

## Walking on Coquina Key

By Matt Hoolehan, Coquina Key Resident

Spring has finally sprung in on Coquina Key and there's no better time to get out and explore the island. The combination of low traffic, fresh air and happy neighbors (Coquina Key is "The Friendly Island" after all!) make it a perfect place to get some exercise, and there's no better way to get exercise than walking.

Why walk? There are few ways to get your body moving that provide as many health benefits. Did you know that walking has been shown to increase circulation, reduce blood pressure and strengthen the hearts of those that do it on a regular basis? That's according to the Harvard School of Public Health. There's more: Walking has been shown to improve mood, reduce depression and anxiety, improve sleep, help weight loss, lower Alzheimer's risk and increase strength. Not bad for something most of us have been doing since before we learned to talk.

In fact, the Greek physician Hippocrates said: Walking is man's best medicine. It's hard to argue with the guy who penned the Hippocratic Oath.

To get started on your walking routine, you'll need:

- A good pair of shoes. Not an expensive pair, but a pair that fits well and supports your foot.
- Comfortable clothes. Dress appropriately for our beautiful Florida weather, but make sure you like what you're wearing. Looking good is the first step to feeling good.
- Take care of your body. Warm up by starting slow and building speed. End by cooling down and when you're finished, take a few minutes to stretch.

You don't need to go far to get a good workout. The average person walks at about 3 miles per hour, a good exercise walking pace is around 4 mph. Of course, that may be something to work toward or it may be too slow for you. Only you know how the best speed for you to walk, but a good rule of thumb is that you should walk fast enough to have a conversation but too fast to sing. In other words, you should feel like you're pushing yourself a little bit. It's exercise and it's a challenge.

Once you start walking, you're sure to get the question: How far did you walk? It's easy to give a time and say, "oh, I walked for 40 minutes." But to really impress your friends, you've got to know distance. And one of the advantages of Coquina Key is that we've got a few loops to walk. My favorite route is the loop created by taking **Lewis Boulevard** over the bridge to **Sunrise Drive** to **Elkcam Boulevard** back to **Lewis Boulevard**. Closing that simple loop is exactly 1.5 miles. It's a simple calculation to add your laps, then estimate and add your distance to GET to the loop. Many tools are available to map your own routes!

See you on the road!

This loop is 1.5 miles long!

