

## *Stairway Initiative Guide*

Stairway initiatives promote using the stairs as a way to incorporate physical activity into daily life. Taking the stairs is encouraged through a variety of physical improvements including paint, lighting and artwork, as well as point-of-decision prompts such as promotional signs. Stairway initiatives are being adopted by many different types of environments across the state, including hospitals, legislative buildings, malls, airports and are a great way of incorporating physical activity into the day of individuals who patron multi-floor buildings. Taking the stairs is a quick way for people to add physical activity to their day and requires no wardrobe change, minimal effort, and no special skills. Posting signs that cue people to use the stairs has been shown to be a very effective, yet simple change. Some places have gone even further, adding music and artistic designs to their stairwells to make them friendlier for individuals to use. More comprehensive approaches may increase use of the stairs for physical activity breaks.

### **When developing a stairway initiative, consider the following:**

**DISCUSS THE IDEA** of the stairway initiative with building management and/or building owner. Consider others (e.g., departments or units) who could partner in the stairway initiative.

**ASSESS THE EXISTING CONDITION** of stairways. Consider any maintenance issues that need to be addressed before enhancements are attempted (e.g., lighting malfunction, safety hazards, missing railings, etc.).

**BRAINSTORM IMPROVEMENTS** that would make the stairwells more attractive and user-friendly. Decide on which improvements would most benefit your stairwell. Consider polling individuals to find out what they would like to see changed.

Improvements may include such things as:

- **Paint**– Choose paint colors that are bright and inviting. If possible, have employees pick out the color scheme to include wall paint, handrail paint, baseboards and carpet. Some agencies have incorporated and coordinated colors that match the area or departmental themes for each floor.
- **Artwork**– A quick way to perk up a stairway is to hang artwork. You can choose posters, motivational quotes, work by local artists or have an individual with artistic talents create art right on the walls.

- **Point of decision prompts**– Signs that encourage stair use are a great way to promote your stairway initiative. Place the signs at the entryway to stairwells and elevators to encourage stair use.

The Activate Treasure Valley initiative has provided 13 posters which will be available for free download. These posters will be available at [www.activatedtreasurevalley.org](http://www.activatedtreasurevalley.org), are in pdf format and can be printed and laminated at your local print shop. You could also have them framed for a more finished and professional look. Post the signs at eye-level or at a place where they are easily visible.



- **Carpet and/or Rubber Stair Treads**– Create an inviting and comfortable environment with the addition of carpet or stair treads. Place carpeting on the landings and rubber stair treads on the stairs themselves. Kick guards can be installed to increase stair durability. The type of landing and stair coverings you use may depend on specific building needs and fire codes. Consider whether doors will be able to open and close over any new flooring installed. Doors can be shortened or replaced if necessary, but it is better to plan ahead for any potential issues. All floor covering, including carpet, must be fire retardant.





This Stairway Initiative is brought to you by funding from YMCA of the USA Pioneering Healthy Communities, PacificSource Health Plans and Albertsons/Supervalu.

Stairway Initiative information and downloadable posters can be found at:

<http://www.activatedtreasurevalley.org>.

- **Enhanced Lighting**- Increase the light in the stairway, either by adding more lights or using brighter bulbs if allowed. Alternatively, you can use "daylight balanced" bulbs which more closely match daylight.
- **Music**- Increase the pleasant atmosphere in the stairway by adding music. Music systems can be wired or wireless, depending on particular needs. Employees may provide input into music selection.
- **Informational Placards**- Inform individuals that you are promoting stairway use by adopting a stairwell initiative sign. Place the sign outside the primary stairway entranceway. The sign could describe the purpose, funding and support behind the project. For example, "This Stairway Initiative has been provided through support from (fill in the blank). *Activate* a healthy life one step at a time."

**DEVELOP A PROPOSAL** listing the improvements you would like to see. Consider including options in your proposal. For example, provide a desired level (a project ideal) and a minimum level of improvement. Proposals should also include a brief overview of the project and a justification such as improved health and reduced healthcare costs. Be sure to include a cost estimate, and, if applicable, who would be responsible for completing and paying for each item. Discuss the proposal with building management. Cost estimates may need to be part of a later discussion if the building management has to be involved with gathering such estimates.

**PREPARE A BUDGET** that outlines each element of the proposed enhancements and the persons/departmental budgets responsible for each.

**CONTACT THE LOCAL FIRE MARSHAL AND BUILDING INSPECTOR** for specific guidance on safety issues after management has given permission. It is critical that you establish clear lines of communication and expectations before moving ahead.

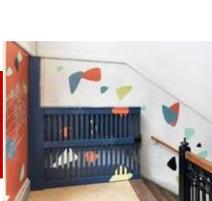
It is likely that:

- Art inside the stairwell will need to be in a metal or fire retardant frame.
- Art may need to be behind tempered safety (shatterproof) glass.
- Art may need to be securely mounted to the wall with approved brackets.
- Art may need to be mounted at or above a minimum height.
- Handrails and/or walls may need to be certain colors, paint type, or reflective nature to ensure escape routes remain safe.



Often, the greatest challenge in completing stairway initiatives is getting all decision makers (i.e., building management, fire marshal, building inspector) on the same page as you start the project. Establishing clear lines of communication and responsibility early in the process is essential for success.

Make this a team effort and promote it widely. Consider a public ribbon cutting, CEO/employee challenge or promotional event to encourage everyone to begin using the enhanced stairwells.





The Activate Treasure Valley (ATV) Stairway Initiative is based on a simple idea. Instead of taking the elevator or escalator, try taking the stairs. We often overlook this easy (and free) way to incorporate physical activity into our lives.

## **Why implement this initiative?**

We know that regular physical activity is an important part of enjoying a healthy lifestyle. But it's frequently hard to be physically active when our lives are so busy. For many of us, our natural reaction is to press the elevator button. But, just as we are thinking differently about the food we eat and changing our habits, taking the stairs should be a part of our everyday routine. Short intervals of physical activity - broken into 10 minute periods throughout the day - can contribute significantly to one's overall fitness and health.

Participating in the ATV Stairway Initiative is a fun, easy way to invest in and promote the health of your patrons and employees. Research shows that a healthier workforce benefits both the employer and employees by:

- Enhancing employee relations and morale
- Reducing absenteeism
- Better retention of healthy employees
- Lowering health care costs

Also, a study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found an increase in stair use when signage was displayed at the decision point between the stairs and the escalator or elevator. The study also said that stairwell use is a lifestyle choice that helps increase overall physical activity.

If organizations encourage taking the stairs, individuals may adopt this behavior more generally, choosing to use the stairs in other environments. Posting ATV Stairway Initiative signage may also increase awareness about the overall benefits of physical activity.

## **How it works**

The ATV Stairway Initiative is free and easy to implement. We will provide your organization with a Stairway Initiative Guide which gives you many options for promoting the use of stairways within your environment. We will also provide you with a variety of informative, upbeat and interesting signage to post near elevators, escalators and stairway doors to prompt users to choose to use the stairwell.

The signs use creative messages designed to influence one's decision about whether or not to take the stairs:

- "Be a Corporate Climber...Take the stairs!"
- "Walk it off...Burn off more than steam!"
- "Psst...there's no waiting for the stairs!"

Plus, eight other messages available electronically for easy printing.

We also have two new 'special edition' signs that we can send to you for printing:

- "Eh,... Has pensado en las escaleras?" – Spanish option
- "Save Energy... Burn Calories" – 'Green' option

At minimum, our goal is for businesses and organizations to participate in the Activate Treasure Valley Stairway Initiative by completing and submitting the registration form and agreeing to challenge their employees/patrons to either engage in more physical activity or use the stairways.

The level of commitment can vary depending on your environment. This may consist of encouraging physical activity such as walking and/or taking the stairs through emails and newsletters or posting the "point of decision" signage next to elevators, escalators and stairway doors. Extended efforts are encouraged and may include additional tips from the Stairway Initiative Guide such as participating in the employee challenge or making physical improvements to the stairway like painting, music, artwork and enhanced lighting.



## **Don't Own Your Building? How to work with your property management company**

### **Things to Consider:**

- Schedule a meeting with your management company.
- Bring to the meeting examples of how this program has been implemented at other managed properties (example: TSYS, DEQ).
- Are your Stairways locked?
- Seek other tenants' buy-in to the program.
- Learn about acceptable signage and the parameters/restrictions.

### **What if my business does not have stairs or an employee is unable to take the stairs?**

- Designate an Activate parking area and hang signs.
- Challenge employees to park farther away for the extra walk.
- Provide prizes to employees who are caught parking in the long distance lot.
- Encourage employees to take a 10-minute walking break during the day.
- Encourage employees to have walking meetings.
- Challenge employees to create their own departmental activity.
- Calculate average distances around the office and let employees know how much physical activity they are fitting into their day.
- Create walking routes inside or outside your building using the Activate logo.

## Promotional Ideas:

Promoting your activities is a key step in the successful implementation of the Activate Stairway Initiative. It is the element that informs and gets employees excited. Be creative and have fun! See also our sample emails to use for promoting your Stairway Initiative.

### Who?

- Involve management and informal leaders. Leverage participation by appointing honorary chairpersons and champions within your organization.

### What?

- Designate a central location where employees can learn and access program information.
- Post weekly handouts on a bulletin board in high traffic areas.
- Offer incentives to participants.
- Schedule a speaker. Arrange for a fitness expert or an active employee who has had success with similar exercise programs to share their stories.
- Create a Activate bulletin board. Post parent handouts and community events that promote physical activities.
- Post pictures of short, quick activities in front of the copier, fax and computer.
- Plan special event days: Walk/Bike to Work day, Sneaker Day, Walking Meeting Day.
- Create a designated Activate parking area further away from your building. Calculate the distance and let employees know how much physical activity they are fitting in to their day.
- Artwork Challenge: Have employees or employee's children create artwork for the Stairways and ask employees to vote for their favorite.
- Hold a grand re-opening of your Activate Stairway.
- Create stair climbing challenges. Create an image of a fixed climb on a poster and track employees progress (i.e. Mount Everest=29,000 feet or 5.5 miles Mount Fuji =12,388 feet, or 2.3 miles) 2000 steps is equal to 1 mile.

### When?

- Take advantage of company-wide or departmental meetings, luncheons etc.
- Send out weekly e-mails to employees. Post reminders on your employee website.

## Where?

- Pick some hot spots. Identify high traffic areas in your building (break rooms, cafeterias, etc.) to display promotional materials. Make sure contact information is easily found on all materials.

## Sample emails:

### What?

Sample emails are provided for your organizations to use as a guide and/or template to create emails or employee website announcements that help promote the Activate Stairway Initiative and healthy lifestyles.

### Why?

Successful initiatives promote awareness of the campaign and encourage employee participation. By using existing resources such as newsletters or e-news communications, organizations can effectively market the campaign with minimal cost.

### How?

Weekly e-mails to employees are an easy, effective way to achieve visibility and scope. Send emails to your employees once a week, and set a goal of sending your emails on the same day of the week for the duration of the program (6-12 weeks). Also post updates on your employee website, if you have one.

### When?

The first email should be sent out the week that the Point of Decision Prompt posters and motivational signs are posted in your building.

## Week One: Introduction

**Goal:** To Introduce the Activate Campaign and Stairway Initiative to employees.

CEO/Senior Management may want to insert personal thoughts and feelings as to why the company became involved in the Activate campaign and the importance of the company/organization being a leader in the community.

### Sample Email Content:

**Activate Treasure Valley** is a healthy living initiative of the Treasure Valley Family YMCA sponsored by PacificSource Health Plans and Albertsons, designed to promote healthy lifestyle choices for all Treasure Valley residents. **Activate** is about making the healthy choice the easy choice. Their goal is to help the Treasure Valley achieve healthier lifestyles through education, motivation, facilitation and long-term collaboration with community partners. Together we are working in partnership, serving as a catalyst to reverse Idaho's obesity and inactivity crisis and make the Treasure Valley the model for healthy living in Idaho.

**Activate** recognizes that community members play an integral role in creating healthy lifestyles for all Idahoans. A Stairway campaign is a simple and easy **first step** that will promote the benefits of physical activity with employees and their families.

Take the first step! By making small changes in your daily routine like taking the stairs or walking at work you can start living an active, healthy life! Each time you take the stairs or go for a walk you are making a decision to be active!

Check out [www.activatedtreasurevalley.org](http://www.activatedtreasurevalley.org) for other ideas to help you eat right and become more physically active.

### **Week Two: Encouragement**

**Goal:** To promote awareness of the Activate Stairway Initiative and encourage employee participation by promoting health benefits. Update on company challenge.

#### **Sample Email Content:**

Take small steps to help make health a priority. Small changes make a big difference over time! Incorporate the stairs (or walking) into activities you would be doing anyway. If you need to go to a different floor, use the stairs. Take the long way to the restroom and take a flight each way. Studies have shown that people are most likely to stick to some type of physical activity when it is part of their daily routine. Get started today!

Along with its benefits to the heart, walking:

- improves circulation
- helps breathing
- combats depression
- bolsters the immune system
- helps prevent osteoporosis
- helps prevent and control diabetes

(American Heart Association: Physical Activity in Your Daily Life: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) )

### **Week Three: Activate at Work**

**Goal:** To promote awareness of the Activate Stairway Initiative and encourage employee to increase physical activity during the day. Update on CEO Challenge: Has CEO been caught in the elevator? How high have they climbed?

#### **Sample E-mail Content:**

Don't waste time waiting for the elevator, use the stairs! Challenge yourself to take the stairs all day today. If it is not possible to use the stairs, challenge yourself to pick two new ways this week to increase your physical activity during the work day:

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Schedule a walking meeting with co-workers.
- Stand and/or stretch while talking on the telephone.
- Rather than using the telephone, walk down the hall to speak with someone.
- Walk around your building, stretch your muscles.
- Park in the farthest parking spot and walk the rest of the way.

Want to track your progress? There are many free, online tools you can use to track your progress. Find out how many calories are burned while engaging in different types of activity, from climbing the stairs to making copies. Download apps on your phone for easy tracking and access throughout the day.

(FitDay is a free, online calorie counter and weight loss journal.  
[www.fitday.com/WebFit/burned/calories\\_burned.html](http://www.fitday.com/WebFit/burned/calories_burned.html) )

### **Week Four: Motivation**

**Goal:** To encourage the participants of the Activate Stairway Initiative to incorporate physical activity into other times during their day.

#### **Sample Email Content:**

Stair climbing and other small bursts of physical activity at work can be accumulated across the course of the day, making a significant contribution to the recommended daily amount of 30 minutes (or more) of daily physical activity!

#### **5 Easy Ways to Enjoy Physical Activity at Work:**

- **Walk up (and down) stairs:** If you have a choice, always take the stairs. If you have stairs, take as many trips up and down as possible.
- **Walk around the office or building:** There's no need to sit still while you talk on the phone or think. Pacing and fidgeting are physical activity. Sometimes a face-to-face talk is the best way to communicate (and it gets you up and moving around).
- **Wear a pedometer at work:** Since every step counts, wearing a pedometer is wonderful motivator to walk more during your workday.

(CDC Tips for Being More Active: [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/tips.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/tips.htm) )

## **Week Five: Encourage each other**

**Goal:** To keep the Activate Stairway Initiative visible, and challenge employees to use the stairs all day this week!

### **Sample Email Content:**

Think about how others have helped you adopt new behaviors. Support and encouragement from someone may have made a difference in your efforts. You have been making progress through the transition of adding physical activity into your daily life by using the stairs and walking more during the work day. You know it can be both hard and rewarding! Share your skills with someone else. Having others depend on you will increase your likelihood of continued success.

- Encourage employees/departments to challenge each other to a stair climbing contest or walking break challenge.
- Have them name their group and award a prize to the most unique name.
- Each group should set an agreed upon goal (so many stairs in so many weeks, or so many miles in so many weeks) and the first group to reach the goal gets a prize.
- Highlight the competition among these groups to other employees (ex. The Stair Steppers from Department A have challenged the Stair Climbers from Dept. B to see who can climb 500 flights first).

## **Week Six: Keep Moving!**

**Goal:** To keep employees involved in the campaign and make it an ongoing lifestyle change. Update on employee challenge from week 5, if appropriate.

### **Sample Email Content:**

This is week six of the Activate Stairway Initiative and we hope that using the stairs is now becoming a part of your daily routine. Walking improves your health and your mood and is good for you heart. Remember:

- Walking helps you lose weight.
- Walking helps lower your blood pressure.
- Walking gives you more energy.
- Walking helps relieve stress.
- Walking helps you sleep better.

(Science-based advice on weight control, getting stronger muscles and bones, and balanced nutrition: [www.healthierus.gov](http://www.healthierus.gov) )

## **Week Seven: Park and Walk!**

**Goal:** To encourage the participants of the Activate Stairway Initiative to challenge themselves by parking further away in a designated Activate Parking area.

### **Sample Email Content:**

Challenge Yourself! Park in the lot furthest from your building. Employees who get caught parking in the designated Activate Parking area will receive a \$ gift certificate to XX. By the end of the week just by parking farther away you will have XX distance (or XX steps).

Remember to keep it simple! Even brief bursts of activity, like a 10-minute walk, can improve your concentration, creativity and performance!

Walking routes offer a safe and fun way to get active in your community. Find a walking route in your community and bring the family!

You can easily monitor your progress with a pedometer. All these small steps do add up! 2000 steps is the equivalent of one mile. Check out the following links for more information on pedometers and walking routes.

(Find a great walking route anywhere in the Treasure Valley: <http://www.mapmywalk.com> ; Pedometer use information: <http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/using-a-pedometer-or-step-counter#> )

## **Week Eight: Walking Routes**

**Goal:** Encourage employees to leverage other opportunities during their day to incorporate physical activity.

### **Sample Email Content:**

Do a little bit more, a little more often! Walk around the building before you go to your car. Invite a co-worker for a walk during lunch. Make an appointment for yourself and your health! Schedule time in your day to take a walk. Start with 10-15 minutes a day.

- During a ten minute walk, a 150 lb person burns 44 calories walking at a moderate pace (3 mph).
- Gradually build up the time spent doing the activity by adding a few minutes every few days until you can comfortably perform the minimum recommended amount of activity (30 minutes per day).
- Walking is a great way to start being active more often!
- Once you start looking for opportunities to walk, you will be amazed at how many there are.

Type in an address and click a path along nearby streets. The website will calculate distances for you:

(<http://www.gmap-pedometer.com> )

## **Week Nine: Eat Right! Be Active!**

**Goal:** To challenge employees to step up their program and promote healthy choices.

### **Sample Email Content:**

Challenge employees to answer a trivia question about physical activity or nutrition via email. The first employee who answers correctly gets a healthy prize.

(My Pyramid offers a detailed assessment of your food intake and physical activity level choices: [www.mypyramid.gov/index.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/index.html) ).

## **Week Ten: Friends and Families**

**Goal:** To encourage employees to keep climbing and bring Activate home to their friends and families.

### **Sample Email Content:**

Now that you have been taking steps to become more physically active by using the stairs and walking at work, encourage your friends and family to do the same. Make getting more physical activity a family project. Encourage everyone to think of fun things to do to get up and moving!

- Celebrate family occasions with a walk or hike.
- Get outside and play.
- Bike to your children's sporting events.
- Walk the dog.
- Encourage your family to use the stairs whenever possible.
- Post an activity log and keep track of your family's progress.

(Make Family Time Active Time!: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/family-time.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/family-time.htm); Find the best bike trails in your community: <http://ridgetorivers.cityofboise.org/index.aspx> ).

## **Week Eleven: Steps in the Right Direction**

**Goal:** Encourage employees to continue to think about physical activity in new ways and reflect on the progress of the Stairway Initiative.

### **Sample Email Content:**

Try to continue to work activity into all areas of your daily life by setting realistic goals. You now have begun to realize that activity doesn't have to take up a lot of time in your day or a lot of planning. You can continue to significantly increase physical activity by continuing to take small steps. It's essential to

be realistic about what you can do--either because you're busy, or because you simply haven't been active in quite a while. Some examples of realistic goals:

- Add 15 minutes of activity to your daily routine--whether it's walking, playing with the kids, swimming, or another activity that you enjoy.
- When given the choice between walking or driving, choose walking!
- Remember to use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park further away from the store.
- Walk the kids home from school or activities.

Write down your goal and give yourself a timeframe to accomplish that goal. The timeframe is very important and will help you monitor and celebrate your successes!

(Track your goals using FitDay: <http://www.fitday.com> ).

### **Week Twelve: We've Come a Long Way!**

**Goal:** Remind employees how far they have climbed and encourage continued participation. Acknowledge employee participation.

#### **Sample Email Content:**

Hopefully by being more physically active during your daily living activities you have realized that you don't have to be a marathon runner or mountain climber to reap the benefits. Little things add up!

Tips for including physical activity in your everyday routine:

- Develop a simple routine — perhaps something you can do while you watch TV.
- Include indoor and outdoor housework in your plan. It all counts!
- For short journeys try walking instead of driving.
- Include active hobbies in your leisure time—walking, hiking, biking, gardening, snowshoeing.
- Make active living part of your family life. Go for a walk, plant a garden, play catch, walk the dog.
- Adopting a healthier lifestyle can be hard at first, but one step at a time makes it easier every day.
- Many people get active and then decide they'd like to lose weight or stop smoking. One thing does lead to the next.

Visit Activate Treasure Valley online at <http://www.activatetreasurevalley.org> for additional resources to keep you moving more and eating right or join our community on Facebook and Twitter (Activ8TV) for continued support, tips, resources and ideas.



# Activate Treasure Valley Stairway Initiative Commitment Form



Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Type (e.g. hospital, government office, college, retail store) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

### We commit to participating in the ATV Stairway Initiative through the following actions:

Stairway Signage (Point of Decision Prompts).	
Stairway Challenge	
Other (please specify):	
Other (please specify):	

Proposed start date \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like technical assistance in implementing the initiative and placing the signs?  Yes  No

Operational Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Ext \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Available Materials	Accessibility
ATV Stairway Initiative Guide	Downloadable
Stairway Initiative Kit (electronic: contains 13 printable signs, instructions, sign in sheet, certificate of completion and additional resources).	Downloadable



I commit that the above-listed business / organization will participate in the Activate Treasure Valley Stairway Initiative and authorize that our name be included in a list of participating sites.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Ext \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
**Please email completed form to [anjie.knickrehm@ymcatvidaho.org](mailto:anjie.knickrehm@ymcatvidaho.org)**

**For more information please contact Anjie Knickrehm at (208) 344-5502 ext. 225**





*Certificate of Completion*

*Awarded to:*

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*For successful completion of:*  
***Activate Treasure Valley Stairway Initiative Challenge***  
*from the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_*