



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Organize a Fitness Event



The Challenge



You don't need to look hard to find news about America's weighty obesity epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost **one-third of American adults are obese** (<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>). Getting fit will go a long way toward reducing: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, arthritis, and other diseases. One great way to motivate yourself and your neighbors is by organizing a community-wide day of fitness.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting



Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Obesity:** Obesity is a label for a range of weight that is greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. The terms also identify a range of weight that has been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems. For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and



height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI).

- **BMI:** Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to adult men and women.
- **Heart disease:** is a term used to describe a range of diseases that affect your heart. The various diseases that fall under the umbrella of heart disease include diseases of your blood vessels, such as coronary artery disease; heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias); heart infections; and heart defects you're born with (congenital heart defects). Many forms of heart disease can be prevented or treated with healthy lifestyle choices.

Identify a Location

School yards and parks are excellent choices for your day of activities. If you live in cold climate, school gyms or community centers are other options.

Be sure to get permission with the owners or managers of the space and involve members of that organization in your efforts. You'll need to secure the site and establish a formal agreement for its use that includes a liability waiver.

Browse Helpful Resources

- [Let's Move](http://www.letsmove.gov/get-active) (<http://www.letsmove.gov/get-active>)
- [Fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov/be-active/) (<http://www.fitness.gov/be-active/>)
- [We Can!](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/get-active/index.htm) (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/get-active/index.htm>)
- [Go 4 Life](http://go4life.nia.nih.gov/try-these-exercises) (<http://go4life.nia.nih.gov/try-these-exercises>)
- [Physical Activity Guidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/) (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>)
- [Basic health assessment](http://easyforyou.info/downloads/EASYScreeningToolHardCopyFINAL040308.pdf) (<http://easyforyou.info/downloads/EASYScreeningToolHardCopyFINAL040308.pdf>)
- [Serve.gov Tip Sheet on Starting a Walking Team](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/walk-seniors/four) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/toolkits/walk-seniors/four>)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team



- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.

Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
 - Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
 - Communications Team
 - VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
 - Fundraising Team
 - Event Team
- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
 - Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can organize a fitness event in your community. Here are a few ideas for planning tasks to complete:

- Brainstorm over the kinds of activities you want to do. Think about Capture the Flag, T-Ball, three-legged and sack races, track and field events, soccer, obstacle courses, etc. Make sure to have activities for all ages.
- Determine what kinds of supplies you will need for the selected activities. Include in this list healthy snacks and beverages such as water, fresh fruit, and vegetables.
- Based on your location, determine how many participants you can accommodate and how many activities can go on simultaneously. This will help to determine the number of activity leaders and additional volunteers needed. Alternatively, you could host the event for all residents of an apartment building or all students in a health class at a local school.
- Decide how you will amplify your voices, if needed, to issue instructions to participants and animate the crowd.
- **Incorporate learning into any service you do** ([node/292](#)) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.
(<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

Raise Resources for Equipment/Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to host a fitness event in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day

Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.

- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be in separate locations running fitness activities, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: promoting fitness in the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with photos and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building partnerships with potential collaborators
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event

Share Impact

Assess and Reflect

Assess and reflect on the project after it is completed. Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What fitness resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example:



If you ran a one-day fitness event, what additional activities could you offer after the event that would help your community on a lifelong path to achieving a healthier lifestyle? What other organizations or programs in your community could you partner with to host additional activities?

Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a fitness event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](#)

<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>

27 reads

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