies are also encouraged to celebrate National ParkRx Day by starting the conversations to create a park prescription program in their own communities. See examples of what can be created on the National ParkRx website at www.ParkRx.org.

Virtual Celebrations

- Share the prewritten social media messages (see section below) through your channels, or write your own.
- Write a blog post or article that describes the effects you've seen from park prescription programs on human or ecological health.

Public Celebrations

For public celebrations, remember to keep the levels introductory and account for participants with differences in mobility.

- Organize guided group walks from clinic to parks or on walking paths with doctors, park staff, and your community.
- Organize mini fitness classes that empower people with simple exercises that they can do on their own (e.g. low impact [yoga, tai-chi, meditation] or age-specific [older adults, children]).
- Seek support from local health providers to organize health screenings (e.g. blood pressure tests, BMI measurements).
- Coordinate volunteer stewardship projects such as trash clean up, clearing trails, and beautifying the park.
- Organize speakers to talk about the importance of visiting parks and public lands as a part of taking care of one's health.

Health Organization and Park Agency Celebrations

Start a dialogue with your community partners to create a park prescription program in your own community. Refer to the appendix for information to get started.

Social media

Whether you are using social media to promote your public celebration, or as your main way to celebrate National ParkRx Day, online engagement is an easy way to spread the dialogue. Use #ParkRx across all channels. For the day, please use the phrase "National #ParkRx Day" because #ParkRx is an evergreen tag. Also include #FindYourPark if possible.

For Twitter:

- Celebrate National #ParkRx Day on April 23rd by taking a walk in the park. Doctor's orders! #FindYourPark
- #Stepitup on National #ParkRx Day. #PhysicalActivity improves your physical health and your #emotionalwellbeing #EncuentraTuParque
- #FindYourPark and a healthy you on National #ParkRx Day this April 23rd. We're hosting a program at xxx am/pm #EncuentraTuParque
- [DC specific] We're celebrating National #ParkRx Day by prescribing you a walk in the park. #FindYourPark by visiting DCParkRx.org
- [Bay Area specific] National #ParkRx Day is the perfect excuse spend time being active outdoors! Find a program near you hphpbayarea.org
- #DYK: Free admission to all #nationalparks to celebrate National #ParkRx Day on 4/23. #FindYourPark at findyourpark.com #EncuentraTuParque

For Facebook:

- On National #ParkRx Day Sunday, April 23rd, join health providers and park managers from across the country in building a healthier nation by creating a strong connection between the American people and parks and open spaces. #FindYourPark
- A big part of celebrating National Park Week is celebrating your health! Attend a National #ParkRx Day program near you. #FindYourPark



Planning process

Planning

If you are planning to host a public, in-person event, follow these steps for a successful day:

- Hold your event on Sunday, April 23, 2017 *during National Park Week*. Your event can be in a national park or any other type of park.
 - Choose the ideal park location for your event. Think about locations with easy access to communities and public transportation nodes (i.e. bus, train, bike share, etc.).
 - Contact and involve the managing park agency as a part of this process. If you do not know who owns the park, call your local county government offices or parks and recreation department.
 - You may need to complete and submit a park permit for your event. Depending on the managing public land agency, permits may be submitted up to a year in advance. This may impact your desired park location.
 - Consult ADA.gov for proper accessibility guidance.
- Include an existing health provider with a ParkRx program and involve them in the planning. Invite a new health provider as basis for event (BMI measurements, etc).
- Consider what activities would be relevant to your target audience and whether the park you've identified allows these types of activities.
- Invite and engage community organizations to be players in the planning process and to provide feedback in regards to what will work with the community. Have multiple community organizations lead activities if possible. Make sure that there is alignment with their work with ParkRx (i.e. connections with nature/parks and the improvement of human health).

Establishing visions and objectives

What do you want participants to get out of this event in relation to the ParkRx movement in general?

- Example: Knowledge of how the ParkRx program works and health benefits of prescribing parks.

What do you want participants to walk away thinking/feeling/knowing about the ParkRx movement?

- Example: Walk away from event feeling confident that ParkRx can help the health of their communities at large.

How do you plan to empower people to actually participate in the ParkRx program?

- Example: Educate physicians, health care providers, etc. about how to prescribe parks as legitimate treatment/preventative care methods. If they're well informed, they'll be more likely to implement ParkRx into their practice.

Logistics

There are four main questions to ask in order to host a successful ParkRx Day:

1. Where will you host the event?
2. Who are your partners?
3. What resources do you need?
4. Who will help promote the event?

To help you answer the questions, more detailed guidance is provided below:

- **Planning/Logistics Team:** If you are planning a large event, consider collaborating with others to divide the following amongst the team:
 - Secure park permit.
 - Invitations to dignitaries.
 - Set event schedule for day.
 - Coordination of partner organizations with activities (recreation, health screenings, etc.)
 - Coordinate with event crew
 - Plan for visible first aid station, security, etc.,
 - Set up and clean up
- **Determine Budget** (for scope of event/activity)c
- **Promotional Materials** (e.g. save the date email invitations, flyers in English, Spanish, and other languages relating to the community, briefings for dignitaries, park and health agency directors).
- **Schedule for the Day:** It will be wise to also include a rain plan.
- **Concessions**
 - Offer healthy foods for the public.



- Consider not selling plastic bottled water, and instead working with a local entity to provide potable water so participants can refill their reusable water bottles.
- **First Aid Area**
- **Event Crew Support**
 - Tables, chairs, and tents (check if permitted)
 - Rental of a stage/riser, sound system and speakers, podium
- **City Street permits** if there are large street closures or mobile vans during the event.
- **Volunteer Support**
- **Local Police Security** if determined by the anticipated number of people
- **Clean up Materials**
 - Have separate receptacles for recycling and trash.

Partnerships

If you are planning an event with more than 50 people, include your core partners in the planning and implementation process. Try reaching out to:

- Local health providers
- Local public land agencies
- Community leaders
- National and local environmental, recreational, and community nonprofit organizations
- YMCA chapters, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Local businesses (to donate: food, beverages, tools and equipment, raffle giveaways, etc.)
- Outdoor retailers
- Schools and colleges
- Transportation planners
- Educators
- Senior citizen groups
- Fire and police departments
- Interfaith community - churches representing multi denominations

Impact and follow-up

Celebrations for National ParkRx Day will catalyze more discussions and dialogue regarding both park prescriptions programs and the connection between human health and nature. To help show the impact of National ParkRx Day across the country, please:

- **Document** your event with photos. Be sure to get photo release approval. Share your photos with the ParkRx website (www.ParkRx.org) for national reach or upload them to the National ParkRx Initiative Facebook and Twitter sites.
- **Evaluate** your event for improvement and lessons learned from the celebrations.
- **Thank partners** for their commitment to the day and also for their sustained partnerships with park prescriptions.
- **Ramp up** your park prescriptions program, and join the National ParkRx movement (www.ParkRx.org).



Appendix

What is the concept of ParkRx?

ParkRx (park prescriptions) are programs designed in collaboration with healthcare providers and community partners that utilize parks, trails, and open space for the purpose of improving individual and community health. Other community and environmental nonprofits and local businesses may support free programming for patients and communities as it connects with a patient's park prescriptions.

The National ParkRx Day was created with input from the National ParkRx Initiative, which is a movement to strengthen the connection between health care and parks and public lands to improve the physical and mental health of individuals and communities. The Initiative involves a collaboration of national partners and subject-matter experts to advance the movement and create awareness among various audiences, including park and health professionals, to address the operational hurdles present in parks and health collaborations, and hone and measure the best delivery models currently in practice. The park prescriptions concept has grown out of a conceptual phase into a period of rapid implementation. There is ripe opportunity to communicate and build on early successes and lessons learned that can contribute to building a community of practice to support broader park and community-based application nationally.

Definition of parks and open space

"Parks" is a broad term to include many types of parks with green space/open space where people can participate in active and/or passive recreation. Parks may include; city/local parks (cityparksalliance.org), county parks, regional parks, state parks, and all types of national park units, including national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, preserves, seashores, and recreation areas.

Parks also encompass national forests, national grasslands, agricultural areas; national wildlife refuges; recreation trails, landmarks, historic sites; state forests and nurseries.

Active and passive recreation

The health benefits of nature go beyond just physical health. There are well-documented benefits of nature that improve mental health, spiritual health, and social health.

Having both active and passive recreation opportunities in parks allow for people with different abilities and preferences to reap the health benefits of nature.

Active recreation includes any individual or group activity such as walking, hiking, running, biking, skateboarding, rock climbing, horseback riding, dancing, organized sports, and playground activities. These active recreation activities may improve physical and mental health of individuals.

Passive recreation includes more low impact activities such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, Pilates, stretching, reading, art (painting, photography, sketching, nature journaling, poetry, song, etc.) fishing, wildlife observation, stargazing, attending an outdoor music/performance/play, picnicking, etc. These passive recreation activities may improve mental/emotional and spiritual health of individuals.

For more information: Go to <http://www.parkrx.org/fill-your-park-rx/health-benefits>