



Sample Some **TRAIL MIX** Park Authority Style

Trail mix isn't just for eating anymore.

The Park Authority has cooked up a no-calorie Trail Mix that will satisfy your hunger for an outdoor fitness program that's fun for everyone in the family.

Starting February 1, walk, jog or run on designated trails at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park and Mason District Park and look for markers along the way with QR codes offering exercise demonstrations. Stop at the markers in any order and choose from low impact, medium and advanced exercise options to suit your taste.

"Trail Mix plays on the idea of fitness as a recipe for healthy living," explains Wellness Coordinator Elizabeth Ittner, who developed the program with Oak Marr Rec Center Fitness Director Hannah Hutton. "All of the fitness 'ingredients' will provide a complete body workout."



There are eight markers along each trail, and Ittner says, "The theme of each station is a measurement of ingredients, just like you would see in a recipe -- dash, pinch, and dip -- and the exercises coincide with the food ingredients."

For example, all good trail mixes need a base ingredient, such as granola. Think of the exercise you get moving from station to station as that firm building block for your Trail Mix. Try some squats or frog jumps to add a little zing to your mix. Imagine chocolate-covered raisins or popcorn. Do some crunches to get that nutty flavor. Throw in a sprinkle of jumping jacks, a pinch of calf raises and a slice of toe touches as you add to your fitness recipe.

Since you can mix up your stops in any order, each of the markers contains a code for the exercise video, as well as introductory and ending messages. The introductory message explains the Trail Mix theme and introduces users to their fitness instructor guides. The closing message offers a wrap-up exercise suggestion.

"All you need is a smart device with internet capabilities to scan the QR codes and watch the videos," says Ittner. "No exercise equipment is needed, and all of the exercises can be done standing. We understand the importance of outdoor space on health for mind and body, and we wanted to incorporate a fun, family-friendly activity that would promote that nature-health connection."

The paved Big Rocky Run Trail at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park and the Meadows Trail at Mason District Park are the first to get the Trail Mix signage. Big Rocky Run is an out-and-back trail that is just over a mile roundtrip. Meadows Trail is a .54-mile loop trail that is mostly paved or stone dust.

Ittner and Hutton hope to expand the Trail Mix program in the future to include a variety of health and wellness themes, such as yoga, ninja warrior or storybook trails.

The Healthy Strides Trail Mix program is supported by the Fairfax County Park Foundation. For more information, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trail-mix.

