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*Heart and Stroke “Shaping Active, Healthy Communities”*

The Heart and Stroke Foundation has created a guide to building local change, with the goal of increasing physical activity and decreasing serious health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity. Shaping Active, Healthy Communities suggests that the ways urban Canadian environments are “built” are often not conducive to active lifestyles – instead of being able to walk or bike, urban planning trends create long commutes and more pollution. The Heart and Stroke toolkit advocates for the use of healthy community design strategies to increase physical activity among Canadians.

Shaping Active, Healthy Communities highlights the fact that improved built environments can have far-reaching effects by creating safe and inviting spaces where people can be active as part of their daily routines. This includes projects such as good public transit, clean and safe parks, and established walking and cycling networks. The booklet also provides information and practical tools that individuals can use to move their communities towards more active and “walkable” designs.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation is an active agent of change through its promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, research and funding partnerships, extensive awareness campaigns, and production of resources such as Shaping Active, Healthy Communities. The toolkit is a valuable resource for



parents, teachers, community leaders, and concerned citizens in general, as it provides information about the health implications of “unwalkable” communities and a step-by-step guide to creating change.

Shaping Active, Healthy

Communities is available under the “Advocate” tab at [www.heartandstroke.sk.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.sk.ca).





## Going Green on Saskatchewan's Trails

As part of the "Go Green" movement taking place in Saskatchewan and across Canada, the provincial government has developed a list of activities and tips to facilitate individual contributions to sustainability. The list includes ideas for the home and workplace, such as bringing a reusable mug to the office, lowering the thermostat at night or when no one is home, starting a compost bin, and starting or joining a carpool in your community. These are simple habits to incorporate into everyday life, but as you know, life in Saskatchewan is not all business!



People here like to kick back and have a good time. This often involves consumption of increasingly scarce fossil fuels or the creation of unnecessary waste; however, there is another option.

Trails in Saskatchewan offer an alternative way to enjoy the beauty and bounty of our province's resources without consuming or harming them.

For the practical purpose of trail development in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA) defines trails as anything from sidewalks to waterways, natural surfaces for hiking or horseback riding to off-road bicycle routes. Trails come in many forms, so everyone in Saskatchewan has relatively easy (and inexpensive) access to some kind of trail activity.

Trails are beneficial to individuals and communities in a variety of ways. Besides the boost that trails give to regional economies and tourism, they also strengthen community interaction, participation, and sense of identity. Trails provide an adventurous setting for individual, family or group activities. Most importantly for the green movement is the ability of Saskatchewan trails to facilitate "greater use of human-powered transportation."

Trails are recreational sites that also help people interact with and learn about the environment. The use of developed trails protects natural and sensitive ecosystems while reducing the production of greenhouse gases and energy consumption. If the environmental benefits aren't enough to convince you, research also suggests that contact with nature has significant health and psychological benefits for individuals and families.

Next time you have a free day, step away from the television and onto the beaten – or unbeaten – trail. Help keep Saskatchewan, and your pockets, green.



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## Introducing Cathy Watts, STA President

Cathy Watts, the new STA President, has a personal business card which reads:

- Year-round cyclist
- Quilt maker
- Passionate trail promoter
- Grandmother

Cathy has been a Director of STA since its inception in 2004, and has come to realize that making trails in this province is a very political process. As STA President, she is hoping to build bridges in the coming year with all trail organizations, associations, government, and STA members. She believes our trail community is too small to not be working together towards creating and maintaining trails that will add to the health and quality of life of Saskatchewan residents.

Cathy is also the chairperson of Parkland Trans Canada Trail Association in the Saskatoon area. This experience has given her significant insight into the issues around building trails in an urban setting with a small band of volunteers.

One of her dreams is to ride her bicycle across the country. As the Trans Canada Trail is not complete, this process has occurred in many short trips in several parts of Canada. In 2009, she and her husband rode 600 km around Saskatchewan, starting from their garage and ending up back there eight days later. The "Great Exotic

Saskatchewan Bike Trip" included Outlook, Elbow, Buffalo Pound, Regina, Fort Qu'Appelle, Melville and a four hour train trip back to Saskatoon. Later this month their adventures will include riding from Hamilton to Montreal on the Waterfront Trail.

After organizing a bike trip for 30 women on the Trans Canada Trail last summer, Cathy was quoted by a StarPhoenix journalist as saying, "If we can put a railway across the country and a highway across the country and a pipeline across the country, why is it we can't put a trail across this country? There is such a huge opportunity in Saskatchewan, we've only just begun."





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