



## Rio Grande City StoryWalk™ increases Physical Activity levels in the community

*"My favorite part about the StoryWalk™ was seeing all of the families at the park together. A lot of parents just sit down while the kids are running and playing, but with the StoryWalk™ everyone is walking the park and reading together."*

Frank Eguia, Parks Director and project partner

Rio Grande City librarian, Norma Fultz, was concerned about county level obesity rates and reports that people were not getting enough physical activity. Her team of staff and volunteers provided many successful library programs and wanted to explore adapting some of them to incorporate components encouraging physical activity.

After attending a WOW-E Action Institute, Ms. Fultz identified StoryWalk™ as a feasible approach to increasing literacy and encouraging Physical Activity. "[She] love[d] the idea of reading and walking and where families can get together and come and enjoy a nice evening or day and before you know it you've walked 20 or 30 minutes." The library team acquired technical assistance and seed funds from Texas A&M AgriLife's WOW-E program and developed initial partnerships with the Women's Club and the Park Department to initiate a StoryWalk™ at two sites.



# CHALLENGE

Two in four people in Starr County are inactive. Almost one in two participants at a neighborhood school input process indicated they would be encouraged to use the nearby park more often if it was activated. Citizens and youth have also indicated a need for more physical activity places near neighborhoods, parks to be more active, activities for families and youth of all ages, more family events and programs, and more environments that encourage and support walking.

The Library partnered with the Park Department and a local print and signage company to evaluate feasibility of the materials in the often-high sun and wind environment, identify safe (void of water lines, electric lines, conflicting uses) and meaningful placement of the book page stations.

They worked with the Texas A&M AgriLife WOW-E team and the Texas Transportation Institute team to devise an evaluation plan and develop a virtual intercept survey.

## APPROACH

After facing COVID-19 related safety issues, closed parks, community capacity issues, and school closings, the local librarian determined kicking off the StoryWalk™ in Fall 2021 would be a great opportunity to help reignite the library family programming and get people active.

The library staff and volunteers selected two books and devised a simple communication plan. They then partnered with the city communication team, Women's Club, and Girl Scouts to start spreading the word about the initial StoryWalk™. A kick-off event was held in October of 2022 to garner excitement about and knowledge of the first book, Dragons Love Tacos.

## StoryWalk™ by the Numbers

**3**  
Books

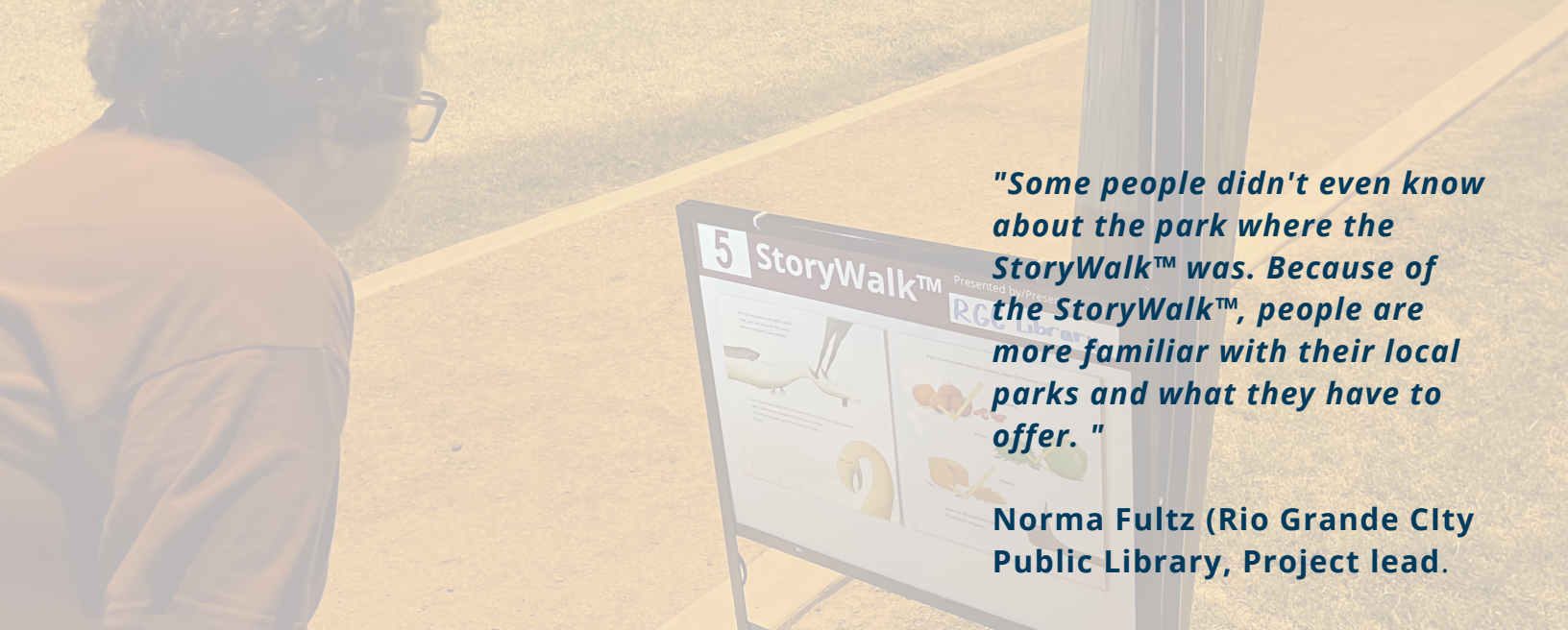
**24**  
Weeks

**2**  
Parks

**23+**  
Partners

**3k**  
Nearby Citizens

**9/10**  
People More Active



*"Some people didn't even know about the park where the StoryWalk™ was. Because of the StoryWalk™, people are more familiar with their local parks and what they have to offer. "*

**Norma Fultz (Rio Grande City Public Library, Project lead.**

## RESULTS

The library team and their partners have supported 24 weeks of StoryWalk™, highlighting three books in two local parks. These sites are within proximate distance of over 3,000 local residents. Park usage data indicate an increase in park use for the initial site. Nine out of ten participants in a self-administered QR code intercept survey reported the StoryWalk™ helped them to be more physically active that month.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The Library team, Park Department team, local signage expert, and WOW-E team members continue to address feasibility issues presented by the sun and wind. The library partnership efforts have increased to include over 23 supporters. They are collectively working on an action plan to create two permanent StoryWalk™ installations, roaming StoryWalk™ sets to be used throughout the city, a sponsorship program for long term support, and enhanced evaluation and communication plans.

For more information visit

Agrilife Extension Working on Wellness Environments at [wowe.tamu.edu](http://wowe.tamu.edu)

or check out the StoryWalk™ video at our YouTube Channel

[TAMU Agrilife Extension Urban and Municipal Parks](#)



Cooperative Extension Program

WORKING ON WELLNESS ENVIRONMENTS IS A PROGRAM OF TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION MADE POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION.