

HIP Happenings

Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan

Fall 2004

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Healthy Communities walking program sees positive results

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"I was a couch potato, with little energy and no motivation to do much of anything. After I started walking regularly, I began to feel better and more energetic almost immediately. The Healthy Communities Walking Program gives me the support and encouragement I need to keep going." This observation from Doug White, Chelsea resident, is characteristic of the positive results reported from the first evaluation of the 14-month-old Healthy Communities project spearheaded by Chelsea Community Hospital. The Healthy Communities program targets residents of Chelsea, Manchester and Dexter and was developed in response to the alarming HIP statistics of 2000. Like the rest of the county, they observed dropping physical activity rates and increasing obesity rates among their community members.

An important part of the campaign has been to raise awareness of the recommendation to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day and promoting a variety of ideas for reaching the goal. "I always thought that you had to walk for hours to get any sort of benefit, until I talked with the Healthy Communities people. They taught me that I can walk three times a day for 10 minutes and get the same benefits than if I would have walked for a straight 30 minutes. When I go to the store, I don't search for the closest parking spot any more. It's so easy for me to build walking into my daily activities," says Chris Brown, Manchester resident.

Social support, or having friends who support your exercise by walking with you, is a proven technique for increasing physical activity rates. With this best practice in mind, Healthy Communities organized walking groups and hired leaders to encourage and track the walkers. Barb Rutz of Dexter found this support particularly helpful, "Walking is a great benefit not only physically, but emotionally, especially when walking with friends, as I do. We exchange ideas, solve problems, and the bonus is that we stay healthy while enjoying each other."

A recent survey of 69 participants at a one-year follow-up session found that:

- Average weight decreased by 8 pounds (172 to 164 lbs)
- Average Body Mass Index (BMI) decreased by 1.4 points
- Number of days per week that participants engaged in more than 30 minutes of medium or heavy exercise increased 85% (2.7 to 5 days)

Total miles reported by all participants is 29,636, with average weekly miles recorded of 8 miles (two more than the program goal of 6 miles per week on average).

The walking program steering committee is currently in the next phase of planning,

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"I always thought that you had to walk for hours to get any sort of benefit. . ."

*Chris Brown,
Manchester resident*

HIP Member Spotlight: Meet Jeff Schulz

Jeff Schulz, Associate Professor of Health Education for the School of Health Promotion and Human Performance at Eastern Michigan University, attended his first CHC meeting in March, 2004. As a new Ypsilanti resident and EMU faculty member, Jeff found the CHC “Particularly helpful in finding ways to get involved in local public health and connect with local community programs students could work with.”



After receiving his Ph.D. in Health Sciences from the University of Arkansas, Jeff was an assistant professor of Health Education at Mississippi State University. There, he worked closely with the Mississippi State Department of Health on chronic disease prevention projects. In addition he served as a project director for the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi, a

statewide tobacco use prevention coalition funded by tobacco settlement money.

During his time at EMU, Jeff has worked to increase the involvement of his students in local public health by requiring students to research and observe several community programs. He has recently facilitated the

placement of students at East Middle School in Ypsilanti to help explore ways to expand their student walking program to include parents, seniors and other community members. Jeff notes that after observing local health efforts, several students have been inspired to “Bring these health efforts back to their own communities,” which are often communities in southeast Michigan. Jeff is the Graduate Coordinator of the new M.S. in Health Education program beginning in January, 2005, and looks forward to increased community involvement from the future graduate students.

Jeff says he is “particularly concerned about the obesity crisis we are currently seeing across the lifespan” as well as “the recent increase in smoking I’ve seen in high school and college aged students, especially among young women.” He looks forward to working on the HIP focus areas to help address these issues.

Jeff is excited about becoming further involved in the Ypsilanti community. Currently, he is supporting Ypsilanti youth on the Parkridge Community Center Youth Board. These Ypsilanti high school students are learning community leadership skills through a variety of projects, including fund raising efforts to keep the center doors open after a funding cut last year. Jeff also was recently elected to the board of the Ypsilanti-Area Beyer Memorial Health Foundation and looks forward to continuing his collaboration with HIP and CHC.

Upcoming Community Health Committee Meetings:

January 11, 2005

March 8, 2005

All meetings will be held from

12:00—1:30pm at the

Library Learning Resource Center, Room A
4135 Washtenaw Ave, Ann Arbor

(inside the County Service Center at the corner
of Washtenaw and Hogback Rds.)

Visit the HIP website at

<http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>

New Healthy Eating report available

Washtenaw County Public Health, in coordination with the Health Improvement Plan, has released “Healthy Eating in Washtenaw County,” a report detailing eating trends and the eating environment in the U.S. and locally. The report also describes the process and results of the Healthy Eating Expert Panel, which met twice last year to review local healthy eating data and develop “key messages” on nutrition for the community.

“Washtenaw County residents are not eating enough fruits and vegetables,” says report author Jenna Bacolor. “Our data show that men across all racial and age groups are at particular risk for not eating their 5-a-day.”

This report complements the “Physical Activity in Washtenaw County” report, released last year and available on the HIP website. Both reports are posted on the HIP website for download: <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>. A limited number of paper copies are available by contacting Jenna Bacolor at bacolorj@ewashtenaw.org or 544-2969.

Many take action after attending Healthy Eating, Active Living workshop

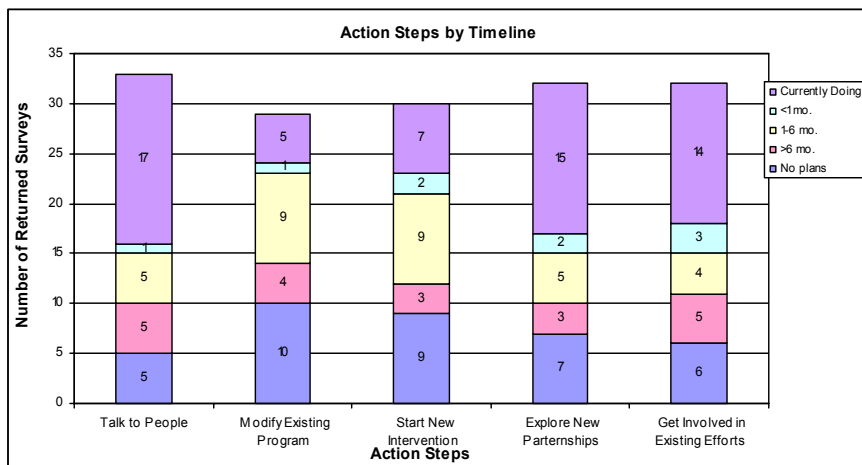
To combat obesity and promote healthy eating and physical activity, the Washtenaw County Public Health Department (WCPHD) hosted the Healthy Eating, Active Living! Workshop on May 7, 2004. Over eighty Washtenaw County community members representing worksites, schools, hospitals, faith-based institutions, community organizations, cities, and neighborhoods attended the workshop to learn about best practices for promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Speakers included local public officials and directors of successful programs.

To determine the effectiveness of the workshop, the Washtenaw County Public Health Department sent a follow-up survey in July 2004 to the participants. In the survey, attendees were asked to indicate when they might implement five action steps:

- Talk to people in their organization about best practices for healthy eating and physical activity;
- Modify an existing program;
- Start a new intervention;
- Explore new partnerships; and
- Get involved in existing efforts in the community.

The survey also included a section to request technical assistance from the Washtenaw County Public Health Department.

43% of workshop attendees responded to the survey. The majority of respondents stated that they were cur-



rently talking to people in their organization, exploring new partnerships, or getting involved in existing community efforts to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Others stated that they plan to modify an existing program or start a new intervention for eating healthfully and exercising within the next six months (see Graph).

The article on page 4 highlights the efforts of three people who attended the workshop.

The Washtenaw County Public Health Department is excited by the level of community involvement to promote healthy eating and physical activity. WCPH continues to offer technical assistance to schools and community groups who are looking for strategies based on best practices. To share your plans or to receive assistance, please contact Jenna Bacolor at bacolorj@ewashtenaw.org or 734-544-2969.

Healthy Communities Walking Program

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which includes:

- ◆ Gathering information about existing sidewalks and trails within the three communities;
- ◆ Developing well marked routes using the existing sidewalks and trails
- ◆ Developing brochures that map the routes and distances between markers
- ◆ Establishing a plan to promote the use of the routes and maintain the route markers.

For more information, visit <http://www.cch.org/healthycommunities/index.html>.

*Congratulations to Saint Joseph Mercy
Health System for changing to a smoke
free campus November 1!*

Three HEAL workshop attendees describe their plans

Several workshop attendees met with Public Health intern Eileen Kuet to describe how attending the Healthy Eating, Active Living Workshop influenced their efforts to promote healthy eating and active living. The following article highlights three individuals' experiences.

Karen Lang, Thurston Wellness Committee

The Thurston PTO Wellness Committee is a group of concerned parents of students attending Thurston Elementary School in Ann Arbor. Wellness Committee member Karen Lang attended the Healthy Eating, Active Living workshop to learn more about community walking programs and the Healthy School Action Tool.



Students attending Thurston Elementary School in Ann Arbor. Wellness Committee member Karen Lang attended the Healthy Eating,

The Wellness Committee recently partnered with M-Care to launch "*Thurston on the Move*," an eight week pedometer program based on the statewide walking initiative Michigan On The Move. Students are using pedometers to track their daily steps with the goal of increasing their average steps per day by 2,000. This effort was highlighted by the Ann Arbor News on October 25, 2004.

Judy Gniewek, Milan Area Schools

Judy Gniewek, a school nurse for the Milan Area Schools, attended the Healthy Eating, Active Living workshop because she is concerned about rising obesity in children and adolescents. Attending the workshop "validated my fears and concerns about a sedentary society." She reports that she is seeing more Type II diabetes in Milan high school students, which has the highest number of teen diabetics compared to surrounding high schools. She has also improved her lifestyle since attending the workshop. "I walk more and eat much better," she notes.



At Simon Elementary School, Judy plans to encourage healthy eating habits by enrolling the school in Team Nutrition, a program that promotes nutritious school meals, nutrition education, and a healthy school environment to help students learn to enjoy healthy eating and physical activity. She has already been successful in changing the a la carte menu to include healthier selections. In addition, Ms. Gniewek hopes to utilize the Healthy Schools Action Tool (HSAT) to assess the school environment for healthy eating, physical activity, and nutrition education. WCPH has agreed to provide facilitators for the HSAT if the school decides to implement this program.

Measie James, Washtenaw County Head Start

As vice-chair of the Community Health Committee, HIP's bi-monthly public meeting, and a program manager at Washtenaw County Head Start, Measie James understands the need for programs to help get families moving.

"More children today are placing at higher percentiles on growth charts than in the past," says Measie. Moreover, she notes that many healthy eating and exercise programs focus on teens and adolescents, but students who are at-risk for overweight often "start at younger ages and we need to catch them before adolescence."



To intervene with a younger age group, Washtenaw County Head Start has developed a Family Walking Program. This program will target Head Start families and students who place greater than the 95th percentile on growth charts. Head Start has created a Walking Package that will include pedometers, a walking slide guide with walking and fitness tips, healthy recipes, walking log to record progress, and a virtual mileage grid with distances to local points of interests such as Mackinac Island, and Cedar Point. One challenge that Measie foresees is to "get them [families] to commit and do it." To motivate families, prizes will be given to families when they reach certain milestones.

Washtenaw County Head Start has also promoted healthy eating and physical activity at the worksite. At a recent inservice meeting, a fitness specialist presented information and tips to staying fit and moving at work as well as some exercises. Other information about eating healthfully was also discussed at the meeting.

Would YOU Like to Be Featured?

HIP Happenings will continue to run stories of community residents working to promote healthy eating and active living in their worksites, communities, and schools. Please contact Melissa Fochesato at fochesam@ewashtenaw.org or (734) 544-3083 if you would like us to showcase *your* efforts!