

## TSET Better Health Podcast Transcript

### Episode 56: TSET: Joining Together for Physical Activity

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**Summary:** Adults should get 150 minutes or more of physical activity each week for good health. Busy schedules can make reaching that goal consistently difficult, and for those who go it alone, decreased motivation and even discouragement can derail one's desire to get up and moving. Group- and community-based can provide the encouragement needed to get and stay physically active, and this episode will delve into some Oklahoma programs that provide such social supports. Guests are Lance Walker of the Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute at Oklahoma State University, Mitch Drummond of the non-profit Activate Oklahoma and Angela Daly, a program manager of TSET's newest physical activity grant program.

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[Theme music]

James Tyree: Hello everyone, I hope you are having a great day. Welcome to Episode 56 of the TSET Better Health Podcast. I am your host, James Tyree, associate director of Integrated Communications at TSET ...

Sarah Carson: And I am Sarah Carson, campaign manager for TSET. It is **really** cold out there as we are now in mid-winter, so I hope all our listeners are warm and comfortable as you enjoy this podcast.

J. Tyree: The weather is frigid but the sports world is heating up with the Super Bowl and Winter Olympics taking place in a few short days. Those special events in February inspired us to delve into physical activity for this episode. More specifically, we'll hear how community programs and other supportive groups inspire Oklahomans to get up and moving together.

S. Carson: Teamwork makes the dream work is a common but true expression for staying active. Whether you're talking individual figure skating stars at the Olympics or football players who make it all the way to the Super Bowl, they all reached the pinnacle of their sport through the excellence and encouragement of coaches and teammates that are either with them on the field or consulting behind the scenes. But it's not just world-class athletes. Anyone, regardless of age or ability, can benefit from joining some form of social support for physical activity.

J. Tyree: I agree, Sarah. As the famous song goes, I get by with a little help from my friends, and that holds true for physical activity. Being part of a community or social recreation program or league can provide the encouragement and accountability we need to achieve or exceed the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity for adults. And we can have a lot more fun doing it!

S. Carson: Today we will hear from guests who devote their time to helping Oklahomans become more physically active in group settings, plus one who researches human health and performance and provides expertise in that area to teachers, coaches and others so they spread that knowledge to their students, patients and community members.

J. Tyree: We'll also bring on a surprise guest toward the end, a person close to us at the Better Health Podcast, who is sharing his story of social support as he trains for an upcoming big event. But let's start with a recent conversation I had with the human performance expert that Sarah just referenced.

Lance Walker: **(00:09):** My name is Lance Walker. I am the Rick and Gail Muncief Executive Director Executive Director of the Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute at Oklahoma State University.

J. Tyree: Thank you for joining us today. So, in a nutshell, what *is* the OSU Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute?

L. Walker: **(00:30):** It's a question I get a lot and I sometimes answer it with a question. I ask folks, what's important to you? What is something that fires you up? What's a passion for you? And I get different answers. I get, "Oh, I want to be a better parent. I want to be a great football player, or I want to provide for my family." And that's the question that sort of starts the conversation around, what is a performance institute? And an institute for performance is a collection, an amalgam of things, of people, of ideas, of concepts, of resources to leverage, to help you be the best version of yourself for that performance, whatever that is. And so when you think of this less of a building, less of a specific thing, think general concepts around if it's about performance and it's about improving performance for something that's important to [00:01:30] you, that's what this institute is all about.

**(01:33):** And so that's the why. The what, it is, It's an institute based here at Oklahoma State in an academic system, but designed to catalyze all the resources and expertise in our land grant mission to develop solutions that help you to be a better performer. And so think of it less of a building and things that are happening in the building. It's the why that drives it, and it's set up in a way to catalyze all the great things that happen here at Oklahoma State across so many different colleges and departments. **And so it's part why and it's part what and then part how.**

**(02:16):** So how do we do that? Well, we do research. And so the name Research Institute, it's important to hear that, that we've got to seek out the truth, find solutions, then translate those solutions and get those solutions out to folks to make a difference in their performance. And so that's the why, what and how of what we're all about at HPNRI.

J. Tyree: Let's dive a little deeper in the human performance part. You're an expert in that area, and you have worked with top athletes like those we'll soon see in the Winter Olympics.

What does the science of human performance entail, and how does it help people maximize their physical potential to compete at their best?

L. Walker: (03:00): **Performance**, When you say performance, it probably means different things, as we've said, to different folks. Some people think sports, they think Barry Sanders or Thurman Thomas jumping over the goal line for a touchdown on a Saturday. **If you're a ...**

(03:25): **Well, yeah, again, it's a good point**, it evokes that feeling of sport. I think that's one place where you would think about performance. Another might be performance on stage. It could be performance in a job. It could be performance as a CEO of a company. And for me, it could be performance as a parent when I go home. And so performance, when you talk about performance, it's an all-encompassing concept around being at your best when your best is required for what matters most to you. **And that sort of pulls up a level from just the sports and high ... Evoking those concepts around athletes per se.**

(04:08): **We really consider everybody an athlete, that you are all performing at your best for what it is that's important to you. So it starts with performance, and so understanding a performance concept is one.**

(04:19): **Science, science is sort of...** The general idea of science, let's leverage information. Let's figure things out. Let's create some solutions. Let's leverage this new knowledge to create things that makes lives better. And so think about combining those two, performance, science, leveraging those things to improve your performance. And we've been doing this for decades across all these different performers, be it the astronaut performance programs that you've probably seen in the movies, The Right Stuff, where they were measuring factors that they could improve, human factors to improve their ability, their countermeasures against getting those guys to space. That was an example of extreme high level performance. Obviously, the sporting industry, you've seen the proliferation of sports science, trying to extract the aggregation of marginal human factor gains to break world records or to win national championships. You've seen a proliferation there.

(05:17): What we're also starting to see is this performance science approach to elevate performance in things that you might not think of. Things like being a CEO, being a teacher, being a parent. It's the same sort of concept around performance science for sport, it's just leveraged for a different output or an outcome or a different "athlete". And so you think about things like the body, you think about movement. You think about strength and speed and stamina and suppleness and skill, and some of those things that sometimes you think of are more for a sport environment, those are the same trappings of things that makes us good movers as human beings.

(06:01): And whether I'm going to go out and play a round to golf today, or what's important to my why is I might have a chance to get my kayak in the river in the

Mountain Fork down in Southeast Oklahoma this week. I'm really excited about that. But you know what? I need to be able to do that. And that's important to me. And so that drives some of my curiosity in performance science. ~~How do I, at 55 years old, how do I make sure that I can do that, which is important to me, which is get my kayak down there and have a great day of fishing, and then be able to get out of that kayak and get it back up the steep hill and back up to my pickup truck so I can do it again. So that becomes that why.~~

(06:41): How do I leverage performance science to be the best at that? Is that how do I be stronger at age 55? How do I be more nimble? How do I maintain my balance? What kind of stamina am I going to need to make sure I can pull that kayaking trip off this week? Well, I can leverage performance science from other places, not specific to kayaks. I could leverage things from the endurance sciences, from the medical sciences, maybe even from the biosciences and now data sciences. ~~I can leverage best practice to bleed into my strategies or my approach to making sure I'm at my best when my best matters.~~ So that's a pretty high level understanding of what performance science is and how it can be leveraged from everything from the astronauts getting to the moon or me getting in my kayak this week.

J. Tyree: What does human performance look like at OSU?

L. Walker: (07:30): ~~very good question.~~ A very good question. And I'm going to use you as an example. You're an athlete for us, right? And I would think that this podcast is important to you. You want to perform good on this podcast, and I need you to perform well. ~~I want you to be a great host and to queue me up right and to run all the things so that this comes off very well.~~ So let's use your performance as an example of something that is important to you.

(08:29): You, as a performer, might be motivated to find things that would optimize your ability to have success today with the execution of this task. One of those simple things that you might pull from a performance realm could be something as simple as sleep. How can we leverage simple things like sleep that might help you think quicker, focus better, ask better questions, multitask? ~~I'm sure you're behind the scenes right now, multitasking things.~~ Could sleep as one example of a controllable help you to be a better performer? The answer from performance science would say yes, that sleep can be a benefit to your performance in many ways, both physical, mental, even emotional.

(09:19): And so we've learned that from the performance sciences and we have applied that learning to athletes. We've actually seen this applied in collegiate basketball and it's improved free throw shooting. We've seen it applied in soccer, in terms of shooting accuracy. Even some studies in the performance science world showing that the golf putting accuracy can be impacted by your sleep. So think about that as that extreme performance level of sleep. ~~You, your sleep may or may not improve your performance for focus, resiliency, multitasking, et cetera.~~ But what's really cool for you is you're really trying to focus on your performance and you know what we ultimately want to see here

at HPNRI and at Oklahoma State is improved health for our citizens in the state of Oklahoma and beyond.

(10:11): So here's the sneaky part, the same things that we can learn from performance science to improve or help you optimize your sleep, if that would be something of interest to you. Those same things to optimize sleep by optimizing sleep that the sciences are now telling us can help us improve health. Things like insulin sensitivity, things like blood pressure, sympathetic drug. Some of these things, these trappings of health can be improved by improving your sleep. And so I've anchored why that's important to you. Now you might be asking me, "Oh, I want to sleep better. Tell me how I can do it." Great, now I've anchored it to a why that's important to you, to your performance, and it's anchored to something that is about performance, not, "Oh, you better sleep better so you don't get X disease or you don't have Y problems." And it anchors it more to the performance aspect than the health. However, we're kind of using a backdoor approach, right? We're getting after some of those health benefits that we know come from better sleep.

(11:14): And as an example, sleep is one of them. Here in the state of Oklahoma, we don't sleep great. We're not the worst in the nation in sleep as a metric of a health factor tracking, but we're not great. And we do know about all these cardiometabolic disease challenges that we have in the state, sleep may be one lever, one knob that we can grab ahold of and control to optimize, to improve, even if it's just getting a little bit better. So for you, "Hey, I'm interested in that. How can I take the next step?" Well, getting better might be adding this, subtracting that. It's just a simple process of getting better, not perfection, of just getting on that path to improvement.

(11:58): And as we do that at the micro level, at the performance level, that bleeds into that health factors level, sleeping better, getting better sleep, better quality of sleep. The far downstream impact to that, and it might be generational, is the health outcomes concept. You combine that with policies and all these other great activities and actions that are happening in the state right now around health outcomes. It becomes a player, not the only thing, but it becomes a potential player in helping us support better health outcomes in the state.

J. Tyree: What are some of your activities and programs, and what kinds of folks come to the institute — or do you go out to them?

L. Walker: (13:00): It's a very good question. And tactically, it speaks to what we would call our target audiences for this approach. And We do ultimately want this to impact each individual in our state and beyond. The approach though, if we were to approach this and say, "Look, we're going to go out and help each individual," we would probably impact hundreds maybe, right? However, the initial tactic and strategies that we're using here focus a bit more on the next level, the supporters of those that are out there. So folks that are in your particular case, Folks that are supporting you in your health and performance, that could be your healthcare provider, it could be your work

environment. It could be policies that support your healthy living. It could be a coach. **Let's say you're a kid in a school here in Oklahoma. It could be your coach, your physical educator.** It could be a healthcare provider that you are referred to when you have an injury like a physical therapist.

**(14:24):** But those are what we call the force multipliers. And now that same coach, as an example, if you're a physical educator or coach in an Oklahoma school, you may interact with 100, 200, in some cases, 500 kids in a single week. When we are able to permeate some of this performance science and be a catalyst and a platform and a supporter of those supporting Oklahoma's "athletes", that we get this force multiplication effect. **And so think of it more as a business to more of another business versus a direct to consumer delivery mechanism.**

**(15:02):** Now, there are opportunities as individuals to get involved with us too, could be as subjects in research and discovery. It could be as advocates, as ambassadors within your communities. And it could be something as simple as downloading a fact sheet from some of the resources that already exist here at Oklahoma State University that you have access to. There's all different levels of play, but if you think about us as a mechanism of change, we really like to focus in that sweet spot of force multiplication and find those areas that create **that broader, that hybridization or that elevation of these concepts** and empowerment of these concepts so that those force multipliers, those ambassadors for health and performance are doing even more, are doing even better. **They're empowered to do more, better, et cetera. So that becomes sort of the avenue by which a lot of this information and this inspiration and even this innovation gets out into the state.**

J. Tyree: How is TSET involved with the Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute, and are what else is happening campus to advance physical activity here in Oklahoma?

L. Walker: **(16:30):** Yeah, TSET's done a great job **in that space** of empowering those that are in those spaces to really create change at multiplication levels, if you will. And I think that's a really sweet spot for us. A great example is some of the work that we are doing with TSET and one of our tactics is Project ECHO. It's a tele-mentoring space where we're able to create these communities of practice in various sort of sections of our state, sections like physical educators in schools, physical education programs in schools, athletic trainers or the folks that are providing sports medicine to some of our youth and high school sports teams, those sorts of communities, we're able to set up a tele-mentoring network to patch them in to all the great resources that we have here at Oklahoma State, whether that's research, some of our elite practitioners in those spaces, but also create a connecting point for other experts in the state of Oklahoma and even partners in the state of Oklahoma that can catalyze the impact that they're trying to make.

**(17:38):** And so that's one good example where we create these networks, these communities of practice, and then they are able to learn from us, share with us, but also

learn from each other and then magnify on that message and on those policies and practices, ~~daily things that they can make impact on Monday after a Friday session~~. And so TSET has seen a great value in that, we see a great value in that as well. ~~It's almost like a ready-made translation mechanism because the research, if it just ends up in research and in scientific journals and scientific audiences, it's certainly going to move the body of knowledge forward, which we all know will benefit society ultimately.~~

(18:20): ~~What we're set about to do is to really create that next level connecting pipe to translate it and get it into the hands of the practitioners in a more expeditious and more practical and sticky way that they can begin to apply that science today.~~

(18:59): We like to think of that as a teamwork with TSET. ~~I think we see them as teammates. It's really,~~ It's very similar to what I learned in high performance sport, working in sectors for 30 years, working with teams and individuals from all the elite sporting communities really around the world we're leveraging here, and that's a concept of team.

L. Walker: (19:22): ~~And I know that sounds maybe cliche, but~~ What we search for in the high performance community, if we're trying to prepare for, I don't know, a playoff game in the NFL or an Olympic final, the buildup, the development up to that point ~~takes a team and it takes a team of enablers,~~ it takes a team of experts and it takes a sort of a transdisciplinary approach where you're mixing all these assets, these resources and this expertise together in a way that it ultimately benefits the athlete or the end user in the best way possible. It's the athlete or the person or the group that you're trying to impact, they become the benefactor of this. They are the center of the universe for this team.

(20:09): And what we saw with TSET and with other partners around the state, even our experts and our researchers here on campus at Oklahoma State is there are folks that really understand how to come together and work as a team and TSET is one of those teammates in that sort of transdisciplinary hub or that surrounding halo effect that we have on these communities of practice. And I think that's what I find is really helpful and beneficial and somewhat unique for TSET is they're a great teammate.

(20:40): ~~And so they are enabling, they are empowering, they are inspiring and they're teaming.~~ They're shoulder to shoulder with an expert in nutrition, the same registered dietitian that's providing amazing nutrition help for our elite athletes, we're able now to bring that through that enablement, bring that expertise to Poteau, Oklahoma, to Woodward, to Alva, we're able to basically translate and extend that network out through enablement like the folks at TSET. So a valuable, valuable teammate, that is a primary mechanism right now that we're teaming and we're always looking for more ways to team with great teammates, especially those that are in synergy with our overall mission.

[Sam, skip to 26:30 mark of Lance's interview]

J. Tyree: Finally, Lance, most of us are not big-time athletes but we do want to be physically active and realize it's important for our health, do you have a tip or resource to share or a bit of advice to keep us moving and active?

L. Walker: (26:30): Yeah, it's a great question and it's one I get a lot ~~and that discussion is months and years long to have~~. So what I typically like to do is to pull up a level and once again, leverage performance. And I'm going to leverage some of the most elite performers that I've ever been around. I'm talking about NFL Hall of Famers, Super Bowl MVPs, gold medalists, world-record holders. ~~I've been really blessed to be a part of support teams for many of those. And what I've found, and maybe others that are in this space that have done similar, have been around similar,~~ What I've found is some commonalities that I think we can all leverage, and they're simple. They're very simple commonalities. It's not easy, but it's simple.

(27:32): And the first is consistency over intensity. Sometimes we think, "Oh, I've got to go out and do that 150 minutes of ~~vigorous intense or~~ moderate to vigorous activity to tick the box for physical activity that I'm being recommended by my doctor or otherwise to get." It may be starting with a micro dose of that, maybe starting where you are, it could be two minutes of that and then two minutes becomes four and four becomes eight. It's the consistency of getting that done versus "I'm going to get it all in one" and then three weeks later, I wonder why I'm sore or I'm burned out or I don't have time.

(28:10): ~~And we're coming up on New Year's resolutions, I see it all the time. It's like, "On January 2nd, I'm going to start my exercise program." And they start out with this amazing program and it's exactly what the dosages and densities and start where you are. That might be just being consistent enough to get up when your alarm goes off in the morning for the next week. And so~~ That's something that we've learned from the elites is that they are ruthlessly consistent, but they start with being consistent on things that they can execute and they can be successful with and they build off of that.

(28:44): The other thing ~~I think that you mentioned that's the take home, I think is, what you said~~ is anchoring it to a why. I think sometimes we feel like I give advice a lot to folks, I always start asking them, "What's important to you?" And for me, that's that kayak example, or me having enough energy when I come home from today's work that I can give to my 15-year-old daughter and 18-year-old son and my wife. I want to give my best to them. So that becomes my anchor point for my decisions that I make for today, which includes what am I going to eat for lunch? ~~Am I going to eat what I have access to?~~ Am I going to make an extra effort to go a little bit farther to get something better? Am I doing that for my health?

(29:30): Yeah, ultimately, I guess, but I'm thinking more selfish than that I'm thinking for my why. I know if I eat X, I'm going to not have the energy that I would like in the

evening for my kiddos and my wife, which is important tonight. And so it gauges and it guides some of my decision-making because it's anchored to why.

(29:45): And that "why" is performance. ~~It's, I know not to eat horribly. I know that I need to get exercise. I know I should sleep better for my health, but when I start to anchor it to my kayaking and my kids, all of a sudden it takes on this unique feeling. And that's not for everybody, but for the high performers in this space,~~ That's why the football players are up at 6 a.m. lifting weights over here at the Boone Pickens Stadium this morning. Not because they like it, it's because they want to perform on Saturday and it's a means to an end. And that may be the same reason that anchors folks to sticking with consistent behaviors that drive their performance. ~~It's not because they like doing it, they don't like the exercise or the extra sleep hours that they want to get or having that extra effort to eat right or to do what they can to find ways to eat right given their situation,~~ it's because they're anchoring it to their why.

(30:43): It doesn't make it seamless and foolproof, but it just anchors it to a different sort of level of motivation, if you will, or behavior change that may be a great spot for them to start. So consistency over intensity, I think, anchoring it to that why, those are probably two of the biggest things that I've learned from high performance. ~~that I think we can pass down to the listeners and they can find some level of benefit from that.~~

(31:17): Well, I appreciate it. ~~I leave you with a one-liner that I've used in the past that helps me is when you hear performance,~~ We started talking about performance at the start of this thing, and we'll finish with it, but that performance, it's not about being elite. It's about the capacity to be your best when your best matters for what matters most. ~~And I think when we can all grab ahold of that and feel comfortable in saying that, it opens up an entire continuum of concepts for us to improve those lives, to improve our health through that lens of performance.~~ And so I leave your listeners with that and hope that helps them in 2026 and beyond.

### \*\*\* MUSIC \*\*\*

S. Carson: I appreciated how Lance ties physical activity and nutrition with the goals and inspirations of our lives, or the "why" we make healthy choices. With that thinking, eating healthier, staying physically active – and certainly living tobacco-free – becomes part of who we are and want to be, and not just something to add that we should do.

J. Tyree: Lance mentioned TSET's partnership with OSU's Project ECHO that provides expert information and mentorship in a wide variety of health and wellness areas to practitioners across the state. Dr. Tara Jackson heads Project ECHO at OSU and she explained its wide impact on our state in Episode 48 of our podcast. You can listen to that and all other past episodes at <https://www.oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast>.

However, just two of the TSET-funded ECHO initiatives that connect with the OSU-Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute are the Building Healthy School Communities that also partners with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to support PE teachers and administrators and community partners, and one that expands access to, and expertise in, sports medicine and athlete health expertise across Oklahoma, where less than half of schools have an athletic trainer.

S. Carson: Project ECHO at Oklahoma State University offers a ton of expertise in many areas to help many thousands of Oklahomans live healthier. But there are also smaller, community-based groups that encourage people to come together and engage in physical activity. Let's meet the leader of one such group and hear of the social supports they provide.

M. Drummond: (00:14): Hi. I'm Mitch Drummond. I'm the executive director of a nonprofit called Activate Oklahoma.

S. Carson: What is Activate Oklahoma? What is the organization's purpose and scope?

M. Drummond: (00:28) We are a nonprofit committed to improving Oklahoma's mental health through communal, socially oriented physical activity. We are breaking barriers in order to make the healthy choice and easy choice as our ultimate goal. Actually, we want to reframe the way that people think about exercise and active lifestyles in our home state by emphasizing the communal joys and broader health benefits associated with group activities, such as a simple regular walking program with other people.

S. Carson: There is a lot of value in the social and community aspects of wellness. What are your programs in this area, and how have they resonated in the Tulsa area?

M. Drummond: (01:18) Oh, absolutely. Our bread-and-butter initiative is our Breaking Barriers Walking Program. In that program, we partner with community organizations to bring weekly walking programs to typically historically underserved neighborhoods in the Tulsa area. This is generally a program that runs 12 to 14 weeks. It is a group training environment, where we have a goal event to celebrate everyone's accomplishments. We also measure progress and celebrate successes all along the way as we work towards that goal event.

This particular program is free and open to everyone, really across all ages and all abilities, and we really provide that welcoming environment for individuals as well as family and friends to have a nice, comfortable space to be. In 2025, we provided training programs in three areas across Tulsa that allowed us to connect with and support more people in our community. There's a couple of things that came up in our programs over the last several years that actually surprised us.

S. Carson: Like what?

M. Drummond: [03:00] Our main focus is to leverage the benefits of a social network, and we intentionally build and strengthen relationships for a stronger, broader social network as part of these group training programs. We measure both mental and physical health through a couple of either assessments or self-reported surveys. In 2025, 67% of our Breaking Barriers participants reported improved mental health.

(03:32): Then one of the things that we're most proud of that we really weren't expecting is really from an overall community perspective. One of our early objectives in this program was to activate some of those underutilized trails and public spaces in our community. Through our programs and public surveys, it was a little bit surprising to find how many people are unaware of some of the trails and parks that are actually in their own neighborhood or maybe even pretty close to their own backyard. During our Breaking Barriers program in the Phoenix District, we've been using the Osage Prairie Trail. The Osage Prairie Trail is a 16-mile trail that connects Tulsa to Skiatook, so lots and lots of room for walking and biking programs.

(04:20): What we found is that just using that trail on a regular basis actually catalyzed a larger communal growth along the course of the program. We witnessed more people begin using the trail, whether or not they were associated with our program. We saw more people taking care of their yards. We saw less trash along the trail. What's really satisfying to us really is that whenever we visit that trail, even though our programs aren't currently running, we're seeing those same people still out there using those trails on a regular basis. We're pretty proud of that, even though it was kind of an unexpected outcome.

S. Carson: That's a win-win for residents and their community. How has TSET become involved with your programs?

M. Drummond: (05:34): We've enjoyed a strong relationship with TSET for several years. I honestly don't know how many years. We started a few years ago as a member of the Tulsa County's Healthy Living Program as a member of the collaborative group, which is a TSET activity. The next step was TSET was actually one of our first sponsors for our Breaking Barriers 5K that we held three years ago. That was through your conference and training sponsorship program. Most recently, we are extremely fortunate to have been awarded a TSET Discovery Grant for our Connecting Oklahoma platform development.

(06:17): Connecting Oklahoma will be a trusted online resource for discovering free opportunities across the state for physical activity, and again, enabling an easy, healthy choice. Ultimately, Connecting Oklahoma will provide an online directory for every free-space event and group across the state that helps facilitate communal and socially oriented physical activity. Our ultimate goal is to consolidate and streamline all of this information and resources for all Oklahomans, that really just enable a healthy lifestyle by being able to discover opportunities right in your own backyard.

S. Carson: Activate Oklahoma sounds like a great community wellness organization for Tulsa-area residents. Do you have similar programs in other communities that their residents can tap into?

M. Drummond: (07:28): **That's right.** We know that it would be difficult to provide our training programs in every community in the state, but we do want people across the state to benefit from what we've learned in these programs. We're expecting the Connecting Oklahoma platform to make that more possible and more prominent across the state, so that people can either do some of these things on their own or find a group that is providing that kind of support.

(08:10): It will be an online directory, so web or mobile. We expect to be promoting the platform. Our schedule really is first year to cover Tulsa County, because that's what we know the most about, but then through the life of the Discovery Grant over the next three years, we'll expand that to be statewide.

S. Carson: Does that website or directory already exist?

M. Drummond: (08:49) Yeah, absolutely. We have an early version, kind of a preview version of the website available today, so that people can go to [connectingoklahoma.org](http://connectingoklahoma.org) and explore what's coming as far as parks and events and groups available. They can also sign up for our monthly newsletter, and based on that monthly newsletter, you can learn when the product will be available serving your area.

(09:26): Another element of that preview website is we'd like to collect input from people across the state, so there's a couple of surveys that we have on there that we'd like people to complete. We'd love to hear your input on what's available or maybe even what's not available in your area. Then also sign up for that newsletter, so we know that you're interested in the program and we can help support what your current needs are.

(10:00): **Either one.** You can sign up for the newsletter on either one of those websites. We actually have two newsletters. They're both monthly. One will focus on Activate Oklahoma and our programming, our hands-on group programming, and then the Connecting Oklahoma website will provide up-to-date information on where we're at with the program and the platform development.

S. Carson: So that is Connecting Oklahoma. How can our listeners and others learn more about or become involved with Activate Oklahoma?

M. Drummond: (10:36) Sure. [Activateoklahoma.org](http://Activateoklahoma.org) is where we have our programs listed, and [connectingoklahoma.org](http://connectingoklahoma.org) is where you can find information about that new platform.

We also try to make it easy on people so that just a single search, a web search for Activate Oklahoma, will help you find both of those resources without a lot of work.

**Sam, skip to Mitch's 12:47**

S. Carson: One final question, Mitch, and thank you for your time. Do you have a tip or suggestion for anyone who may not move much now but wants to begin or build on their physical activity?

M. Drummond: **(12:47)** My general advice is let's start easy. I mean, literally let's do this one step at a time. If you're going to watch the Olympics, stand up in your living room and maybe walk around, pace around a little bit. Don't try to do the hurdles, right? Not on that first day. **Some other ways just to be paying a little bit more attention to your physical health** **is** I like to tell people to just take a walk, and maybe only make it 10 or 15 minutes. Just do 10 or 15 minutes a day and you'll feel better. You'll sleep better after a couple of weeks.

**(13:28):** Another easy way is whenever you go shopping, park at the far side of the parking lot, and just get in a few extra steps each time you go into a retail store. Maybe the second week, you start returning the cart all the way to the front door to get in a few more steps, and just slowly go from there. Pick one thing and work on it. **You don't have to jump into a full gym routine and completely change your diet habits and** **[00:14:00] add a bunch of cardio exercise.** Just do one thing and do it well.

**\*\*\* MUSIC \*\*\***

J. Tyree: You can tell Mitch is enthusiastic about the physical, mental and community benefits that physical activity in groups can bring. It's great how the sight of these walking groups in the community spurred others who aren't members to get out and walk on trails some didn't even know existed. Talk about a ripple effect of health and wellness!

S. Carson: Connecting Oklahoma will be a good resource for people throughout the state who want to join others in walking and other forms of physical activity. A great website to visit for physical activity and nutrition tips whether you're alone, with the kids or with friends is our very own <https://www.shapeyourfutureok.com>. The number of enticing recipes and practical ideas to get moving is plentiful, so be sure to check it out.

J. Tyree: TSET has funding opportunities to increase wellness in communities, like the Discovery grant that Activate Oklahoma was awarded and TSET Built Environment. But there's a new one that began this fiscal year that a colleague of ours will tell us more about.

Angela Daly: **(00:09):** Yes. Hello, my name is Angela Daly, and I am one of the program managers for community programs on our Engagement and Impact team here at TSET.

J. Tyree: TSET has a new grant program called Targeted Achievement Grant: Physical Activity, or TAG: PA. When did it start and what is it about?

A. Daly **(00:30):** So, the TAG Physical Activity Grant is part of TSET's Targeted Achievement Grant programs, which are aimed to strengthen local efforts to create healthier communities in Oklahoma, and these grants are really supporting evidence-based strategies that help communities increase access to physical activity, improving healthy food options, and help prevent youth tobacco use. So, the TAG Physical Activity Grant is a new funding opportunity that was offered by TSET in fiscal year '26, which is aimed to support program initiatives that help people be more active together. So, examples of these programs may include long-term walking groups, community exercise classes, or group activities in existing public spaces. All of these are essentially aimed to help people be more active together.

S. Carson: What makes this a unique funding opportunity compared to other TSET grant programs?

A. Daly **(01:45):** That's an excellent question. So, this funding opportunity is unique because it specifically supports new or expanded social support programs in community settings, and those are aimed to help build, strengthen, and sustain social networks that encourage or really reinforce positive behaviors and physical activity behavior in communities.

J. Tyree: Any person can get up and move or exercise in any way they want and at any time. So why does this TAG grant focus on the social or community aspect of physical activity?

A. Daly: Right. So, as you mentioned, individuals, they can exercise any way or any time that they want, however, group activity can improve not only physical health, but also mental wellbeing. So, when people move together, whether it's in a walking group in the park or a fitness class at a local rec center, they build trust and connection and accountability with one another. So, when we show up for each other, we're more likely to stick to those new habits, and that kind of support can really lead to lifelong change to improve health, and that's really the magic behind this funding opportunity, it combines movement with meaningful community support.

S. Carson: Who is eligible to apply for this funding opportunity?

A. Daly: **(03:28):** Absolutely. So, eligible applicants for this specific funding opportunity can include Oklahoma local governments, so this may be towns, cities, counties. It also includes nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, tribal nations, institutions of common and higher education, county health departments, and public entities. So, those include public school districts and sites, as well as state government. The applicants for this funding opportunity must be located in select 32 counties as part of a pilot grant initiative, and these counties were really selected based on TSET's history and

collaboration with community engagement in these areas. ~~And by focusing efforts in these counties where this strong foundation has been laid, this pilot initiative will really maximize impact and serve as a scalable model for possible expansion into other regions in the future.~~

J. Tyree: How and when can eligible entities apply for this grant?

A. Daly: [\(04:41\)](#) So, this funding opportunity opened on September 23rd, 2025, and it closed November 18th, 2025. And awarded grantees for this funding opportunity are set to start July 1st, 2026. And while this specific funding opportunity is closed, we do encourage listeners to visit TSET's website at [TSET.ok.gov](http://TSET.ok.gov) to sign up for alerts and stay informed about new RFAs, grants, or other public health funding initiatives, and these alerts will be sent directly to their inbox.

S. Carson: A lot of people know TSET for funding the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline and working to prevent tobacco and vape use. So, why is TSET interested in people becoming more physically active?

A. Daly: [\(05:30\)](#) ~~Right,~~ that's a great question. As you may know, TSET is a state grantmaking trust that's devoted to preventing cancer and cardiovascular disease, which are leading causes of death in Oklahoma. So, a sedentary lifestyle is a major contributor to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. ~~So, this funding opportunity, the TAG Physical Activity Funding opportunity, is an opportunity for others to...~~ So, this funding opportunity allows a strategic focus on addressing some of those root causes associated with chronic diseases. And as Julie Bisbee, our TSET executive director says, "We are committed to funding innovative programs that make the healthy choice the easy choice for Oklahomans," and this grant empowers local organizations to do just that by bringing people together and getting them moving.

\*\*\* MUSIC \*\*\*

S. Carson: Most of us want to be more physically active, not only for enjoyment, but also for our cardiovascular health. Physical activity can help us live longer and better, and finding support within our community or from experts in the field can help us stay active over the long run.

J. Tyree: We want to thank our guests today, Lance Walker of OSU's Human Performance and Nutrition Research Institute, Mitch Drummond of Activate Oklahoma and Angela Daly of TSET for joining us today. And we thank you, our listeners, for your time and interest in health and wellness for yourself, your family and your community.

S. Carson: Remember, you can listen to this or any episode of the TSET Better Health Podcast at [oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast](http://oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast) or anywhere you listen to podcasts. So have a great day, enjoy the Olympics and until next time, this is Sarah Carson ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree wishing you peace ...

S. Carson: And one more guest!

That's right, everyone. Sam Carrillo has worked behind the scenes of the TSET Better Health Podcast as our audio engineer and producer. But we have never heard from here on the podcast – at least not until today.

J. Tyree: I learned very recently that Sam is training for a big event this spring and that he decided to train with a running group to help him achieve his goal. That fits perfectly with this episode's theme, so I asked him to join us briefly and share his story.

J. Tyree: Sam, you have been our audio producer for some time. It is so nice to have you on as a guest. I learned yesterday that you plan to run the half marathon at this city's Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon. I wanted to ask, have you run a race like this before? And what prompted you to make this leap?

S. Carrillo: Yeah, well, it'll be my first time. I've never done this big of a race before. I've done my fair share of 5Ks, but this will be my first half marathon. It was sort of a New Year resolution kind of thing.

J. Tyree That sounds pretty happy. that ah That sounds terrific. That sounds great. So I also learned that you were doing some of your training with a local running club. So although running, jogging, walking, that's all an individual activity, how helpful for you is this group activity for you and why?

S. Carrillo: Yeah, running solo can be a real struggle most times. But running as a team or with a community, it feels like you're doing it together with others. Whether you're tackling like your first run or it's your first 5k, I think it sort of creates like-energy that flows through everyone to, like, want to run with others. When you're running solo, you kind of run into a lot of hurdles of excuses to either give up, slow down, or not push yourself as much as you can.

So I've invested time in looking into different run groups, people that run together like Red Coyote, as well as others. And just kind of going with friends and choosing to run with others, kind of keeping each other accountable and motivated most of the time. Keeping the bad thoughts out as you run, wanting to either give up or thinking you can't get through that you knew last mile. So, yeah, it's been great.

J. Tyree: Very good. Well, let me ask you this final question before I let you go to produce this episode. **But** How do you like to be physically active when you are not prepping for a half marathon?

S. Carrillo: Well, great question. **know, you knew** As I began my running journey, I've learned that running is really just a year-round thing you can do even without a race in mind. So I've implemented that mostly. **Even when I'm not training or running for something, I still do either very slow jogs, walk around the park.** I think moving in general is like a big part of my life, and that's what I do. Even when I'm not training for anything, I'll, you know, go out, stroll by the park, walk by the lake, ah maybe a little neighborhood run. Anything that keeps my body kind of moving forward. I'm not a big gym guy, but running has become sort of part of my daily routine, even if I wasn't doing this half marathon.

J. Tyree: Excellent. Well, thanks for stopping by, Sam. I really appreciate it. I wish you all the best and good luck at the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon and actually everyone who will be participating at that event **coming up, ah it's ah It's a great event, It's super important for our community and it's a great way to stay physically active and healthy, so thank you.**

S. Carrillo: **Thank you, James.** Thank you for having me on. it was a pleasure.

S. Carson: We definitely are cheering for Sam and all participants. Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon events are scheduled this year from April 24 through 26. Thank you for joining us today. Stay warm this winter, stay physically active, and for real this time, this is Sarah Carson ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree wishing you peace,

S. Carson: And better health.