A publication of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

NACDD & ACHIEVE:

changing policy. changing lives.

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The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) provides state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control at the state and national levels by developing partnerships to pursue common goals, developing legislative analyses concerning state chronic disease programs, advocating data-based planning and evidence-based interventions, and providing educational and training opportunities for its members. NACDD was officially founded in 1988 to link the chronic disease program directors of each state and territory into a national forum for chronic disease prevention and control. NACDD has more than 1,500 members representing chronic disease and health promotion programs at state health departments, in university settings, and in other public health-related fields. The organization has worked closely with CDC on the development and implementation of programs directed to state health departments to ensure that chronic disease strategies are compatible with states' needs.

Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) fosters collaborative partnerships between city and county health officials, city and county government, tribal programs, parks and recreation departments, local YMCAs, local health-related coalitions, and other representatives from the school, business, health, and community sectors to implement improvements. State departments of health and other state-level partners provide additional resources and information to help communities meet their goals. Examples of community-based improvements include increased access to and use of attractive and safe locations for engaging in physical activity, revised school food contracts that include more fruits and vegetables and whole grain foods, ordinances that protect children and adults from exposure to secondhand smoke and encourage nonsmoking, and requirements for sidewalks and crossing signals in neighborhoods to make them more pedestrian-friendly.

This report contains new & original content as well as information gathered verbatim from the ACHIEVE communities themselves.

ACHIEVE COMMUNITIES

In January 2008, 10 initial communities were jointly selected by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) and the YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) to pilot the ACHIEVE model in its first year. During the next five years, these organizations, along with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), will individually select and fund approximately 200 new ACHIEVE communities.

The list below are the ACHIEVE communities funded by NACDD. The following pages highlight the ACHIEVE efforts in each area.

2008 Cohort Communities

Albuquerque, New Mexico
Allentown, Pennsylvania
Black Hawk, Iowa
Cleveland County, North Carolina
Harris County - Aldine, Texas
Mount Desert Island, Maine
Salamanca, New York
Stark County, Ohio
Pierce County - Tacoma, Washington
Wichita, Kansas

2009 Cohort Communities

Eastern Highlands, Connecticut
Forrest and Lamar Counties, Mississippi
Jefferson County, Oregon
Kershaw County, South Carolina
Lake County, Ohio
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
Multnomah, Oregon
Nacogdoches, Texas
Northeast District, Connecticut
Palm Beach County, Florida
Rockland County, New York
Whatcom County, Washington
Williamson County, Texas

A complete list of all of the ACHIEVE communities can be found at www.achievecommunities.org.

glossary OF ACHIEVE TERMS

ACTION INSTITUTE - The ACHIEVE Action Institute is an event where leaders learn about tools, resources, and strategies to build healthier communities.

CDC'S HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Healthy Communities Program provides technical assistance and funding to the five national organizations entrusted with administering ACHIEVE.

CHART - Community Health Action Response Teams. These teams are made up of community leaders who oversee the local ACHIEVE efforts.

CHANGE - Community Health Assessment aNd Group Evaluation. CHANGE is a CDC assessment tool that evaluates the policy, systems and environmental strategies within a community. It also assists in identifying areas of opportunity for change within an area. For more information, see http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change/downloads.htm.

COACHES - Local ACHIEVE representatives who provide guidance for the CHART.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN (CAP) - A document developed by the local CHART that outlines the policy, systems and environmental changes to be implemented within a community.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES - Changes that are designed to influence individual behavior by making structural enhancements to the built environment; encouraging positive changes in attitudes or actions; or offering financial incentives or disincentives to spur a desired behavior.

POLICY CHANGES - Changes that rely on the adoption of new regulations (such as laws, ordinances or protocols) to urge desired behavior. Policy changes are often necessary to sustain a desired behavior.

PSE - The abbreviation for Policy, Systems and Environmental Changes

SYSTEMS CHANGES - Changes that affect all aspects of the "system" (a community, institution, or organization). These changes are often a result of policy changes.

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CONNECTICUT
Eastern Highlands

Upon being awarded an ACHIEVE grant in January 2009, the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) formed a Community Health Action Response Team (CHART) comprised of key individuals in the community, taking an interdisciplinary approach to the group's composition. Encompassing ten small towns, the district facilitates communication related to health and wellness across geographic boundaries, bringing the communities together for a common purpose.

To kick off its efforts, the team hosted a farm-to-table dinner geared toward increasing awareness of the EHHD ACHIEVE Initiative, promoting healthy eating and active living to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity and create a healthier community. In addition to these PSE efforts, EHHD focused on changes in worksites (to promote nutrition by adopting lactation protocols and worksite wellness policies); local community organizations (adopting policies that promote healthy eating); local government (reviewing policy and ordinances as they relate to opportunities for physical activity); and in schools and pre-schools (advancing the concept of only serving 100% milk in lunch rooms and addressing healthy snacks).

To educate local youth, the 2009 ACHIEVE designate hosts a "Captain 5 A Day" web site geared toward elementary school students, pre-schoolers and their parents, promoting the consumption of five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The site offers puzzles, games, suggestions for fun physical activities and simple, healthy recipes for families to prepare together. In addition, on its general web site, the district promotes a "Produce of the Week," rotating through locally-grown fruits and vegetables in season. This has impacted the awareness and acceptability of seasonal produce in our community's children - the local grocery store reports selling 2 to 3 times the amount of a particular produce when it is featured as the Produce of the Week.

The EHHD has also allocated resources for active living projects to create more local opportunities for physical activity, supplied materials to member town senior centers in an effort to increase local opportunities for physical activity, and conducted workshops to educate community members on addressing modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease, promoting awareness of blood pressure and cholesterol status through health screenings, and increasing community members' knowledge of the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke while stressing prevention through active living.

CONNECTICUT
Northeast District

Sometimes, literally putting one foot in front of the other instigates the beginning of not just an individual journey, but rather, an entire movement affecting generations to come.

HEALTHQUEST Northeast Connecticut is a community health partnership led by the Northeast District Department of Health that is working to create healthier communities through policy change so that all residents may experience the joys of healthy living.

The coalition points to its brilliantly simple "WriteSteps School Walking Initiative" when asked to illustrate one of its successes in health and wellness promotion. Upon receipt of its 2009 ACHIEVE designation, HealthQuest partnered with national recreational walking expert Robert Sweetgall and embarked on an initiative that begins each school day with a 10-minute walk. Students are given an instructional topic to discuss during the walk, and they complete a journal assignment about the subject when they return to the classroom. Everyone throughout the school participates – not just students and teachers, but also administrative and support staff. It is truly a school-wide effort.

In the first year since its launch at Plainfield Memorial School, Principal Lyn Gandolf reports that disciplinary issues have substantially decreased; writing scores have improved and the amount of students passing the physical fitness component of the Connecticut Mastery Test has risen dramatically. It costs the schools nothing. Seven schools now participate, and the long-term goal is to implement it in all 41 schools in the district.

Linda J. Colangelo, the health education & communications director for the district's health department, has received overwhelming feedback.

"In my office, I have 400 letters from students at one of the schools saying things like, 'Thank you so much for allowing us to walk in the morning… otherwise I'd have a bad school day,' and 'It helps to get the stress out of me.'" We have students who've written, 'I think I *think* better.'"

"Is a ten-minute walk going to help combat the obesity epidemic?" Colangelo queries. "Every step is a step in the right direction. It's a logical, no-cost way to increase opportunities for physical activity in our schools. And it's an engaging way to foster good old face-to-face conversation between students and staff. When it comes to physical activity, it's time to drop the Gameboys, and instead get the boys and girls back in the actual games. There are hundreds of ways to establish healthier behaviors every day, and yes, they can be surprisingly affordable."

Asked about the patience required to see a true paradigm shift, she offers, "This effort takes an extraordinary amount of time, and you have to be committed for the long haul. Try not to lose sight of the bigger picture of a vibrant, healthy community of happy human beings. Those of us who work in public health and policy change know that our efforts are about preventing illness and protecting our future generations. There's not a lot of instant gratification because the true benefits associated with these efforts may not be revealed for years. I'm reminded of a Chinese proverb that says, 'One generation plants the seeds, and the other gets the shade.' Even little steps can lead to a legacy."

"In my office, I have 400 letters from students saying things like, 'Thank you so much for allowing me to walk in the morning… otherwise, I'd have a bad school day, and it helps to get the stress out of me.'"

FLORIDA
Palm Beach County

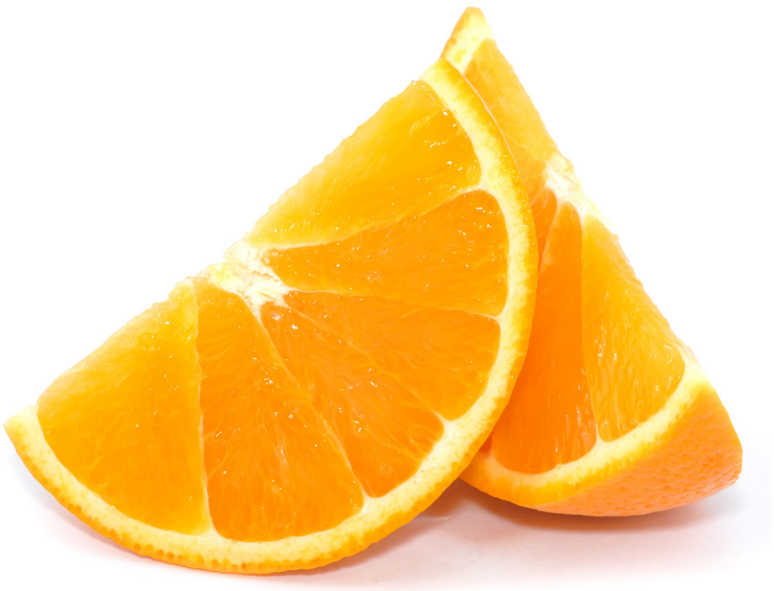
Palm Beach County is the second largest county (in land mass) in Florida and has more than 1.3 million residents and 7 million visitors per year. It boasts the state's highest per capita annual income -- $55,311 -- compared with a statewide average of $36,720. With so many visitors moving through it every year, a natural inclination toward accommodating tourism is understandable. Still, the Palm Beach County ACHIEVE initiative focuses intently on educating, motivating and providing its local community with sufficient resources to optimize wellness.

The mission of the Palm Beach County Coalition to ACHIEVE Wellness is to prevent/reduce chronic illness in all demographic segments of the community by promoting education and self-responsibility within individual, private, and public organization sectors about the health benefits of not smoking, maintaining a balanced diet, and adequate physical activity levels. The initiative's vision is a healthy community that is well educated, motivated, and provided with sufficient resources to optimize wellness, prevent and live with chronic illness, and be responsible for their well-being.

Community assessments conducted since Palm Beach County received its 2009 ACHIEVE designation have found that, when a policy is put into place in the school setting, it has a great effect on the population. Prior to ACHIEVE's presence, local health-based education initiatives were not sustaining themselves without policies to keep them in place. Now, the Palm Beach community is pursuing a policy that every school must set aside land for community gardening, with funding put toward garden-to-table education and emphasis placed on increasing individual access to growing healthful fruits and vegetables.

Hand in hand with the community gardens project are new plans to encourage healthy behaviors among Palm Beach residents, including getting nine hours of sleep per night, spending no more than two hours of screen time and no less than one hour of physical activity per day, and a decrease in sugary beverage consumption. To that end, in October 2009, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation began its elimination of sugary drinks from park vending machines, replacing them with healthier alternatives.

Many agencies in Palm Beach are participating in initiatives that complement the ACHIEVE concept across the age continuum: the local school district funds a "Commit 2 B Fit" program geared toward its students, while the local area agency on aging offers chronic disease self-management classes in partnership with the health department. Conversations have also begun among key partners about promoting non-motorized transportation by implementing infrastructure, behavioral and policy change to bring awareness to bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The local metropolitan planning organization allocated $150,000 to develop a master bicycle plan; as part of the plan, a newly-created bicycle suitability map will ideally undergo biennial reviews and updates to keep it current.



IOWA
Black Hawk County

The county of Black Hawk, Iowa presents an intriguing duality: a locally-ingrained way of life that has long promoted collaboration, and a population with a profound problem that could even be called an epidemic. In 2008-2009, an estimated 48 percent of students in the schools of the county seat, Waterloo, were either overweight or obese – a 13 percent increase since 2001-2002.

So, in an effort to design culturally appropriate interventions and control or reduce chronic illness in one of the larger metropolitan areas in the state, the Black Hawk County Health Department began its journey toward becoming an ACHIEVE community. As it began making initial strides, though, additional opportunities arose. Black Hawk County Health Department Division Manager Eileen Daley explains:

"A welcome surprise was that, in addition to some of the outreach and education we were doing on the use of the Community Health Assessment aNd Group Evaluation (CHANGE) assessment tool and workplace resource guide (two tools undertaken in the name of following the ACHIEVE model), two organizations related to cancer prevention basically had the same themes on their radar. The Iowa Cancer Consortium has a workgroup looking at physical activity and nutrition… and the Des Moines Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation said, 'Could you do a little bit more on just some primary prevention and working with people to change lifestyle(s) so we can be preventing cancer in the first place and creating a healthier environment?'"

The county undertook an expansion of its community gardens, establishing garden clubs in retirement communities and promotion of food preservation education among multiple age groups; increasing the number of local farmers' markets; and both school-aged and adult-geared curriculum components to keep the county's population mobile, raise its activity level and increase overall health.

Daley says increased access to fresh produce through community gardens and farmers markets has made the biggest impact thus far. Perhaps the most visible example is the city of Waterloo itself, which designed a beautiful public market site similar to that of Seattle. Of the county's evidence-based health promotion efforts related to chronic disease management, fall prevention (in order to improve activity levels in older adults) and school-based curricula, she says, "These programs in the long run will demonstrate improved outcomes in health status. We know they've been researched and tested, and they work."

In terms of funding, the community is, as it says, "pre-creative" in looking at alternative funding sources. According to Daley, "Anywhere from two-thirds to three-quarters of our revenue is external. That's just ongoing… we will always be looking for creative funding sources to supplement or to underwrite some of these programs. We are the recipient of a large state grant which has been reduced as a result of some of the issues in the economy and declining revenues statewide, but we have some flexibility with that funding to prioritize how we use it. So, in this community, it's been a priority to use it in evidence-based health promotion."

> *"We know how to work together. We've been doing it for a long time, and it's just a way of life."*

Her advice to a new ACHIEVE community? "It takes time. It's all about building relationships. We write our grants as teams, we implement as teams, and we have to have that team mentality as we approach the work that we do. No longer can one individual agency sustain an activity. We really are dependent on one another, so we have to take the time to build those relationships."

"When you look at the state of Iowa," she adds, "We know how to work together. We've been doing it for a long time, and it's just a way of life."

KANSAS
Wichita

When Wichita, Kansas received its ACHIEVE grant in 2008, it was already poised for action. A health & wellness coalition had been in place for four years, and the grant funding went directly into formulating a plan promoting physical activity & healthy eating. The team was strong in program development & resource mobilization, but it hadn't ventured into the realm of policy. That, however, would change dramatically with the relationship-building opportunities made possible by ACHIEVE.

The leadership team — comprised of representatives from the health department, YMCA, county commission, city council, chamber of commerce, Cessna Aircraft Company (based in Wichita), local foundations, and other key partners — used its ACHIEVE funding to attend an Action Institute, which trains leadership teams from funded communities to make health-related policy, systems, and environmental changes.

The team's attendance galvanized their will to work together. They developed a plan to educate the city and county's engineers, public works and planners about the complete streets concept, which makes road networks safer, more livable and welcoming to individuals of all ages, abilities and modes of transport. Heeding the advice of the county commissioner on the team, who also served as chair of the local metropolitan planning organization and knew how planners and engineers thought, the team began putting the concept and its terminology into practice first, and waited until it was generally accepted by the engineers, public works and planners in their day-to-day conversations.

"We as Kansans don't like to be told what to do," says Mim McKenzie, Executive Director of Community Development for the Wichita YMCA. "But if we start educating and practicing these concepts within our everyday planning and conversations, when we do decide to make it a policy, it's not as if we're infringing. (We) felt that it was a much more friendly approach, and for us, it paid off tremendously."

"Public works people staff and city planners are now using the same terminology as (health advocates)," she adds. "We talk in a different way now, and everyone understands what we're talking about."

The time it took to build those relationships paid off. "In February 2009, we started educating our public works engineers, planners, and city and county leaders on specific concepts relating to a healthy built environment. That summer, the head of our public works department went to the city council and asked to do a couple of pilot projects.

> *"Public works & city planners are now using the same terminology as health advocates."*

By the end of 2009, not only were we doing (those), but the complete streets concept was written into a new plan the city had come up with, and the city council approved several new projects that related to biking and walking being used as transportation and improving our streets to help support that. "

"Once we educated them and they saw that we weren't going to be these die-hard advocates, but wanted to support them, things moved quickly. We were very thankful for that."
The team agrees that, in order to move forward in a cohesive way, the mission has to come first. "When we developed the health & wellness coalition, we did not develop (it) around a pot of money," McKenzie notes. "Neither did we develop the leadership team around money. It was around a mission and a vision. The money started coming because people saw – and funders saw – that we were serious about this, our community supported it, there were direct outcomes that could happen, and they were going to see improvement in our community and in individuals as well."

MAINE
Mount Desert Island

Since its ACHIEVE designation was granted in 2008, community partners in Mount Desert Island, Maine, have been working together from multiple angles to bring about social and environmental systems changes. The partners hail from a variety of backgrounds -- public health, health care, small business, local planning, community advocacy, and other disciplines.

With a variety of interests, of course, came a variety of suggestions for prioritization.

Elsie Flemings, Community Relations Director for Healthy Acadia (a city in the Mt. Desert Island region), explains the breakdown of projects that have benefited from the ACHIEVE initiative:

"A lot of community members had a lot of exciting ideas, and we wanted to help build on those grass roots community initiatives. We ended up funding a number of different projects in the community based on their ability to really bring about sustainable long-term change. We funded things from a garden and salad bar for schools and a community garden and compost, a broader project to develop a skate park with widespread community interest, to a nature trail."

"We also enabled an organization that works with adults and children with disabilities to purchase a Wii and equipment needed to implement long-term exercise programs."

"We did a lot with bicycle-pedestrian development in terms of planning and trying to move forward quite a large project in the Bar Harbor area. We started with a couple of things that would really raise awareness and bring about the momentum to move forward on bike-ped initiatives and transportation planning to improve our built environment, to encourage more complete streets planning and more bicycles and pedestrians and healthy living."

In partnership with a number of businesses and organizations, ACHIEVE partners also came together to plan a visit from national bike-ped expert Mark Fenton. They also organized a community leadership breakfast and guided walk, heavily attended by legislators, health advocates, business owners and a wide swath of the local population.

Out of that process, they have entered an exciting new phase with the state transportation department on an infrastructure improvement project in Bar Harbor. It has since become a top priority for the state to improve the area, and bicycle-pedestrian issues are now front and center.

MISSISSIPPI

Forrest & Lamar Counties

The Mississippi State Department of Health has declared that "obesity in children and adults is a leading health concern for Mississippi." Obesity contributes to the major chronic disease killers in the state, including heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.

ACHIEVE's primary target resides in Forrest and Lamar Counties, with a combined population of 123,056. The median household income of Forrest County is $32,393, while that of Lamar County is $46,528; however, stratification exists between the two areas. In Lamar County, although the median household income is higher, 10.6 percent of individuals live below the poverty level, while in Forrest County, although the median household income is far lower, its percentage of residents living below the poverty level is more than double that of its counterpart, at 25.9 percent. Each county presents its own set of challenges to the promotion of sustainable health and wellness promotion across socio-economic boundaries.

The vision of the ACHIEVEable Change Coalition is to create a Mississippi that is free of chronic disease and void of disparate health outcomes despite socio-economic conditions.

The ACHIEVEable Change Coalition's mission is to work with community officials, constituents and organizations in all sectors to implement policy and environmental strategies to make citizens aware of services, facilities and venues that promote healthier lifestyles, including more nutritious food choices, increased physical activity, and abstaining and/or ceasing from the use of tobacco products.

NEW MEXICO
Albuquerque

ACHIEVE partners have targeted an area within the Southeast Heights area of Albuquerque that has been known for years as the "war zone." This area, which makes up a portion of the 87108 ZIP code, has a history of high crime rates, poor opportunities for physical activity, and a lack of accessible and affordable healthy food. Strong community cohesion and activism exists, however, and with ACHIEVE's help, local residents are working to transform their community into a safe, positive, wellness-oriented environment benefiting all who live within it.

A quarter of the ZIP's population lives below the federal poverty level, and the rate of vice crime-related police responses is nearly three times that of the overall city rate.

A quarter of the population lives below the federal poverty level, and the rate of vice crime-related police responses in 87108 is nearly three times that of the overall city rate.

ACHIEVE makes many things possible, however, and Albuquerque's involvement is already yielding considerable results. An art dedication ceremony was held in September 2010 to celebrate the conversion of a parking lot into a public playground called Creative Park, providing an appealing and accessible space for physical activity. Alao, ACHIEVE spent several months gathering community input and assessing the 'walkability' of the South San Pedro, Trumbull, and La Mesa neighborhoods. In March, 2010 a large workshop was held with the support of our Sponsor, City Councilor, Rey Garduno, to finalize a community trail. The community is in the process of requesting funds from government agencies for the development of the trail.

In October, 2009, ACHIEVE received a $6,050 grant to incorporate pedestrian safety information into a guide developed as part of the "International Community Trails Project". Neighborhood-specific pedestrian safety information along with the community trails outline was developed for residents of the International District in Spanish, English, and Vietnamese. The MAP/Guide was completed in September 2010, and a kick-off event was held at the International District Festival. To date over 5,000 Map/Guides have been distributed in the International District.

Most recently, in September 2010, ACHIEVE was awarded a USDA Community Food Project grant for the Youth Food Action Project proposal. The project aims to develop the capacity of young people the 3 target neighborhoods of Albuquerque to improve the food environment at their schools and in their communities through civic engagement with a focus on food equity and community health.

Nearly a fifth of the ZIP's population is foreign-born, and in the La Mesa and Trumbull neighborhoods, Spanish is spoken in nearly two-thirds of households and is the main or only language spoken in nearly half. As such, plans are under way to implement a bilingual media campaign involving radio, newspaper, posters and television to provide information about ACHIEVE initiatives and other local programs.

Despite linguistic and civic challenges, the local partnership refuses to give up, but rather, is taking a steady and methodical approach to tackling obstacles head on as progress is achieved with strong support from ACHIEVE along the way.

NEW YORK
Rockland County

The Monsey Community Coalition for Health and Wellness (MCCHW) of Rockland County was established to represent and serve the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish populations of several communities in Rockland County, New York. These communities (Monsey, Kaser, and New Square) are all located within the town of Ramapo. Many of the Orthodox Jews living in these communities have low socioeconomic status, as families are quite large, often with more than five children in one household. Additionally, adults in these communities usually do not receive a secular education beyond high school. The poverty rates are astounding: 30.6 percent in Monsey, 66.4 percent in Kaser, and 72.5 percent in New Square — the highest level in the county. These rates are all well above both the county's and state's rates (9.5 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively). More than 30 percent of the population in Monsey and New Square participates in WIC, representing more than 6,000 people.

ACHIEVE in Rockland County is, in many ways, a specialized case; many unique cultural parameters must be considered in the undertaking of health and wellness promotion in order to respect the values and practices of this particular community. For example, many in the more insular Orthodox Jewish sub-populations embrace a lifestyle defined in part by determined seclusion from the secular world. They therefore rely primarily on local community print media for much of their information. As such, they have relatively little exposure to health messages available to the general public through secular media.

High-risk health factors such as obesity and sedentary lifestyles are not uncommon. Organized sports are generally shunned and the traditional diet includes foods rich in fat and calories. Additionally, children in this community are often rewarded with sweets as incentives for good behavior or academic achievement. Further, the sparseness of sidewalks in Rockland County is a disincentive to engaging in common physical activities such as walking and bike-riding.

About a year into ACHIEVE, the coalition defined three focal areas: working with community parochial schools to assist them in developing formalized documented wellness policies; conducting a community health survey to capture data which would not otherwise be accessible at this micro-community level via standard government surveys; and preventing tobacco use among young adults.

The coalition has since been building strategic alliances and working toward its mission to improve the community's health through collaboration and lasting policy, systems, and environmental changes, in keeping with the ideals of arvus (communal responsibility) and venishmartem m'od lenafshoseichem (the religious imperative to maintain one's health) while navigating through the nuances necessary to truly reach and impact the community in a meaningful way.

NEW YORK
Salamanca

Salamanca is the smallest of the original ten communities awarded with the ACHIEVE designation in 2008. It lies almost completely on the Allegany Indian Reservation; in fact, it is the only city east of the Mississippi River located on an Indian Reservation. Salamanca leases its land from the Seneca Nation of Indians, one of the six tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy. The current land lease is in effect through 2030.

The town has grave issues of generational poverty and health disparities that are not only evident, but also generally accepted. Its chronic disease indicators are in some cases double those of the state itself. The city has a five-member city council as well as a tribal council led by a president, elected every two years. In terms of policy, everything must be passed through both bodies.

Businesses sell tobacco tax-free on the reservation, so many people travel from far away to purchase them. Therefore, those businesses have become almost completely dependent on that revenue for their survival. There are a couple of dozen smoke shops, which stand in contrast with only two grocery stores. Once a particular juvenile police officer attended an ACHIEVE Action Institute and decided to undertake an anti-secondhand smoke movement, the town passed a Young Lungs at Play ordinance to enact no-smoking zones near playgrounds and areas frequented by children.

Next, a youth possession law was passed wherein tobacco products can be confiscated from the hands of a minor by a law officer, and educational tools can be shared during the interaction. It was a polarizing move by many accounts, but it was a bold step in the direction of cessation.

The town has developed a pattern of taking sensitive issues and tackling them head-on with an eye toward healthfulness and physical activity. In 1999 on Mother's Day, a young local midwife had gone for a walk when she was brutally raped and murdered, leaving behind a husband and two young daughters. The trail became stigmatized over safety concerns and lapsed in use and maintenance over the years. On Mother's Day 2009, the tenth anniversary of her death, a reclamation event was held with county and state officials, representatives from the Seneca nation, the woman's family, and local community members in attendance. The focus of the event was to reintroduce the trail to the community and give local groups opportunities to adopt and clean up sections of the trail. Biking and walking patrols were set up, and its use has since risen dramatically.

Two fresh, locally-grown fruits have been added to school lunches per week and are often donated by local businesses and growers. For some students, this effort provides them with their very first taste of an apple or orange.

Since the inception of ACHIEVE in Salamanca, examples abound of community engagement activities geared toward fostering healthy active lifestyles for local children. The Salamanca Youth Bureau plays a vital role in the daily workings of the city and has helped to enhance a community-sponsored soup kitchen in the evenings, while the local garden club has banded together to plant shrubs and flowers on the PENNSY Trail. The Kiwanis Club host bike rodeos for the local kids, and family days in the park are held every summer with donated food, scavenger hunts, parachute activities and the like.

Perhaps the most profound example of health-smart changes taking place in Salamanca is also one of the simplest. Two fresh locally-grown fruits have been added to school lunches per week and are often donated from local businesses and growers. For some students, this effort provides them with their very first taste of an apple or orange.

NORTH CAROLINA
Cleveland County

Change can be a daunting thing. Walk into an environment built on routine, take away the everyday element of instant gratification and replace it with a long-term goal for sustainability, and while early adopters may see the benefits of the new paradigm, others may not nod quite so quickly.

Anne Short, community coach for the Cleveland County 2008 ACHIEVE Team, explains:

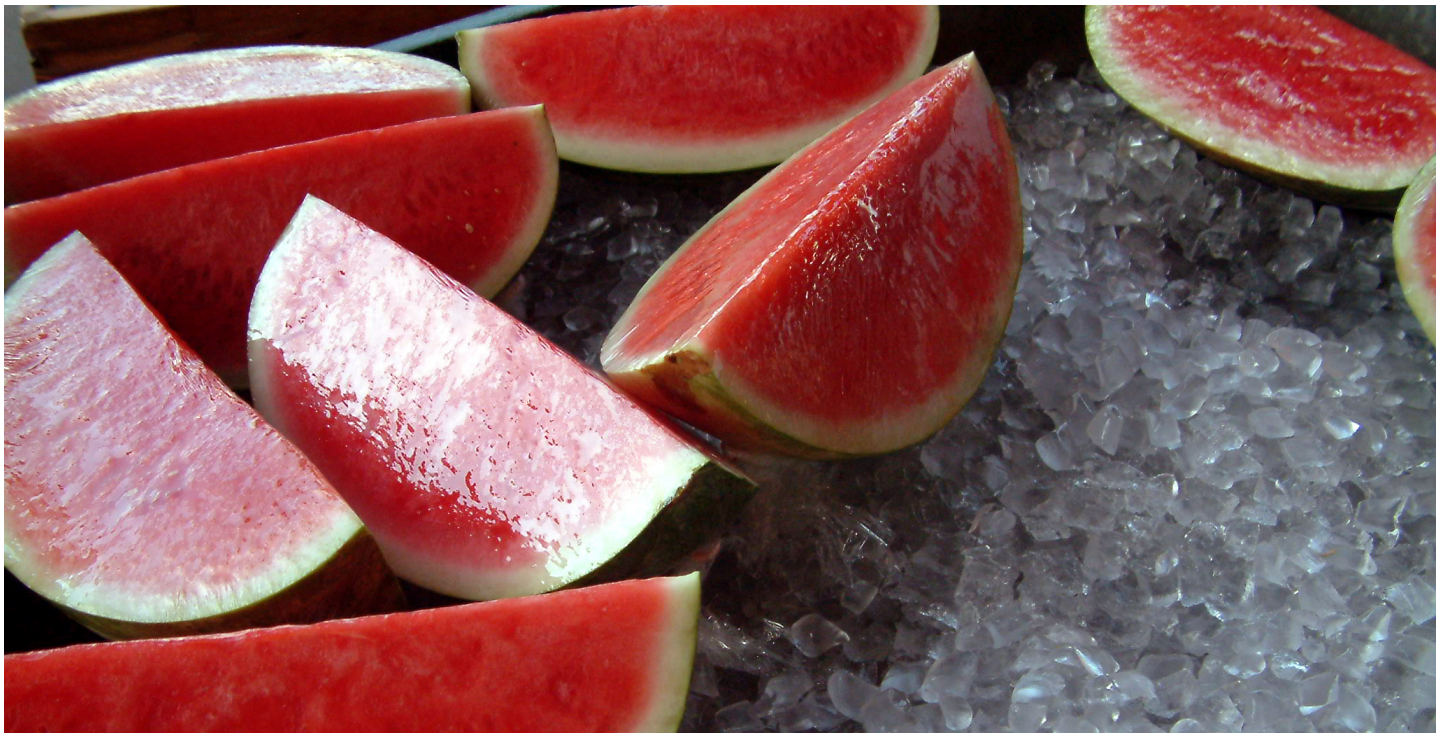
"We were making a shift in our thought process from doing projects to really thinking about policy and environmental changes. Part of our reason for doing that was that that's more long-lasting. They're harder to explain to people who expect to have a nice, neat package tied up and delivered to them of what you've accomplished, but in the long run, there's more sustainability if you go the policy and environmental change route. So that's what we chose to do."

"What we have done is create the Eat Smart Move More coalition with support from the health department and Alliance for Health and the Dover Foundation YMCA. And in this day and age, with tight resources and limited time and fewer staff members to accomplish things, if you're not willing to collaborate, you're going to be pretty frustrated."

The mission of the Cleveland County CHART team is to empower Cleveland County residents to prevent and reduce chronic diseases and related risk factors through environmental approaches that impact policies addressing lifestyle changes such as healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco use.

As such, the team's vision is to lead residents in Cleveland County to become healthier citizens through policies that support healthy lifestyles.

"In the long run, there's more sustainability if you go the policy and environmental change route."



NORTH CAROLINA
Mecklenburg County

Charlotte, North Carolina serves as headquarters for many major national and international companies. During the past ten years, 7,309 new firms have invested $12 billion in new facilities there; in fact, 326 of the Fortune 500 companies have facilities in Charlotte (seven of which are headquarters), ranking the city seventh nationally in the number of headquartered firms. More than 1.3 million people reside within a 25-mile radius of the city.

"A majority of people spend 60 percent of their awake time at the office. If it's not a place of wellness, their health will suffer."

The leading cause of death in Mecklenburg County is cancer (for both men and women), followed by heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, unintentional injury, diabetes, kidney disease, influenza, pneumonia, and HIV. According to the 2009State of the County Health Report, 16.8 percent of Mecklenburg County adults smoke, 61 percent are overweight/obese, 19 percent report no physical activity, and only 23 percent consume five servings or more of fruits and vegetables per day.

Julie Jackman, the Mecklenburg County Health Department Worksite Wellness Coordinator in Charlotte, North Carolina, explains the link between work and health:

"A majority of people spend 60 percent of their awake time at the office. If it's not a place of wellness, their health will suffer. We know there's an obesity epidemic in our community; we know Americans are the most sedentary of most nations; and we have a real issue with our health as far as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

"If all we provide for nutrition for our employees is stuff in a vending machine, that's an issue. If all our employees can get to at lunchtime is a fast food place across the street, that's an issue. If there are not places to walk, if there are not places to exercise, if their work site is not allowing them to get up and take a walk and there are no pathways for them to walk on during lunchtime, if the stairwells are locked or dirty or unusable… these are barriers to the health of the employee population."

To address the community's needs with guidance from ACHIEVE, the local work site wellness coalition is developing a forum to be launched in spring 2011 in an effort to impact the greatest possible number of employers in the community with resources, information and guidance.

"We did a community assessment back in 2006 and saw there was a gap in providing work site wellness programs in our area," Jackman says. "There's a very large business community within Mecklenburg County; it's the largest county in the state. We wanted to reach into those work environments where the majority of our community members spend most of their time, and impact them with health, nutrition and physical activity opportunities so we can improve the health of our community."

Coalition members include top-level representatives from the county's largest employers such as the president of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte-Mecklenburg school health director, a benefits expert, the City of Charlotte wellness director, the associate vice-chancellor of human resources for the University of North Carolina, the Live Well Carolinas assistant vice president, a tobacco control coordinator, a benefits structure appraisal company and associate vice-president of resources at a community college. Each was chosen for a specific purpose and role.

OHIO
Stark County

Live Well Stark County has 16 active members from various backgrounds, concentrating their collective focus on nutrition, physical activity and worksite wellness. Of the three focus areas, worksite wellness has become the highest priority with the most notable achievements to date.

The coalition has been instrumental in increasing the amount of bike lanes and mapped walking paths throughout the community. It has also helped 18 local restaurants offer patrons more healthful options by conducting nutritional analyses of their menus and securing agreements with them to post caloric information in visible areas for patrons to review.

To address its worksite wellness focus, the group has created worksite wellness kits and distributed them to businesses throughout the community. As a result of that effort , bolstered by diligent follow-up, more than 70 local workplaces now have indoor and/or outdoor mapped walking paths available, encouraging physical activity for more than 4,000 employees. The team has also assessed more than 50 workplaces using its scorecard assessment tool and hosted several community challenge events to promote physical activity.

Partnerships include the Stark County Health Department, the Stark County YMCA, Stark County Parks, Altman Hospital, City of Alliance, Alliance Green Taskforce, Ohio State Extension Agency, Stark County Regional Planning, Stark County Engineers, Malone University, the Area Agency on Aging, Alliance Family YMCA, Alliance Community Hospital and the KID-FIT program. Most team members are high-level decision makers who can truly make an impact.

The coalition has also been working to raise awareness of its efforts by compiling a communication plan, distributing posters promoting physical activity -- taking the stairs at work, for example -- and engaging in social media through the introduction of its facebook page.

More than 70 workplaces now have mapped walking paths, encouraging physical activity for more than 4,000 employees.

OHIO
Lake County

Lake County, Ohio sits just east of Cleveland and has a set of leading causes of death all too familiar in America: heart disease, cancer, and chronic lower respiratory disease. According to the *Healthy Ohio Community Profile*, the risk factors associated with these diseases in Lake County are attributable to lifestyle choices that include poor diet, being overweight or obese, use of tobacco, lack of physical activity, and excessive alcohol consumption.

The vision of ACHIEVE Lake County is for local residents of all ages to be encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles that include consuming nutritious foods and engaging in higher levels of physical activity.

"Let's face it: no one wants to die of a heart attack at age 40, or be diagnosed with diabetes in high school."

The ACHIEVE initiative in Lake County focuses on four sectors of the community: schools, worksites, community at large and community institutions & organizations. The main goal is to improve physical activity and nutrition through implementation of policy and environmental change strategies in those four sectors. The ACHIEVE team meets every month and is categorized into four sub-teams. The team members were selected from a wish list compiled early in the coalition-building process.

Because the concept of moving away from wholesale programmatic approaches and working toward more comprehensive long-term planning and change implementation is fairly new, explains Lake County ACHIEVE Initiative lead coach Tori Luyster, generating excitement can take time.

"Stakeholders don't always understand what 'policy and environmental change' means. I think as we move forward and people hear more and more about the type of work... there will be a larger acceptance."

"We need people to understand that the health of our country is a very real issue, and these approaches can correct health issues over time. These are building blocks to lifestyle change for America. And let's face it: no one wants to die of a heart attack at age 40, or be diagnosed with diabetes in high school and need insulin for the rest of their life, or be so overweight that they cannot ride in an airplane. Most people want to be healthy and happy, and that's what ACHIEVE is working towards."

OREGON
Jefferson County

When Jefferson County, Oregon received its ACHIEVE designation in 2009, its coalition, Jefferson County ACHIEVERS, decided to concentrate on three realms: the community at large, school systems, and work site wellness initiatives primarily focusing on hospitals, the school district, and county offices.

Jefferson County is a rural county in the heart of Central Oregon with a population of approximately 22,030 people. The region is ethnically and culturally diverse and includes a significant portion of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation, as well as a substantial Latino population. More than 10 percent of families have incomes below the poverty level. More than 76 percent of 509J students qualify for free or reduced price school meals. The unemployment rate was 9.4 percent in April 2008 and continued to rise with the economic downturn. The diversity and socioeconomic status of the community are reflected in the populations served through family planning, home visiting, immunizations, STD, HIV, WIC, and other public health programs offered through the health department.

The mission of Jefferson County ACHIEVERS is to lead and engage the community in sustainable change that improves health for all. Its vision is a united community in which policies and infrastructure support healthy living year-round for all citizens.

According to Beth Ann Beamer, who runs the Community Health Improvement Partnership at the local hospital and serves as an ACHIEVE coach, "What's cool about ACHIEVE is that it has built on a lot of work that's been going on in our community for the last few years, and it really helps galvanize the awareness of how important, in particular, policy work is in sustaining health improvement."

"I think people are becoming aware that individuals can do a whole bunch of programming, but if you don't have policy to support it and to sustain it over time, the health benefit and health improvement is not going to be sustained as well."

"What's cool about ACHIEVE is that it has built on a lot of work that's been going on in our community for a few years, and it really helps galvanize the awareness of how important policy work is..."

OREGON
Multnomah

Multnomah County is the smallest and most populous county in Oregon, with a population of more than 710,000 people. It spans over 450 square miles and includes six incorporated cities, including Portland. Twenty-three percent of the population is under 18 years old. Oregon has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. In Multnomah County, approximately 12 percent of the population is unemployed; even prior to the current recession, African Americans experienced unemployment rates 84 percent higher than that of the rest of the population.

"Some people can't afford to be members in a health club. Some people can't afford to buy the bike and the helmet. Those who can't are the ones we've been focusing on."

African American communities in Oregon are primarily located in Multnomah County; in fact, sixty-four percent of black Oregonians of working age reside in Multnomah County. This is the target population for the ACHIEVE initiative, due to this community's disproportionate burden of chronic diseases and its associated risk factors. Between 2001 and 2005 in Multnomah County, African Americans had the highest stroke and heart disease mortality rate of any of the races. African Americans also had a statistically higher diabetes mortality rate for the same period. In Multnomah County, the prevalence of obesity and overweight is highest among African Americans. African Americans and blacks are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry.

"All you have to do is look at the data," says Eugene Rashad of Healthy Active Multnomah County, the community coalition tasked with implementing the ACHIEVE initiative throughout the county. "The data gives a very disheartening health profile of the people we're trying to reach. Some of the more vigilant leaders in the community say, 'Why now? What's different? What will be different about ACHIEVE?' Most of these individuals understand the need, and the data helps to precipitate action and mobilization in the community."

"We're talking about building legacy," Rashad explains. "Some people can't afford to be members in a health club. Some people can't afford to buy healthier food. Some people can't afford to buy the bike and the helmet. Those who can't are the ones that we've been focusing on."

A key strategy in keeping team members engaged and the community enthused is the balancing act between short-term results that give the community hope and long-term efforts geared toward changing the environment in the long run through policy change.

"At times it is challenging to keep the focus on policy because it's a long-term approach and there are immediate needs in the community," says coalition leader Rachel Banks. "So for us, through our (team), we've really been able to talk about both ends. There are partners at the table who can provide programmatic supports down the road toward policy, who can provide educational pieces, who can through the work of their agencies throw an event that will help to highlight the need for policy. There's room for agencies who have those resources to add some programmatic supports in the meantime to be able to do that, so that we're both addressing short-term needs and working toward our long-term goals."

PENNSYLVANIA
Allentown

"From the very beginning, our mayor was proud that Allentown was one of the ten original communities chosen for the ACHIEVE initiative," says Tina Amato, Nutrition and Physical Activity Manager at the Allentown Health Bureau. "He was always concerned about childhood obesity and other chronic disease issues. Although he's very busy, he was very supportive when we received this recognition."

The newly formed local ACHIEVE coalition underwent a Community Health Assessment aNd Group Evaluation (CHANGE tool) assessment recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the national level and decided to focus on physical activity in the community in general and, more specifically, in schools. Goals included a trail connectivity plan, complete streets policies, and a plan for city and park signage to promote physical activity through messaging.

"Allentown is a dense, urban city," says Amato. "We're the third largest city in Pennsylvania. And as dense and urban as we are, we really have this very, very extensive and beautiful park system. And we also have a lot of existing trails – many many miles of trails – but it lacks connectivity pulling the city and the outlying regions together. Through the leadership of our parks and recreation director, a member of our Community Health Action and Response Team (CHART), we're trying to pull these valuable resources together so they reach their full potential."

"It's really a nice blend of public health with all these other areas," Amato says. "You're pulling people from unconventional realms into public health… like engineers, and community and economic development planners, different areas of public works, bicycle groups and advocates… people coming together for a common goal."

Allentown's vision of a healthy community is one in which the highest degree of health is greatly valued, sought after, and achieved. Cooperative efforts and the collaborative development of policies and environments that facilitate healthy choices will decrease the incidence of chronic disease and increase the health of the community. To that end, Allentown is using its ACHIEVE funding and guidance from partners to move its coalition forward to improve quality of life across the board for generations to come.

As dense and urban as we are, we really have this very, very extensive and beautiful park system… but it totally lacks connectivity pulling the city and outlying areas together.

SOUTH CAROLINA
Kershaw County

Camden, the oldest existing inland town in the state of South Carolina, was part of a township plan ordered by King George II in 1730. Rich in heritage, Camden is a place where the strength of tradition and history mingle with the excitement of the present. Today, it serves as the county seat of Kershaw County. The 2000 Census highlights that the total population of Camden is 21,475. Sixty-two percent of the population is Caucasian and thirty-seven percent is African-American, leaving only one percent of the population as another race. The median age is 41 years and 18 percent of the population is over the age of 65.

Fourteen percent of the adults living in Camden are civilian veterans. Twenty-seven percent of residents are qualified as disabled. Many people choose Camden as their retirement home because of the slow-paced lifestyle, yet close proximity to cultural and recreational amenities. However, with the large number of seniors and disabled residents, mobility and access to services are important issues.

The median household income in 1999 was a little more than $36,000. Sixteen percent of the residents in Camden live below the poverty level. Seventy-four percent of residents have graduated from high school and twenty percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. Although city-level health data is not available, Kershaw County has prevalence rates of sedentary lifestyle, hypertension, heart disease, and stroke similar to state rates. Hospitalization, emergency department visits, obesity, and diabetes rates are higher in Kershaw County than for the state of South Carolina as a whole. These statistics point out that residents of Kershaw County are not taking steps to prevent or manage chronic conditions as well as they could.

Kershaw County was given its ACHIEVE designation in 2009, the second year of the initiative. Today, the mission of Eat Smart, Move More Kershaw County is to coordinate collaborative and sustainable efforts to support healthy eating and active living where Kershaw County residents live, learn, work, and play. Its mission is to have a community focused on health, wellness, and sustainable living.

TEXAS

Harris County ~ Aldine

When Harris County received its ACHIEVE designation in 2008, it formed a Community Health Action and Response Team (CHART) as a means to collaborate with community residents and to explore policy and environmental change solutions to address the priority health issues. Today, CHART members in Harris County regularly come together to focus their efforts specifically on East Aldine. The team includes community residents from various age groups, Aldine Y.O.U.T.H., the YMCA, Aldine Independent School District, Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, Harris County Precincts 1 & 2, and the Texas Department of State Health Services.

In June 2008, the team, led by four coaches, participated in the Action Institute in Alexandria, Virginia, collectively learning strategies firsthand from top-tier experts to reduce obesity and other chronic diseases. The team returned energized and ready for action.

Since that trip, the team has begun the processes of conducting walkability and bikeability audits; inventorying all relevant capital improvement projects involving sidewalks, street design, lighting and crosswalks; identifying current nutrition counseling resources and blood pressure machines available to the community; mapping out restaurants and grocery stores for future outreach; and conducting a baseline assessment of produce markets. Its community action plan focuses on increasing opportunities for physical activity, as well as the availability and safety of areas for walking and biking. In addition, the plan includes a component relating to healthy eating promotion.

The team has also focused its efforts on promoting smoking cessation. By working with health care delivery systems, it strives to improve the delivery of tobacco use treatment to members of the community who need it. It is spending the bulk of its energy and resources providing clinical toolkits and trainings to health care providers and putting the rest toward action guides and tangible items offering reminders or prompts for those attempting to kick their tobacco habits for good.

TEXAS
Nacogdoches

The small rural community of Nacogdoches is widely referred to as the "oldest town in Texas," a designation that makes its participation in the ACHIEVE initiative just that much sweeter, according to its community health leaders.

"For our own community, ACHIEVE is something that gives us credibility," says Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital health educator Jessica Waguespack. "We're part of a national movement of change for the good for America, and we're doing it here in Nacogdoches. It's put us on the map here in our state as a community that's working toward improving its poor health trends in chronic disease. It's a community leader-driven effort with assessment planning, evaluation and an evidence-based approach. Since we've (been involved with) ACHIEVE, our community has gotten $795,000 in funding for physical activity and environmental change, through an obesity prevention grant and a school grant as well. It's pretty exciting to see that coming into our community. We can't say it's solely due to ACHIEVE, but it does give us that credibility."

The Healthy Nacogdoches Coalition's physical activity committee has developed a survey to collect students' opinions of their physical education classes. The committee is also placing a booklet in the city's newspaper to help residents find local spaces for activities like running, biking, Frisbee golf and more.

The coalition's nutrition committee is working with the Department of State Health Services on increasing the prevalence of mother-friendly worksites with designated rooms for breastfeeding. It's also working on an initiative to encourage farmers' markets to accept WIC as a form of payment , as well as an effort to offer less expensive, more healthful options in vending machines.

> *"We're a little proud of ourselves. You don't just have to plan... it's a lot more than that. You can change your community."*

The coalition also has a tobacco committee dedicated to reducing and preventing the use of tobacco among Nacogdoches residents. To that end, it works with city council members to enact policy whenever possible.

"We're a little proud of ourselves," Waguespack says of Nacogdoches' participation in ACHIEVE efforts. "We plan, but we're able to implement and make change. You don't just have to plan... it's a lot more than that. You can change your community."

TEXAS

Williamson County

According to the 2005 Texas Vital Statistics Annual Report, there were a total of 1,465 deaths (all causes) in Williamson County. Major cardiovascular diseases resulted in 419 deaths, malignant neoplasms in 335 deaths, chronic lower respiratory diseases in 76 deaths, and diabetes mellitus in 36 deaths. Approximately 70 percent of the major cardiovascular disease deaths were from diseases of the heart; 205 deaths specifically as a result of ischemic heart disease. Meanwhile, 22.7 percent of major cardiovascular disease deaths were a result of cerebrovascular diseases.

Williamson County now focuses on three specific health and wellness initiatives to combat such statistics: healthy nutrition (working with small local restaurants on labeling items for various types of diets, i.e., diabetic, blood pressure maintenance, etc.), "exercise as medicine" (promoting the prescription of exercise rather than increasing or adding medications), and worksite wellness (assisting small and mid-sized workplaces who may not be able to afford traditional workplace wellness programs).

The ACHIEVE partnership includes representation from health care disciplines, city offices, the state House of Representatives, nearby universities, non-profit organizations, the parks & recreation department, the local YMCA, independent school districts, and more.

*"I had one of our team members say, 'I don't want to just sit in your meeting because I'm the mayor of Georgetown. I want to sit in your meeting because you **need** me, and you're going to **do** something with me.' And we did."*

The ACHIEVE initiative focuses on just one community in Williamson County: the City of Georgetown. According to the 2005-2007 Census report, 39,424 people reside in the City of Georgetown. The race/ethnicity distribution estimates are: 71 percent Caucasian, 22 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 7 percent Other (includes Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races). The City of Georgetown participated in the Department of State Health Services' Heart & Stroke Healthy City Recognition Program in 2004, 2006, and 2008; although the city has not yet reached a level of recognition, their score has improved each year. As such, Georgetown was selected as the starting point for the ACHIEVE initiative due to the high level of community readiness.

Cynthia Guirrero, Division Director for the Williamson County and City Health District, gives an example of the team's enthusiasm and dedication to actually making a difference:

"I had one of our team members say, 'I don't want to just sit in your meeting because I'm the mayor of Georgetown. I want to sit in your meeting because you need me, and you're going to do something with me.' And we did."

WASHINGTON

Pierce County ~ Tacoma

Several attempts have been made in the past to develop community coalitions to address healthy eating and active living in Pierce County, but none of them withstood the initial stages of development. That changed in 2008 with the formation of the Community Health Action Response Team (CHART). It brought together community leaders from various agencies, including local and state health departments, YMCA, school districts, Pierce County Medical Society, city and county councils, parks districts, and others. Through ACHIEVE, the team is focused on making changes in two areas of childhood obesity prevention: physical activity and nutrition.

These agencies and others have committed to ensuring youth receive 60 minutes of physical activity daily, consistently including all the following components: bone strengthening, aerobic activity and muscle strengthening; and assuring youth and their families have access to healthy and affordable foods every day by means of community gardens, farmers' markets and full-service grocery stores in all neighborhoods, as well as healthy meals and snacks in daycares, schools, community centers, and other community programming.

The team is currently working together toward three key goals in two communities: Tacoma and Gig Harbor. Its goals include improving school meals, increasing local capacity for community gardens and increasing the number of minutes of physical activity students in both communities achieve each day.

To date, twelve separate organizations within Pierce County have signed a plan to offer hard dollars and/or in-kind support toward building community gardens, and the Tacoma mayor donated 7 plots of land as well.

Additionally, the city of Tacoma has staffed a position strictly for community garden oversight. Gardens are being placed in areas where local residents have expressed a strong desire to contribute to their success, and special emphasis is placed on low-income areas.

As for school meals: fiber, sugar, sodium and fat standards have been introduced into the district, where they weren't previously recognized. A three-week pilot menu was introduced and met with great enthusiasm; it has since been adopted into the district in tandem with the new standards, providing students with more healthful options during the school week.

To date, twelve separate organizations within Pierce County have signed a plan to offer hard dollars and/or in-kind support toward building community gardens.

WASHINGTON
Whatcom County

Population and demographic trends are important to the ACHIEVE initiative. With growth and population migration into Whatcom County in the 1990s and early 2000s, housing prices rose in more urban areas, increasing the number of households with lower incomes seeking housing in rural areas. Nationally, increased driving times and distances to physical activity and nutrition resources impact health outcomes, and the trends are reflected in Whatcom County where people with lower incomes, less education, and those who live in rural areas have higher rates of chronic disease and related indicators of health risks, such as obesity.

The vision of the Whatcom ACHIEVE Partnership is for all residents of Whatcom County to have equal access to healthy foods, safe and active environments, and be free from tobacco exposure. Healthy choices should be the easy choices for every Whatcom County resident. To that end, it collaborates with community members to implement policy and environmental changes that will reduce the risk of chronic disease and enhance the health and quality of life for everyone in the county.

Slightly more than 15 percent of Whatcom County residents live below the federal poverty level although the Washington State average is 11.1 percent. In total, almost 42 percent of children in the county's public schools qualify for reduced or free lunches. Significant disparities in health status and chronic diseases are exhibited in populations affected by socio-economic factors including residing in a rural area, having low income, and being less educated, as well as minority or underrepresented populations. Chronic diseases associated with being overweight and physical inactivity are among the leading sources of morbidity and mortality in Whatcom County in adults.

Since 1996, the obesity rate in Whatcom's adults has risen from 13 percent to 26 percent. Sixty percent of adults are now overweight or obese. Diabetes rates have doubled from three to six percent. Additionally, youth with poor nutrition or physical inactivity also exhibit lesser health outcomes. At least 25 percent of Whatcom County eighth graders are overweight or at risk of being overweight, 51 percent of tenth graders have no days in a physical education class, and only 31 percent of twelfth graders get the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week. Most troubling are rates of obesity, chronic disease, and poor physical health in low- and middle-income populations.

For the first time in recent history, nontraditional partners have begun coming together through the ACHIEVE initiative to address these concerns and host frank conversations about building a plan to move forward together to tackle the issues at hand. The recent economic downturn may have diverted some funding from local non-profit organizations, but their representatives now have more time available to participate in community partnerships that may not otherwise have been as feasible.

notes

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