

NEWS

Healthy Living touted*Conference to focus on walkability*[Print Page](#)**By ROBERT LEE LONG**
Community Editor

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HERNANDO — America is taking steps to improve physical fitness — literally.

That's the message that nationally recognized walking expert Mark Fenton is expected to bring to Hernando early next month.

Fenton will be the keynote speaker of the day-long "Healthy Communities-Healthy Families" conference, set for Dec. 9 at the Gale Center in Hernando.

Additional sessions will center on greenways, bicycle and pedestrian planning, and planning and zoning for active living and healthy communities.

The conference is presented by the Bouchillon Institute For Community Planning in partnership with the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities Get A Life! organization.

Fenton is considered one the nation's foremost experts on the activity and is the former editor-at-large of WALKING Magazine. He hosted the March 2000 PBS pledge special, "Walk to a Better Life" and is now host of the new PBS series, "America's Walking."

"He is a nationally recognized speaker on walkability and healthy living," Bob Barber, Hernando's city planner said Monday. "He is a high-energy person and a person people will enjoy hearing from on a subject which is important to all of us."

Fenton is also a champion walker. From 1986 to 1990, Fenton was a member of the United States national race walking team five times, and represented the U.S. in numerous international competitions.

In addition, while training for the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Trials in the 50-kilometer (31-mile) race walk, he studied biomechanics and exercise physiology at the Olympic Training Center's Sports Science Laboratory in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Other speakers are DeSoto County Greenways Coordinator Larry Jarrett and a panel of planning experts including Renee Autumn Ray, Kyle Wagenschutz and Katherine Ennis.

"Elected officials, citizen planners and community officials of various types who are allies to the cause of good community planning will be taking part. It promises to be a great day. This conference is really unsurpassed."

Planning officials will be able to continue on a track to achieving recognition as a Certified Planning Official. Elected leaders will also have an opportunity to gain credit towards the Certified Municipal Official designation.

"The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi is pleased once again to partner with the Bouchillon Institute to provide training and support for our Healthy Kids Healthy Communities Initiative," Peggy Linton, community development director for the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi said. "The primary focus of this initiative is to advocate for policy and environmental changes for healthy eating and active living, with this year's focus being active living. We can reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity and provide our children a healthier future."

Barber said people are encouraged to RSVP by contacting his office at 662-429-9092.

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