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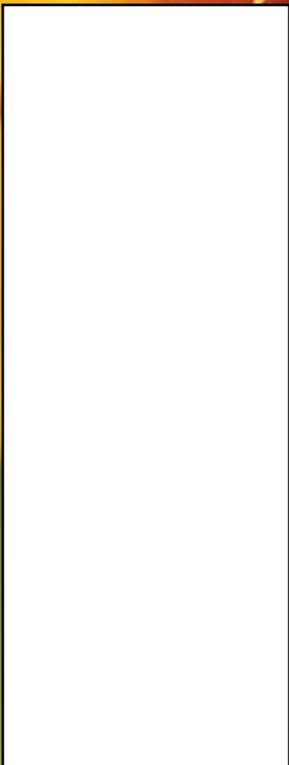
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**A Unique Partnership  
to Improve Your  
Community's Health**

**Lessons from the  
California Legions**

**Painted Rocks  
Invading Your Parks?**



# Game Changer!



## Parks & 3 WINS Fitness Partnership

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Four years ago, we had the pleasure of meeting Jane H. Adams who at that time was California Park & Recreation Society's Executive Director. We presented our 100 Citizens Free Exercise Program from the City of San Fernando's Recreation Park at the 2012 Annual meeting in Long Beach and she invited us to write an article for this magazine; *100 Citizens: A Solution to Improve the Public's Health. A Kinesiology and Public Parks Partnership to Reduce Physical Inactivity*<sup>1</sup>. She also shared the VIP (Vision, Insight, Planning) Action Plan conceived in 1999. This idea from the Action Plan resonated with us: "Park and recreation professionals will be recognized for its vital role in creating healthy communities, families and individuals."

All photos courtesy of Carmen Anthony

**C**PRS is now working on a revision to the VIP Action Plan to be titled the California Action Plan. Health and wellness will remain a major component of the mission areas of the new plan. We propose our successful 3 WINS Fitness program can be a catalyzing partnership between Kinesiology departments at local California State Universities and local park and recreation agencies to jump start the transformative changes that will be envisioned in the California Action Plan.

The 100 Citizens program has been re-branded to 3 WINS Fitness. 3 WINS exists in nine public parks serving hundreds of participants. Participants are improving their health and fitness. There is no cost to the participant and no external funding required to sustain the program as we enter our 6th year. What follows is background relevant to both VIP Action Plan and 3 WINS and why a partnership makes sense.

### What is 3 WINS Fitness?

In a story recently reported in CSUN TODAY<sup>2</sup>, “Mary-Anne Saffon-King was involved in a car accident in 2013. The crash left her in a coma for two days and then, when she awoke, seriously limited her mobility on the right side of her body. Three years later she is exercising, dancing and smiling at the San Fernando Recreation Park three mornings a week – without any physical sign of the injuries from her accident. Saffon-King is one of the more than 250 participants (at six parks) in 3 WINS Fitness, which started as the 100 Citizens program in 2011, born from California State University, Northridge’s Department of Kinesiology — one of the nation’s largest kinesiology programs. The exercise program aimed to improve public health and fitness by offering free workout sessions to the local community at San Fernando Recreation Park.” Saffon-King, who recovered her mobility after her car accident said 3 WINS Fitness helped her to regain physical and psychological strength. “Everybody who knows me and what happened in the accident is amazed now,” she said. “These exercises help you to handle pain bet-

ter. I still feel pain, but my attitude toward it and my movements are better. We wake up in the morning and look forward to the session,” Saffon-King said. “If I can’t make it, I feel sad and lonely. When I’m here, I smile the whole time.”

3 WINS Fitness is an exercise program that is free (accessible), sustainable (no external funding), and scaleable. Kinesiology students who are educated and skilled in human movement lead community members in group exercise. We changed our name to 3 WINS Fitness to reflect the WINS we focus on: participant fitness, student career benefit, and community health ([www.3winsfitness.com](http://www.3winsfitness.com)).

From San Fernando in 2011, we are now in six parks in Los Angeles. We’ve expanded to parks near three of our sister CSU institutions bringing us to nine parks total with steps taken to be in over 50% of the CSU system this fall.

We intend to be in California’s 21 CSU kinesiology departments statewide and eventually across the country (700+ departments). In 2012, we were recognized by First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! campaign, which challenged community organizations to share their programs in an international video competition. We profess that a public health solution to end childhood obesity must begin with the family, and we reach children by helping adults become healthier role models. Our video submission <http://letsmovecommunities.devpost.com/submissions/6815-100-citizens-role-models-for-the-future> won the Popular Choice vote and we visited the White House in 2013.

As part of our Clinton Global Initiative University Commitment to Action, we have raised funds to build a 3 WINS Fitness infrastructure in seven additional CSUs this fall. As with all our programs, once it’s built, there is no external funding required as the



program runs out of public parks with our students serving as volunteers of the parks with many receiving academic internship units.

### A Game Changing Partnership

3 WINS Fitness has the capacity to improve public health, strengthen communities, and provide students with valuable career-related experiences. Research conducted with RAND Corporation<sup>3</sup> in San Fernando concluded that creating a partnership between parks and kinesiology programs is a promising health promotion model. This is particularly important given prior research findings that parks are often underutilized for physical activity (PA), particularly in low-income communities<sup>4</sup> and that parks’ facilities, programming, and supervised and organized activities can have a significant impact on the amount of park-based moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA)<sup>5</sup>. 3 WINS Fitness can be that supervised exercise park program. The evaluation found that 3 WINS Fitness (formerly 100 Citizens) attracts new park users and can yield important health dividends for participants, and, potentially, the community at large.

A 3rd partner could be public health. With no state below 20% obesity<sup>6</sup>, we represent a solution that can and must happen now. In a novel approach, we have partnered with Providence Health and Services who regularly visit two of our parks with a mobile health van. At no cost, they provide basic services in addition to blood tests for HbA1C, glucose, and cholesterol testing with data to be ana-



lyzed over the next few months. The opportunity of having someone diagnosed as pre-diabetic and giving them an immediate solution is invaluable. Of course, this is also in line with the National Recreation and Park Association Park Prescription (National Parks Rx, nrpa.org) program and would represent another timely tie-in.

### Our 3 WINS

Our Kinesiology students have been empowered to expand the program and partnering with the Parks and possibly Public Health throughout the state, we clearly have the potential of accomplishing the vital role identified in the 1999 VIP, “creating healthy communities, families and individuals.” This concurs with our stated 3 WINS of participants, student, and community.

Participant fitness gains have been many. As mentioned in the CSUN TODAY story, “I didn’t exercise for three years before I joined [the program],” said Carmen Guerrero. “Now I dance Zumba and enjoy life. My kids even ask me, ‘Mom, what’s happening?’” “My cholesterol was really high, over 220,” said participant Maria Valdez. “After three months of exercising [with 3 WINS Fitness], I got it to 175.” “I feel energetic at the end of every session,” added Maria Aceves, who has participated in the program since its beginning. “I’ve lost 35 pounds already. I’ll look like

Jennifer Lopez soon.” Over jumping jacks and weight training, Saffon-King, Aceves and Valdez have become close with the rest of their group. The social aspect of the program is one of its highlights, many said.

Students benefit at graduate and undergraduate levels. CSUN graduate students in kinesiology are spearheading the creation of the sustainable infrastructure for the 3 WINS at the seven CSU expansion campuses this fall. They have acquired experience in building the organization in the expansion from one park to six parks emanating out of Northridge and are ready to apply their newly developed skills.

Over 100 interns and volunteer students service our programs, each semester, in many leadership capacities ranging from assistant instructors to program leaders honing their public speaking ability along with program delivery and personnel management skills. They talk of the rewards of touching lives in the community and of serving as mentors to new and younger students. Undergraduate Lucia Muro, now with the program for one year says, “I am learning how to properly interact with professionals and adults first hand. These things are NOT taught in books.” She adds, “... if you are having a bad week/morning, I guarantee you will be leaving with a huge smile on your face.” And the friendships formed amongst the students are those forged from a common cause which enhances their college experience. Finally, many have also acquired jobs in the parks, public health, and entrance into graduate schools as a function of their participation; that was a primary intention of the program, job creation for our many kinesiology majors (2400 at Northridge alone) which is one of the fastest growing majors in the nation.

And for the community, physical inactivity is the fourth-leading cause of death<sup>7</sup> and

leads to health issues such as diabetes, coronary artery disease and obesity. Though most people are aware they should be active, many don’t have the resources to do so in group settings, which add an important social component, and they often don’t know where to start or how to make progress. Kinesiology students are able to provide them progression and accommodations to make exercising most effective, beneficial and safe. Many who have lost weight are members of our free Healthy You program which is a diabetes prevention program providing health and nutrition education based on the CDC National Diabetes Prevention Program focusing on the reduction of weight by 5-7% resulting in a 58% reduction in diabetes risk<sup>8</sup>.

### San Fernando Recreation Park

And what about the park where this all started? Ismael Aguila, the director of recreation and community services says, “With the help of 100 Citizens/3 WINS Fitness, our City has been able to maximize efforts to create a nationally recognized health and wellness program with expertise most park and recreation programs don’t have. Our partnership has provided us an “army of specialists” that the City could not afford given the internships and volunteer hours they provide. 3 WINS Fitness helped change the culture of our park with the community calling it Fitness Park. Of equal importance, it was changing how our City Council and other community leaders were viewing what we as parks and recreation do, in part because their family members’ health was improving



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through participation in the 3 WINS Fitness program. Just three years ago, with 3 WINS volunteer assistance and encouragement, and City Council support we took a major step in becoming Healthy San Fernando with the Inaugural 5K Relay Walk or Run. We just held our 3rd event with numerous sponsors and over 1000 registrants! There is no question this partnership has improved the health and changed the lives of hundreds of citizens in our city and has the potential to do the same in cities throughout California.”

### Conclusion

Parks, Kinesiology, and Public Health can and should work together to improve the health of the people in our communities. With ONLY 21% of adults meeting the minimum recommended guidelines for physical activity<sup>9</sup>, we must turn around the state of physical inactivity and with our partnership it is clearly possible. We have shown 3 WINS Fitness to be a sustainable model free to the participant. If we are going to be successful in waging a battle against physical inactivity and its related chronic diseases, we see this as one of the few

if not the only sustainable cost free program that educates and delivers a physically active solution. We look forward to partnering with the Parks in the neighborhoods of our new 3 WINS programs throughout California. Keep your eyes and ears open for 3 WINS coming to a CSU near your park! Let them know you want to be involved. We believe we can be a catalyst for the CPRS movement to VIP 2.0 and together we can be a model to improve the health of our nation.

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