

Don't let the weather keep you on the couch

Moving Grays Harbor
By Maryann Welch

In this column, I have often urged readers to refrain from letting weather dictate opportunities for physical activity. With the proper gear, intrepid Harborites are able to continue outdoor activity routines even in our soggy environment. I will admit, however, that this winter presented conditions that really did hamper my resolve - flooding, snow and ice.

The January flood brought sufficient water to launch my kayak right out the back door; but, safety prevailed and clean-up duties had to suffice for exercise.

The unusual amount of snow this season also seemed like a surmountable barrier for walking...until my friend, Marnie Schumacher, and I embarked on a lunch time walk at Morrison Park on a snowy, crisp, blue-sky day. On the trail, not far out of the car, my feet flew out from under me as they contacted the sheet of ice hidden beneath the snow. Unhurt, we gingerly made our way back to the car and high-tailed it over to the Southshore Mall!

The risk of a fall injury then kept me walking on my treadmill or at the mall any time ice was a possibility. At that time I considered the purchase of gripper devices for my shoes but felt the ice and snow would soon be gone. Here in March, hindsight tells me that move would have likely paid off.

February found Jim and me in upstate New York visiting my son, Corey, and his family. There, with three feet of snow piled everywhere and sub-freezing temperatures being the norm, I could appreciate even more the

challenges weather brings to outdoor activity. Certainly there are recreational opportunities such as snow shoeing and skiing in those conditions and we did take advantage of the proximity of a downhill ski area. However, during our visit I realized that routine activity is severely limited to the indoors for most people. Their local YMCA was a wonderful resource and was crowded with others seeking to stay active (and safe) while watching the snow come down. Again, ice was a constant hazard and I obviously missed another opportunity to use those grippers I decided not to purchase!

Yes, winter can bring limitations to outdoor activity, but it can also present opportunities to escape from "cabin fever". On three occasions this season I had the good fortune to spend time on the 1.5 mile Basich Walkway between Cosmopolis and Pioneer Park/South Aberdeen on unseasonable semi-warm, sunny days - yes, we have had those! These outings have made this my current favorite walk for several reasons.

Daughter Katy lives at the opposite end of Cosmopolis. Bundling up the available grandkids, who range in age from 7 months to 10 years, we can head out on 2nd Street with strollers and/or bicycles toward Lions Park. Improved sidewalks and curb cuts on the street make this a lovely stroll. The kids are excited to get to the park, which features entertaining play equipment for them while Katy and I sit and soak up the winter sun. After a few minutes of playing they are eager to explore the trail and look forward to playing there again on the return trip.

The Basich Walkway starts from the Lions Park and progresses through a wooded area toward Stevens Elementary School, Miller Junior High School and Pioneer Park. The paved trail is wide enough to accommodate two strollers side-by-side and has benches strategically placed along the

way. In fact, we utilized a bench when it was feeding time for baby Brody. All the comforts of home!

Just after entering Cosmopolis from Aberdeen, there is a nice paved parking lot (on the right-hand side) for those wishing to access the trail, and, best of all, the restrooms at the Lions Park are open year-around.

Not only does this walkway provide a great family activity, but I realize that it can be a link for many in Cosmopolis to avail themselves of services in South Aberdeen without use of a vehicle. On one of my walks I encountered my friend, Jim Phipps, on his bicycle and learned he was returning from Dennis Company. He reported that he frequently finds himself in need of grocery or hardware items and hops on his bike to take the trail and complete his errands. Likewise, Marnie enjoys the Walkway as the first leg of her bicycle trip to work (in good weather) or to retrieve grocery items from Swanson's.

With the promise of better days ahead I'd like to encourage you to get out there and find your current "favorite place to walk". Shake off those winter blahs and lace up your sneakers – because I want to hear from you...I'd like to feature a few more favorite Grays Harbor walks in the next few columns. So, send me an e-mail and tell me where you like to walk.

Maryann Welch is the recently retired director of Grays Harbor County's Public Health and Social Services Department.

If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the health department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us or visit our web site at www.ghphss.org.