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PRESS RELEASE

CITY OF ALAMOGORDO

City of Alamogordo

Have You Found Each of the Desert Critters Yet?

Alamogordo, NM Friday, August 6, 2021 There are 19 stone monuments waiting to be discovered throughout Washington Park in Alamogordo. City of Alamogordo in partnership with Otero Health Council *HEAL* team (Healthy Eating Active Living) invite you to explore the new *Desert Critters Trail*. We will hold a special event to celebrate the completion of this scavenger hunt style trail, on Thursday, August 26th at 3:15 pm at the Washington Park Stage, corner of 1st Street and Washington Avenue in Alamogordo.

Please join us for a brief ribbon cutting ceremony at which we will thank our partners and celebrate this whimsical new addition to the beloved park. Desert Critters Trail souvenirs and fresh fruit-to-go will be provided at the event, while supplies last. There are 18 animals plus one Zia stone monument to discover; bring family and friends to help you find them all while enjoying some rejuvenating time outdoors.

Desert Critters Trail partners for this project include: City of Alamogordo, Otero Soil and Water Conservation District, Otero County Community Health Council HEAL Action Team, US Forest Service - Lincoln National Forest, NM Department of Health, The Grindstone Group, and Eco-Servants. This project is funded by Paso del Norte Health Foundation.

HEAL proposed the idea of a scavenger hunt style trail with this goal in mind: Creating a community environment that promotes physical activity and reduces sedentary behavior. Washington Park has been revitalized, upgraded and revamped. City leadership offered Washington Park, and HEAL agreed this is an ideal location, offering a safe and frequented place for families to spend outdoors time walking and playing. Desert Critters Trail offers a fun way to learn about our local fauna. The Trail also promotes being physically active at one's own pace, with a social support aspect. Expected benefits for individuals and the community include: enjoying more outdoor time, increased use of a neighborhood park where children can gain new physical activity experiences, revitalizing a cornerstone park, and enhancing a natural setting that is easily accessible from several residential areas.

"Making physical activity the easy choice for individuals and families is the goal of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation's Physical Activity initiative. The Desert Critters Trail does just that by providing a fun activity for families to be active together," said Jana Renner, Program Officer from Paso del Norte Health Foundation.

"Paso del Norte Health Foundation based in El Paso TX generously funded this project through their HEAL Initiative, and we were pleased to have the opportunity to help support this educational, fun and health-promoting project together with regional partners in Otero and Lincoln Counties," said Vicky Milne of the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District.

"This project is a fun new opportunity for families. I am looking forward to bringing my own kids to the park to find the Desert Critters." Kayla Wedlow, Otero Health Council HEAL Chairperson.

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Going to the park is fun, free, and improves fitness and emotional well-being. Documented benefits of physical activity include: improved bone health, weight management, improved cardio-respiratory health, improved cognition, reduced anxiety and depression, improved sleep, and reduced risk of many cancers according to the [CDC Physical Activity webpage](#).

If you haven't been to Washington Park lately – come on out Thursday, August 26th at 3:15pm to see the new trail and walk in the park. A hat and your own water bottle are suggested as it will likely be fairly warm!

In addition, Washington Park, on the northeast corner of Washington Avenue and First Street in Alamogordo now offers: a newly installed Futsal court, shaded concrete skate park, soccer fields, covered playground, multiple picnic pavilions, a footbridge, basketball courts, hockey rink, bathrooms and a permanent stage for community events. An ADA compliant sidewalk runs through most of the park, and the footbridge is also ADA compliant. Grass seed has been planted and recent rains have helped to re-green this large green space! Desert Critters Trail adds whimsy to our walk in the park, encourages increased outdoor activity time, and can help us learn about and respect the indigenous animals in our region.

“We were excited to partner with Otero Health Council and Paso del Norte Health Foundation to provide this beautiful addition to our Washington Park. I urge our citizens to get out and enjoy the trail. Staff did an amazing job and work extremely hard so that our community can get fresh air, exercise, picnic, and just enjoy the outdoors.” said Stephanie Hernandez, Assistant City Manager

Learn more at one of the newly installed trailhead signs in the park, or on the City's website at tiny.cc/desertcritterstrail. This page offers information about each animal as well as several printable activities for youngsters of any age. Scan the QR code below to learn more.

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