



*Tioga County Countryside Council*  
Tioga County, Pennsylvania

A work-group of the Tioga County Partnership for Community Health

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### The Birth of the "Walking Forum"

Do you feel blessed to be living in Tioga County? Many people do, and probably just as many don't. And then there are many who have never given it a thought. Have you ever thought about what you would like to see this area look like in twenty-five years? Have you ever wondered what your neighbors think about these questions?

The Tioga County Countryside Council would like to start a conversation about these and similar questions. The Countryside Council is a working group of the Tioga County Partnership for Community Health. The Council's mission is to facilitate communication among the residents of Tioga County about issues relating to quality of life, economics, and the land base we all share.

In October of 2008, a group got together to create a project for 2009. The project is called, "Walking Forums; Conversations Through the Seasons." The Forums will occur during walks that take during four seasons in four distinct environments. As part of the "Step Outdoors" program of the Tioga County Partnership for Community Health, each Walking Forum will take place in an environment that is crucial to the quality of life in Tioga County.

The first Forum will be held where water is a key component. Another walk will occur in an environment that is primarily wooded. Another walk will take place in an agricultural environment, on a farm. And the fourth walk will occur in the built environment, around a town. Each walk will occur during a different season, the first of which will be this spring, with one in the summer, another in the fall, and the last in the winter.

The day will begin at 9:30 at a rendezvous point, where participants will introduce themselves, and the protocols for the conversations will be established. Then small groups will form, and set off with a specific topic to discuss for about 15 minutes till they reach the first station. With another question to ponder, the groups will walk to the next station. At noon, all the groups will meet for a common lunch, before making their way back to the beginning to share the insights of the day. These insights will become a part of the body of public input for the 2010 Tioga County Comprehensive Plan.

The Tioga County Countryside Council meets at 9:00 AM on the third Tuesday of every month in the Tioga County Development Corporation (TCDC) Conference Room located in the old Sheriff's house, behind the historic elm tree, and next to the Tioga County Court House in Wellsboro. Volunteers are needed and the public is welcome at the meetings.

Invest a day taking a walk in an important local environment, together with a group of people engaged in a conversation about local issues, and then share a meal. This will invigorate social dialog and awareness of our county. In such a context, together with other people interested in increasing their health and local knowledge, the Walking Forum will be a real boon to the county's attractiveness and sense of community cohesiveness.