

INVESTING IN PREVENTION

Feet on the Ground: Getting Active with Walkability Expert Mark Fenton

Walkability expert Mark Fenton visited the towns of Alburgh, Enosburg Falls, Fairfax, Grand Isle, Highgate, Montgomery, Sheldon, St. Albans and Swanton this spring, as part of collaborative efforts to make local communities more walkable and more bikeable. Fenton was making a repeat visit to our area, having toured here in 2015, and he both reviewed progress made and recommended continued improvements.

The visit was made possible by RiseVT with planning help from the Northwestern Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Department of Health. Fenton's visit was inspiring, as he spoke with many community members throughout his visit, applauding their efforts and urging them to keep the momentum going.

His key message: design your communities to encourage physical activity – specifically walking. These design and infrastructure changes will be good for individual health, will attract new homeowners, and strengthen the local economy.

One of the remarkable elements of his visit was the deep engagement in each town he visited. He was met with community leaders, business people and citizens who were excited to share and learn – and he encouraged them to be unafraid to try small changes, temporary measures and pilot projects to get the walkability ball rolling.

He was impressed with work in Swanton where the community implemented many improvements since the 2015 visit. He emphasized that community change takes community partnerships and thanked RiseVT for providing impetus and support for such change. "If you don't have good community partners like {RiseVT} to work with, nothing gets done," he said.



Mark Fenton and a group of Fairfax residents cross the covered bridge near the elementary and high school on Maple Street.



Fenton visited Highgate, walking the Health Path with Heidi Britch-Valenta in this photo.



Touring the St. Albans Bay area, Fenton took note of the dangerous intersection of Lake Street and Georgia Shore Road, recommending curb extensions, high-visibility crosswalks & curb bump-outs.



In Montgomery, Fenton visited with community leaders, staff and residents. He recommended the town adopt a "complete streets" policy that ensures that all road work takes all users into account, including pedestrians and bicyclists.



Prevention Ride with the Governor

In August, Governor Phil Scott toured Franklin County on his bike with a group of local cyclists taking a journey designed by RiseVT to promote wellness, primary prevention of chronic disease, and build on the rolling momentum of a visit by national walkability expert Mark Fenton.

The Governor embarked on the trip from Northwestern Medical Center, and from there headed to the St. Albans Bay Park. He was met by RiseVT Wellness Specialist Jessica Frost, who introduced Town Select board Chair Brendan Deso and Melinda White of NMC's Northwestern Partners in Hope and Recovery. Both Deso and White spoke of the importance of walkable communities – which

support businesses, quality of life, and even recovery.

Next the Governor's riding group headed to Swanton where they celebrated 10 years of the Swanton Fit and Healthy Path and visited a new playground. The crowd in Swanton was strong, demonstrating that community's engagement on healthy programming and infrastructure.

From Swanton, the group rode to Highgate, once again met by a crowd of community members and officials who showed off the area's work on walkability.

The event was a successful showcase of the concepts behind thoughtful design of the built environment. This thoughtful approach has big impacts on creating safe, walkable, bikeable environments for all. This kind of environment fosters health and wellbeing through physical activity and community connectedness.

New Wellness Policy for Maple Run

This June, the Maple Run Unified School District adopted a new wellness policy aimed at creating healthier school environments and ultimately reducing childhood obesity.

The new policy was developed collaboratively with input from many groups, and with support from RiseVT. A group of advocates came together with about 20 active members that included nurses, guidance counselors, teachers, Vermont Department of Health staff, parents, physical therapists, Farm to School experts, The Abbey Group and staff of the school district office. This group met regularly for nearly two years to evaluate the existing policy, and craft a new one.

The group used a Wellness School Assessment Tool (WELLSAT) and found that the old policy scored a 33/100. RiseVT also conducted a measurement study of BMI averages for the school district. The results showed obesity rates as high as 28 percent in one of the Maple Run school districts. These numbers prompted school officials to take action.

The new policy has schools building physical activity into classroom activity, implementing Farm to School programs, using healthy foods in celebrations, adopting “share fridges” to address hunger and eliminate waste ... and much more. The collaborative process and widespread impact of the policy change make this milestone a major marker on our area’s journey to health.



RiseVT encourages stretch breaks for kids in classrooms.



St. Albans City School students take part in a wall sit challenge.

RISEVT IS RISING TO THE OCCASION

Many local schools, businesses and municipalities have risen to the challenge set by RiseVT to actively create healthy environments. Schools tap into the energy of staff and students, businesses build flexible, innovative wellness programs for healthy workplaces, and cities and towns commit to policy changes that support healthy community environments. This great work locally has inspired the RiseVT movement to grow statewide. [Click here](#) to learn more about the statewide effort.

HERE'S A LIST OF THE RISING TIDE OF HEALTHY HEROES!

GOLD SCHOOLS

- Bakersfield Elementary Middle School
- Fairfield Center School
- Fletcher Elementary School
- Georgia Elementary and Middle School
- Sheldon Elementary School
- SOAR Learning Center
- St. Albans City School
- St. Albans Town Educational Center
- Thank you to the dedicated classroom teachers who have made this gold-level success possible!

GOLD BUSINESSES

- Ben & Jerry's
- Community College of Vermont
- City of St. Albans
- Duke's Fitness Center
- Franklin County Caring Communities
- Franklin County Home Health Agency
- Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union
- Maple Run Unified School District
- Northwestern Counseling & Support Services

- Northwestern Medical Center
- The St. Albans Museum
- Swanton Village
- Vermont Department of Health
- Vermont Precision Tools

GOLD MUNICIPALITIES

- City of St. Albans
- Swanton Village
- Town of Highgate
- Town of St. Albans

GOLD TEACHERS

SACS

- Jessica Bachand
- Tess Bashaw
- Jill Boomhover
- Anna Brace
- Braina Brown
- Braina Brown

Swanton Elementary School

- Jody Chase
- Jamie McCarthy - now teaching in Essex
- Gabby Ramseyer
- Hannah Scott

SOAR

- Marc Brunelle
- Matt Chevalier
- Caitlin Farrar
- Kristi Hamblett
- Randy Pike

- Tiffany Trombley

- Heather Young

Sheldon Elementary

- Jessica Bourbeau
- Amy Callan-Gervais
- Lisa Cioffi
- Kelly Derry
- Sarah Farrar
- Kerri Hoag
- Regan Keelty

SATEC

- Jill Boomhover
- Diane Bruley
- Jennifer Callahan
- Lisa Curry
- Daphne Delude
- Cheryl Duplissa
- Dina Fitzgerald
- Kate Pelkey
- Lisa Thompson
- Amy Ward

ST. Albans City School

- Jessica Bachand
- Anna Brace
- Braina Brown
- Tyler Cook
- Tiffany Johnson
- Sally Lawyer
- Lisa Lucas
- Lauren Mangis
- Kristen Murphy
- Michelle Patnode - now teaching in Highgate
- Kathleen Williams

Grand Isle School

- Robin Taylor

Georgia Elementary & Middle School

- Mandy Alarcon Georgia
- Pam Farmer
- Sara Heth
- Jessica Howrigan
- Allison MacKenzie
- Emily Morse
- Heather Sikorsky
- Stacey Sullivan
- Sue Tougas
- Erin Young

Folsom Education and Community Center

- Samantha Cantell -
- Alison Perry

Fletcher Elementary School

- Cathy O'Brien
- Kathleen Pellegrino

Fairfield Center School

- Madison Sanguinetti

Bakerfield Elementary Middle School

- Stephanie Beland
- Chelsea Ellis
- Kiah Hamner
- Cara Newman
- Arlene O'Rourke
- Meghan Petrie
- Kendra Pillsbury