

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



HEALTHY LAKES REGION, MAINE Obesity Prevention

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) is an initiative designed to make healthy living easier by promoting environmental changes at the local level. Through funding awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010, a total of 50 communities are working to prevent obesity and tobacco use—the two leading preventable causes of death and disability.

“THE CPPW EFFORTS IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT HAVE BEEN A GREAT ASSET TO CREATING A HEALTHIER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. FROM THE NEW LUNCH OPTIONS IN OUR CAFETERIAS TO THE OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT PURCHASED BY THE SCHOOLS, WE ARE HELPING TO MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE FOR OUR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, STAFF, AND ENTIRE COMMUNITY.”

— *Kathleen Beecher, Superintendent, Maine School Administrative District 61 (MSAD 61)*

Community Overview

The Healthy Lakes Region of Maine is tackling obesity throughout the community. Approximately 50,000 residents in nine rural towns in western Cumberland County, Maine, comprise the Healthy Lakes Region. The sparse population across a large geographic area makes the community vulnerable to obesity due to limited access to healthy food and opportunities for active transportation. In the Healthy Lakes Region, 42% of the adult population is overweight, and 26% of the adult population is obese. Approximately 28% of high school students in Maine are overweight or obese.



Only 25% of adults in the Healthy Lakes Region consume fruits and vegetables five or more times per day, and 24% of adults do not meet the Surgeon General's recommendations for weekly physical activity—30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at the Healthy Lakes Region's entire population, certain initiatives target high-risk populations, such as low-income community members.

Community Successes

If healthy options are not available, then healthy living is not possible. With the support of the CPPW initiative, the Healthy Lakes Region has implemented a variety of changes throughout the community to make healthy living easier.

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, the Healthy Lakes Region:

- Developed and coordinated an innovative food transportation model that partners food pantries and town governments to ensure that pantries are consistently stocked with healthy foods.
- Provided low-income community members with access to exercise facilities and equipment at eight community centers to increase opportunities for physical activity. Approximately 50,000 residents can benefit from this initiative.





“THESE CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ARE AN EXCITING FIRST STEP TO MAKING THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE IN OUR SCHOOLS.”

— Courtney Kennedy, School Health Coordinator, MSAD 61

Community Successes *(continued)*

- Supported two rural farmers’ markets in developing a program that enables low-income residents to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits to purchase healthy, local fruits and vegetables.
- Helped 10 schools purchase equipment such as bikes, snowshoes, and fitness machines to increase students’ access to and options for physical activity before, during, and after school.



(The list above is a sample of all activities completed by the community.)

New School Lunch Menu Makes Healthy Eating Easier for Students

The Healthy Lakes Region is increasing access to nutritious, local foods in two school districts. One of these districts, the MSAD 61, hired a full-time school health coordinator, established a healthier school lunch menu, and acquired kitchen equipment and conducted trainings that enable staff to process and serve healthier foods in cafeterias. As of January 2011, all 1,700 students attending MSAD 61 schools can enjoy daily servings of fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the district offers healthy food and beverage options in school stores and on-site vending machines, which now meet the Institute of Medicine’s standards pertaining to nutrition content and portion size.

Leadership Team

The leadership team includes high-level community leaders from multiple sectors, who have the combined resources and capacity to make healthy living easier. Members of the Healthy Lakes Region’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Bridgton Hospital
- Bridgton Hospital-Wellness Committee
- Casco Parks and Recreation
- Communities Promoting Health Coalition
- Healthy Lakes Region Healthy Maine Partnership
- Lakes Region Elder Network and Owner of Wellness Associates, Inc.
- Maine Cooking Matters
- Maine Council of Churches
- Maine School Administrative District #61
- People’s Regional Opportunity Program Board of Trustees
- Regional School Unit #14
- Rippling Waters Farm
- Smart Meals for ME
- St. Joseph’s College of Maine
- Windham Adult Education
- Windham Parks and Recreation

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.communitiespromotinghealth.org.