

文武隊

Location: Hong Kong

“Around the World” Walking Challenge

Our team of 10 friends, ranging in age from the young to a couple of septuagenarian grandparents, can be regarded as a microcosm of HKU's community. Our interests are diverse, ranging from literary to martial arts, but the ultimate interest that binds us together is our common goal of staying active and healthy. Although we hold different jobs in HKU ranging from the physically active to the more sedentary paper-pushing desk jobs which span different faculties and facilities, we have formed a strong and lasting friendship from our quest for a healthy lifestyle.

Our group started over 10 years ago with a few of us forming a Taichi group practising taichi chuan, different forms of martial arts, and mindfulness exercises every morning at the Chong Yuet Ming Fountain before work. It was through this daily exercise that some colleagues saw us having "fun" on their way to work. Our exercise group grew in size and a strong relationship was formed. There was always free exchange of knowledge, the more experienced giving the novice pointers. Exchange of





knowledge and advice is not limited to exercise only. Since our group is made up of a diverse group of people of different expertise, there are always good exchange of ideas and advice when it is needed. It is truly a friendship that has no boundaries.

When some of us saw the "Around the World" Walking Challenge posted at IHP Active, we decided to join "for fun". Ideas were thrown around for a name for our group. Finally, we settled on “文武隊” for our team to reflect the diversity of our expertise and interests (文 and 武). Our initial goal was 10,000+ steps per day. The problem was our team was made up of a spectrum of "super active" members who already easily log in 20,000 steps normally, to others who only walk less than 5,000 steps per day due to their jobs and after work lifestyle; this is way short of the 10,000 steps recommended by the American Heart Association. Since we are now counting our steps, for those of us "non-walkers", the goal of 10,000 steps per day posed a challenge. As this is teamwork, we the "non-walkers" did not want to let the team down too much. So the challenge was on to keep up with each other. Activities and walking increased. "Cruising" at 10,000 steps became more bearable for the “non-walkers” towards the end of the first 10 days. Then the first results were in. Shocker! Our team was ranked #4! Disbelief and elation! Now we felt like we needed to walk a little more daily to keep that position. Steps were increased. The second results came in - #2! Congratulations and high fives all around. Then realization struck. It is highly possible that we may be able to keep the #2 place as by this time walking was no longer laborious. It was fun, and more steps were quite easily attainable. We found new routes to make walking interesting and pleasurable. Routes were mapped out to walk home from HKU after work; looking for new trails in Country Parks, to the beach and up to the Peak, climbing up High West behind HKU; and finding that Hong Kong and Kowloon skylines are truly spectacular in the evening, especially one evening when it was clear and it was full moon. It was then that many of the “non-walkers” attained 20,000+ steps, and then 30,000+ steps. Phrases like “My best day! I reached 30,000+ steps today”, and “me too. I reached 30,000 steps” appeared in our group WhatsApp. “I reached 50,000+ steps” and later “60,000+ steps” were greeted with huge “Wah!”. Ultimately “finally I achieved a total of one million steps” by our “super walker” was greeted with congratulations and joy. That was great achievement. The most touching part was when the “super walkers” told the oldies and the “non-walkers” not to stress themselves too much and to leave the extra walking to them. However, the old and frail did not see it this way. Don't be so condescending, they said! We are just as capable as the next younger person! So now the challenge was on to show them that we can perform just as good!

We walked individually, in pairs or groups in the morning, at lunch in the campus, and walked home or part of the way after work. Stronger bonds were formed. Not only have our friendship and bonding flourished during this period, there has also been an increase in bonding with family members: hiking with family during weekends; out walking with daughter after dinner most evenings during which much



information was shared; taking kids to Disney Land during weekends so kids can enjoy the rides while daddy logs in his steps. It was truly touching when a daughter asked her mother whether they could still take a walk after dinner when the “Walking Challenge” was over as she was enjoying their time together.

All our members felt that this was indeed an extremely rewarding experience. Not only did we look after each other during this past month during the “Challenge”, team performance meant more to us than individual performance. Achievement is by the Team and not by the individual. This is real “team spirit”.

Most of us felt like we have attained a life-time experience through this exercise. Not only can we reach a higher activity level so that 10,000 steps is no longer a “chore”, we walked more each day, telling ourselves that we can now easily reach 10,000 steps if not 20,000 steps. We have developed habits of walking to places instead of catching public transportation. The greatest benefit which we have experienced from this exercise is that most of us feel “fitter” and we even have some team members remarking that their blood pressure has decreased.

An unexpected achievement was the amount of interest generated by retirees and home makers living in the vicinity of the campus. They walk to Chong Yuet Ming Fountain for their daily morning exercise. They saw how happy we were, how we shared our walking experience, and where we walked. We were asked questions like “how far and how long did it take you to walk to Central and which is the best route”; “what about to the Peak”; and “how to get to Conduit Path and there are wild pigs aren’t there?”. Then the next day, a retiree told one of us that he walked to Central and it was about 30,000+ steps and one lady said it took her about 30 minutes. We find that we have really achieved something by stimulating interest in the community to take more steps themselves rather than relying on public transport.

Thank you Centre for Sports and Exercise for a great and meaningful experience!
