



PORTLAND

Pearl seniors embrace walking as the new running

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Walking clubs springing up around the country

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PORTLAND, Ore. (KOIN) — Ed Wilgus has been living at [The Watermark at The Pearl](#) for about six months. He was one of the original members of the Walk Club.

Rain or shine, a small group of residents make it a point to hit the streets three times a week.

“It’s Portland. You walk no matter what,” Wilgus said. “There were a group of us guys walking and people joined in and we started walking up to Tanner Creek. and we’ve even walked the riverwalk all the way down to Portland.”



Ed Wilgus of The Watermark in The Pearl Walking Club, November 2024 (KOIN)

The Watermark has a mix of independent and assisted living plus memory care — and a personal trainer, Denzel Bartolaba.

“Every time we go out and do some sort of walk I’ve seen them get stronger every single day,” Bartolaba told KOIN 6 News. And it goes beyond the physical benefits.

Oregon Walks Vancouver Walking Club

“This is a way for everyone to start connecting with everyone, and as time has gone on and more people have been joining up with us, it’s been great,” he said.

Some estimates show walking has 40% fewer injuries than running. Social walking clubs are popping up across the country, rivaling the 11% increase in new running clubs over the past year.



People walking down the street in the Pearl District in Portland, November 2024 (KOIN)

A few members of the Watermark Walking Club are former runners. And some, like Kathy Lillis, said that at this stage of their life, walking is the new running.

“I think all of us are looking for additional things that would be fun and beneficial for us to do,” she said.

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