

# walk

By DICK VACCA

## Meet ED Michael Immel

Issues involving public health and the urban environment have long occupied Michael Immel. As a WalkBoston member, he's seen how walking can bridge the two. And as WalkBoston's new executive director, he can act on all three using his professional experience.

Named in April, Immel brings a unique perspective to the position. He spent 8 years developing and directing education programs for the AIDS Action Committee in Boston and 11 more designing and directing urban projects as a landscape architect. A believer in open communication and creative management, he has often worked as liaison between funding organizations, staff, volunteers and target audiences.

Immel can already visualize three paths to progress:

- Seek additional partners for programs like Safe Routes to Schools and pursue long-range fundraising opportunities structured like STEPS, WalkBoston's current five-year program with the Boston Public Health Commission. [see Walking Groups, back page].
- Expand WalkBoston's consulting practice by offering services such as community audits of walking environments or helping planners incorporate walking into the design process.
- Employ social marketing strategies successful in the public health field. Social marketing informs, educates and encourages people to change an attitude or behavior—for example, to get out and walk more often. Immel points to WalkBoston's guided walks as instances of social marketing, where people have the opportunity to try something new. If they have a good experience, they'll do it again.

By strengthening existing programs and exploring new opportunities, Immel believes WalkBoston can further its local leadership in creating safe walking environments and expanding the walking constituency. All the recent news about Overweight America may signal the time is right for Immel's active approach.

## Annual Meeting

The 14th Annual Meeting of WalkBoston, held on March 25, 2004, was marked by a change in leadership, as Ann Hershfang turned over the presidency to Liz Levin. The first speaker was Steve Burrington of the state Office of Commonwealth Development, formerly of the Conservation Law Foundation, and a member of WalkBoston. Steve thanked WalkBoston for its contributions to development of pedestrian-friendly places in Massachusetts. Steve introduced Dan Burden, president of Walkable Communities and a national expert on pedestrian improvements, who presented a slide show demonstrating that town after town has successfully implemented projects incorporating walkability and pedestrian access to create valuable and safe public spaces. Burden said that pedestrian safety has gone through the three stages of truth: 1) first, it is ridiculed; 2) second, it is violently opposed; 3) and finally, it is accepted as self-evident! To work for change, he said, we must first dare to dream with others to overcome the barriers to implementation of change.

By BOB SLOANE

## New WalkBoston President

Elizabeth Levin, affectionately known as Liz, is the new president of WalkBoston. She began her presidency at our 14th annual meeting in March.

Liz has been a WalkBoston Board member since 2002. Well-known in her South End neighborhood, Liz is active in environmental, transportation and engineering projects throughout Greater Boston.

A Wellesley College graduate, Liz holds a Masters of Urban Affairs degree from Boston University and an MBA from Simmons School of Management.

President of Liz Levin & Company, a management consulting company serving the transportation, design and environmental industry, Liz was formerly a Senior Vice President and Principal at Rizzo Associates. At Rizzo, she led the Transportation and Environmental Permitting Group.

Liz's work has led to regional and national prominence, with honors and awards from the Environmental Business Council, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, Women's Educational & Industrial Union and Women's Transportation Seminar.

Looking to the year ahead, Liz challenged WalkBoston members "to walk and engage with her and the Board as we move this year to build our organization's resources and to advance safer and better walking environments."

## 2004 Golden Shoe awards

Awarded at the 14th Annual WalkBoston meeting in March

**Beth Larkin** is leading a task force that is rewriting the Massachusetts Highway Design Manual, so that pedestrian needs will be included in the design of transportation facilities.

**HNTB**, Beth's employer, was cited for graciously providing time for her to undertake this leadership effort.

**The Cambridge Public Health Department** sponsors an annual Cambridge Walks Program to encourage residents of all ages to walk and search for gold-painted shoes conspicuously "hidden" in parks and playgrounds. Pedestrians who discover a golden shoe can swap it for a free pair of New Balance walking shoes.

**William "Buzz" Constable** is an attorney active in conservation and trail development through the Land Conservation Trust in his hometown, Lincoln. Because of Buzz's efforts, Lincoln now boasts walking trails along all of its roads for recreation and for walking to school.

**Ann Hershfang** was WalkBoston's president from 1997 to 2004. She proudly notes the growth of the organization from its original 40 members to over 500 today. She has been invaluable as an advocate for pedestrians, and will continue her work as an advocate for improving pedestrian facilities and programs.



Michael Immel ED | Liz Levin President

# Boston

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES  
MORE WALKABLE

SPRING 2004

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### COMMITTEES/CONTACTS

**executive director**  
Michael Immel 617.367.9255

**operations manager**  
Robert Sloane 617.367.9255

**advocacy**  
Ann Hershfang 617.267.9770

**consulting**  
Liz Levin 617.542.1253

**communications**  
Nina Garfinkle 617.424.9115

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**membership**  
Holly Bogle 617.496.5354

**newsletter design/production**  
Nina Garfinkle 617.424.9115

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Anne McKinnon 617.522.0259

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Dorothea Hass 617.232.0104  
Don Eunson 617.522.0656

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MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL

**walkBoston**  
 45 School Street  
 Boston, MA 02108  
 T: 617.367.9255  
 F: 617.367.9285  
 info@walkboston.org  
 www.walkboston.org

WalkBoston promotes walking for transportation, health and recreation through education and advocacy. Our mission is to create and preserve safe walking environments that build vital communities.

## wanted

**New copy machine** Small desktop copier with self-feeding feature. Used for 1000 copies/month. Call or email the office for details

**Membership volunteers** Help membership grow to new levels! Team with our new staff to find new members and renew old memberships. Camaraderie and fun in return for only a few hours each week!

**Volunteer coordinator** We need a few hours of help each week in finding and managing volunteer work. We have a lot of exciting things to do, and too few people to do it all. Join us in encouraging member participation! Call 617.367.9255.

**DNC help** If you want to participate in our efforts, contact Erik Scheier at [escheier@comcast.net](mailto:escheier@comcast.net) or call 617.899.9116

## walking groups

**NeighborWalk walking groups**  
 The Boston Public Health Commission's STEPS Program has over 58 walking groups set up in seven neighborhoods as part of its anti-obesity and health campaign. WalkBoston is part of the STEPS program, helping create groups in Chinatown/South End, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park, South Boston, Mattapan, and Roxbury. WalkBoston will aid these groups in evaluating local walking routes and recommending ways to improve pedestrian facilities – through neckdowns, wider sidewalks and more walk time at signals.

For information on joining a walking group, see [www.bphc.org/bphc/neighborwalk\\_sched.asp](http://www.bphc.org/bphc/neighborwalk_sched.asp).

## riverpaths

On April 24, we joined with the cities of Somerville and Everett and the Mystic River Watershed Association to highlight the need for a path over the closed Amelia Earhart Dam on the Mystic River. First, representatives of the cities boated to the middle of the Mystic to point out the short distance – 900 feet – covered by the dam. Then walkers walked around the basin on a four-mile land route to demonstrate the value of the short pedestrian crossing over the dam.

The DCR has designated \$250,000 of the \$1 million fine levied on Exelon Northeast for clean-air violations in Everett to design a path over the dam. We believe the simplest solution would be replacing the existing catwalk with a pedestrian walkway.

## walking cities

The American Podiatric Medical Association, concerned with the health of the feet of our citizens, has surveyed 125 US cities to determine those best suited for fitness and walking in 2004. **Boston ranked number 7**, outranked only by New York, San Diego, Jersey City, Honolulu, Madison, and Philadelphia. To establish rankings, the Association weighed 20 criteria chosen to reflect both walking and walking conditions. Criteria concerning walking conditions included crime, urban sprawl, air quality, and annual precipitation of both rain and snow. Pedestrian participation rates were reflected in choice of commuting mode (walk/or bike and the use of mass transit), and the use of historic sites, museums, parks and health or fitness clubs in each city.

## membership application

Complete this form & mail along with your check made payable to: WalkBoston, Old City Hall, 45 School Street, Boston, MA 02108.  
 T: 617.367.9255 | F: 617.367.9285 | [info@walkboston.org](mailto:info@walkboston.org) | [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org)

name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

phone:daytime \_\_\_\_\_ evening \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ fax \_\_\_\_\_

- check one:  STUDENT / SENIOR [ 65+ ] \$15  SUPPORTER \$50  
 MEMBER \$30  FRIEND \$100  
 DUAL / FAMILY \$40  ORGANIZATION \$250 | \$500 | \$1000

- circle committees you are interested in. (to contact them directly - see front)
- membership  advocacy  communications  
 legislative  development  programs

Your donation is tax deductible as a charitable contribution.

BY ERIK SCHEIER

## DNC walking

**Opportunity** Thousands of delegates and visitors will attend the July Democratic National Convention (DNC). The DNC is an opportunity for WalkBoston and political leaders to raise awareness of the transportation, environmental/ health benefits of walking, and to feature Boston as a walkable city.

**Choosing Walking** Each day, these visitors will make a transportation and health choice: take a shuttle bus, taxi, the MBTA, or walk from nearby hotels to the Fleet Center. To influence this choice, WalkBoston will publicize walking as the most healthy transportation mode available and ask high profile leaders to walk with delegates.

**The Routes** WalkBoston volunteers will be stationed at hotels and along the best walking routes to the convention. Volunteers will guide the delegates along these routes, making their walk convenient, informative, and enjoyable.

- To accomplish this WalkBoston will:
- Distribute maps and route info at hotels during the convention.
  - Provide "WalkStations" with colorful banners and T-shirt clad volunteers to cheer and celebrate the walking delegates.
  - Describe travel time, health and environmental impacts for transit, shuttle bus, taxi, and walking choices.
- \* Create a memorable walking surface illustrated with artwork drawn on the pavement by a Boston artistic legend.