Attleboro

Call Attleboro walking club The Wanderers

BY MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE Tuesday, July 22, 2008 2:49 AM EDT

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ATTLEBORO - "Get tired of walking?" Tony Sousa joked after lapping seven of his fellow walking club members who had stopped along a path in Capron Park to talk with a reporter.

Quick-witted comments like that are common for this vivacious group of Attleboro seniors, all over 70, who gather every Monday and Wednesday at 8 a.m. to walk about one or two miles through the city's landmark park.

They are called the Rev. Larson Senior Center Walking Club, or as the back of their matching T-shirts reads, the "Attleboro Wanderers."

"It's a friendship, a comradery," said member Millie Bauer of the nine-person club nearing its two-year anniversary.

"We keep moving and socialize and have lots of fun," said Wednesday session leader Phyllis Campbell, who added that the walkers carry on casual conversations and update each other on the news. The group says they normally trudge through summer rainstorms, prepared with umbrellas in their cars, but in the winter they sometimes forced by cold or severe weather to meet and walk at Emerald Square mall in North Attleboro.

"They don't even compare," retired Attleboro police officer and former club leader, Matt Savastano said of walking in the mall versus the park.

All of the members said they enjoy the park the most, for its openness and scenery, as well as the shade the tall, overhanging trees provide, said member Carol Theberge.

"It's a beautiful park to walk in," Campbell said.

She said the park provides a great opportunity to meet other people in the community and their dogs.

The exercise can also benefit physical, mental and emotional health, member Ginny Holt said she has learned from her doctor.

Holt noted how depression can be common among the elderly, but exercise, especially in a group, can help.

The activity is also good for blood pressure and keeps blood flowing to the brain to help stay alert.

And, several members said they keep active in other ways, from bowling, biking, tai chi or additional walking.

There is no pressure to keep up, so members walk at their own pace while keeping one another in sight. "I'm not a fast walker, I'm not a slow walker - I'm a half-fast walker," Matt Savastano said of his pace through the half-mile laps with his wife, Alice.

One walker, Gerry Green was absent Monday. The group said it is always ready to look out for fellow seniors who do not feel well, move out of the area or die.

"Groups like these have to be open-ended," Millie Bauer said.

The club welcome new members.

"It's fun. It's a good group," said Monday's leader, Theo Sousa.

The club wants other people to consider joining and realize the benefits the walks can offer. They also said there are always plenty of spaces where they meet in the park's small parking lot across from Nelson Family Dental off County Street.

"Come and try us, you might like us," Campbell said.

Anyone interested can call the Rev. Larson Senior Center for more information and to sign-up.

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