

If You're Happy and You Know It, Walk to Work!

Over 50% of walkers say they feel good about themselves

13th November 2013 – More than 1 billion steps were taken by 4,250 participants from 56 of Ireland's largest workplaces as part of the Smarter Travel Workplaces 'Pedometer Challenge'. The Pedometer Challenge is organised by the National Transport Authority, in partnership with the Irish Heart Foundation. By ditching their car and making the healthy choice, those taking part travelled over 900,000 km on foot and reported feeling fit and good about themselves! The overall winner of the Smarter Travel Workplaces 'Pedometer Challenge' was 'Walking on the Wild Side' from St Vincent's University Hospital who clocked up an impressive team average of 939,145 steps over 4 weeks.

Research conducted by National Transport Authority among participants found:

- 45% of respondents stated that they intended to walk to work on a regular / occasional basis following the Pedometer Challenge, up from 12% at the start of the Challenge
- 70% of respondents enjoyed being part of a team
- 52% of survey respondents said that the Challenge helped their team increase their fitness
- 51% said that it helped them feel good about themselves

Participants reported other results too, with one participant, Annette Gerety from St. Vincent's University Hospital saying, "My Pedometer Challenge experience was gaining firmer buttocks, losing a few pounds and having an on-going relationship with my pedometer!"

Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of the National Transport Authority commented: "Over the past 6 years we have heard fantastic stories from participants around the country who have become active on their commute as a result of participating in the Pedometer Challenge. Year on year participants report feeling good about themselves, increased walking on the commute and a boost in morale. We are delighted to run this challenge in partnership with the Irish Heart Foundation, and to raise funds to support their work."

Mr Barry Dempsey Chief Executive of the Irish Heart Foundation said: "At the Irish Heart Foundation, we know the benefits of promoting an active lifestyle as part of heart health and we are proud to partner with the National Transport Authority on the unique and successful 'Pedometer Challenge' initiative and to celebrate its success for a sixth year. In a country where 100,000 new cases of heart

disease and stroke are diagnosed every year and thousands more are living with the condition, the benefits of reducing risk factors like physical inactivity cannot be over-emphasised and programmes like this one have a vital role to play. There's a terrific productivity and morale dividend too. On behalf of the Irish Heart Foundation, I congratulate all the participants who embraced the Pedometer Challenge by walking or cycling to work, both are a great way to get hearts pumping and we hope more will follow their lead."

Second place in the Smarter Travel Workplaces 'Pedometer Challenge' went to 'UL Chancers' from the University of Limerick, who had a team average of 900,361 steps. The 'CPD- Currency Counter Fitters' from Central Bank of Ireland came in third place.

The winner of the Irish Heart Foundation sponsored prize, a place on their overseas European walk in 2014 was Clare McCormack, Bord Gáis Networks. The 'Best Workplace Awards' went to 'Cook Medical' and 'Roughan & O'Donovan' for being the workplaces with the highest percentage uptake among staff in the Pedometer Challenge.

The Smarter Travel Workplaces 'Pedometer Challenge', which is organised by the National Transport Authority in partnership with the Irish Heart Foundation, ran for a 4 week period, and ended on the 8th of October 2013.

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Editor's Notes:

The Smarter Travel Workplaces Programme is implemented by the National Transport Authority with funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The programme is aimed at large employers (over 250 employees) seeking to develop Workplace Travel Plans. Workplace Travel Plans have been shown internationally to reduce single occupancy car use on the commute by between 10% and 24%. Workplace Travel Plans also reduce costs associated with parking, business travel, fleet, CO2 emissions, absenteeism, and access issues. Further information on the programme and Partners can be found at www.smartertravelworkplaces.ie

Further information on the Pedometer Challenge 2013 can be found here - <http://www.smartertravelworkplaces.ie/pedometer-challenge/what-is-the-pedometer-challenge/>

Participating workplaces

Accenture, Airtricity, An Bord Pleanála, Apple, Aramark, Arup, Atkins, Bord Gáis Networks, Central Bank of Ireland, Children's University Hospital Temple Street, Citi, Connolly Hospital, Cook Medical,

Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Cork University Hospital, Croke Park, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Dublin City Council, Dunlaoghaire Rathdown County Council, Eircom, Eirgrid, ESB, Galway City Council, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, IKEA, Institute of Art Design & Technology Dunlaoghaire, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Irish Dairy Board, KBC, LEO Pharma, Mount Carmel Hospital, National Rehabilitation Hospital, National Transport Authority, National University of Ireland Galway, Naval Services, Oracle, Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, Pfizer, Railway Procurement Agency, Roughan & O'Donovan, Siemens, St. James' Hospital, St. John's Hospital, St. Vincent's University Hospital, Symantec, Takeda, Telefónica Ireland, Transdev, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, University Hospitals Galway, University of Limerick and Waterford County Council.