

# Communities Putting Prevention to Work



**MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**  
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.***

“IN THE PAST YEAR, WE LAUNCHED AN UNPRECEDENTED CAMPAIGN TO SOUND THE ALARM ABOUT THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC IN OUR COMMUNITY. WE ALL HAVE A STAKE IN FIGHTING OBESITY, AND WE BELIEVE WE CAN MAKE MULTNOMAH COUNTY THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD FOR A CHILD TO GROW UP.”

— Jeff Cogen, Multnomah County Chair and CPPW Leadership Team Chair

## Community Overview

Multnomah County, Oregon, is tackling obesity throughout the community. Approximately 26% of adults in the county are obese and 30.2% are overweight. Among children, 26% of eighth grade students and 23.4% of 11th grade students are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Approximately 70% of adults in Multnomah County do not eat the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables, and 14% of adults reported no physical activity in the last 30 days.



Although some communities in Multnomah County have made great strides in the areas of access to healthy food and support of local farmers, disadvantaged populations are still struggling. Oregon is consistently ranked as one of the nation's most food-insecure states. Further, approximately 15% of the 735,334 residents in Multnomah County live under the Federal poverty level. In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at Multnomah County's entire population, certain initiatives target high-risk populations, such as low-income groups and black residents.

## Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Multnomah County:

- Launched *A Healthy Active Multnomah County: It Starts Here*, a public awareness initiative encouraging individuals to make small, positive changes to eating and physical activity habits. Initiative messages are reaching residents through television advertisements and transit, billboard, and shopping mall signage.
- Supported adoption of wellness policies that set nutrition and physical-activity standards for more than 18,000 students enrolled in 60 afterschool programs.





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COMMUNITY.”

— Michelle, Portland resident

### Community Successes *(continued)*

- Worked with faith-based organizations and a senior-meal provider to implement changes such as establishing farm stands and community gardens that increase the availability of healthy meal options. More than 100,000 local residents may benefit from the changes adopted by three large churches, and more than 5,000 seniors at 15 meal sites throughout the county may benefit from the changes adopted by the meal provider.
- Supported school districts to adopt healthy changes in 154 schools, affecting more than 88,000 students and their families. For example, Centennial School District adopted a comprehensive school wellness policy to increase physical activity and healthy food options, affecting 6,800 students at 10 schools; and Gresham Barlow School District is developing a Safe Routes to School program, which will enable and encourage children to walk or bike to school.
- Established the Multnomah County Healthy Retail Initiative to work with local corner store owners to increase the availability and marketing of healthy food and drinks. This includes supporting the Village Market, a community-driven corner store located in a neighborhood of 3,000 mostly low-income residents, as well as working with the City of Portland to encourage healthy mobile vending as a part of the city’s annual Rose Festival.
- Ensured that health equity strategies focused on obesity prevention were integrated into the City of Portland’s 25-year planning vision, the Portland Plan. These strategies, which aim to ensure all people have equal access to healthy living, affect decisions related to land use, transportation, and economic development.

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

### Drinking Water More Accessible in Multnomah County

Multnomah County is working to promote tap water as a healthy alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages through several community changes. Through adoption of the *Take Back the Tap* campaign that involves testing water quality and installing new faucets in the workplace, more than 4,500 Multnomah County employees are encouraged to drink water in lieu of unhealthy beverages. Students throughout the county are also experiencing the benefits of this initiative; for example, Portland Public Schools’ water promotion strategy introduced water stations in elementary school cafeterias, and David Douglas Schools have rolled out “hydration stations” in middle and high schools. More than 50,000 students will benefit from these efforts. The community education initiative also is supporting this effort by highlighting how much sugar is in beverages like sports drinks. In partnership with Portland Parks and Recreation, short vignettes communicating campaign messages were shown at the *Movies in the Park* program in summer 2011, reaching approximately 40,000 county residents.

### 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 Multnomah County’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- City of Gresham
- City of Portland
- Coalition of Communities of Color
- Ecotrust
- Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
- Multnomah County Community Wellness and Prevention
- New Seasons Market
- Portland Public Schools
- Providence Health System
- Reynolds School District

### Additional Information

For more information, please visit [www.multco-itstartshere.org](http://www.multco-itstartshere.org).