

Study: Access to local trails lowers youth obesity

By Nathan Hurst, Springfield News-Leader

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Researchers at the University of Missouri and the University of Minnesota have found that local governments can help cut record levels of youth obesity by expanding public lands available for recreation.

Sonja Wilhelm-Stanis, an associate professor of parks, recreation and tourism in the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, found that counties with more non-motorized nature trails and forest lands have higher levels of youth activity and lower youth obesity, while counties with more nature preserves have lower activity levels.

Wilhelm Stanis, along with her co-authors Andrew Oftedal and Ingrid Schneider from the University of Minnesota, studied data from every county in the state of Minnesota, comparing youth activity rates and youth obesity rates to amount of public non-motorized nature trails, motorized nature trails, nature preserves, parklands and forest land.

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