

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



MID-OHIO VALLEY, WEST VIRGINIA 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.

“I AM SO GLAD IT ALLOWED US THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO OUR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS. THE KIDS LOVED IT, AND IT WAS SO SUCCESSFUL THAT OUR SUPERINTENDENT ADDED IT TO THE BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR.”

— Dwight Goff, Principal, Wirt County Primary Center

Community Overview

West Virginia’s Mid-Ohio Valley is tackling obesity throughout the community. The Mid-Ohio Valley, which is home to 133,280 residents, consists of six individual counties: Calhoun, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Wirt, and Wood. The adult obesity rates for the six counties are a concern, ranging from 31% to 34%.



The adult residents of West Virginia have the highest combined rate of obesity and overweight in the country at 67.9%. The incidence of obesity or overweight among West Virginia children aged 10-17 is 35.5%, which also is higher than the national average. Obesity rates among low-income families are disproportionately higher than obesity rates among higher-income families. West Virginia has the fourth-highest percentage of its total population living below the Federal poverty level, including 18% of all residents and 25.6% of children younger than age 18. This rural state also has the country’s highest percentage of residents with chronic diseases. In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at the community’s entire population, certain initiatives target low-income and youth populations.

Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Mid-Ohio Valley:

- Recruited 32 elementary schools to participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. With this program, 10,219 students—more than half living in low-income neighborhoods—have increased access to healthy foods at school.
- Increased the average number of students per school who participate in daily physical education by approximately 23%. This occurred within six months of placing 14 physical education teachers and one education coordinator in middle and high schools in the region.



“THE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SNACK PROGRAM AT THE SCHOOLS HAS BEEN GREAT. MY DAUGHTER IS A PICKY EATER, BUT, BECAUSE HER FRIENDS WERE TRYING MANGOS, CUMQUATS, AND RED PEPPERS SHE TRIED THEM. SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH MANGOS. WE HAD TO STOP AT THE GROCERY STORE AND PICK SOME UP ON THE WAY HOME. THIS IS SUCH A GREAT IDEA TO GET FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN THE SCHOOLS.”

— Teresa, Wirt County resident

Community Successes *(continued)*

- Collaborated with coalitions in six counties to garner citizens' support and generate ideas to improve access to physical activity and healthy nutrition. Community liaisons affiliated with the coalitions received formal training and reached out to more than 131,800 community members.
- Expanded access to healthy foods through the development of new farmers' markets in three counties. A market was opened in Roane County and two others will be built in the counties of Wirt and Calhoun, which will benefit a total of 27,850 residents.
- Launched the public awareness initiative, *Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice*, which encourages residents to adopt healthy behaviors. Through print, television, radio, and social media, as well as outdoor advertising, including billboards and a building wrap, this effort has reached more than 133,000 people.



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

Retailers Make Stores More Conducive to Healthy Choices

Mid-Ohio Valley secured the commitment of three Walmart and five Foodland stores to implement the Eat-Well-Play-Well pledge. The retailers agreed to stop displaying sugary snacks and beverages alongside toys. Additionally, they committed to creating a healthy check-out aisle, which will include food items with high nutritional value and toys that promote physical activity. The stores also will display fruit, healthy snacks, cereals, and bottled waters adjacent to toy aisles. Foodland stores are located in Wood and Roane counties and serve a population of more than 101,000 citizens. The Walmart stores serve 93,000 customers weekly.

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 Mid-Ohio Valley's leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Board of Health, Calhoun County
- Camden Clark Memorial Hospital
- City of Parkersburg Development Department
- Concerned Citizens, Pleasants County and Wood County
- Coplin Clinic, Wirt County
- Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department
- Regional Education Services Agency 5
- Ritchie County Chamber of Commerce
- Roane County Chamber of Commerce
- Sisters of St. Joe Charitable Foundation
- West Virginia Dental Mission of Mercy
- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
- West Virginia Mountain Bike Association
- Wood County Chamber of Commerce

Additional Information

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