

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA 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.

“CPPW WELLNESS COORDINATORS HAVE ENERGIZED OUR PARENTS, STAFF, AND STUDENTS TO FOCUS ON FITNESS AND WELLNESS EVERY DAY. AS A RESULT OF THIS INITIATIVE, WE ARE BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE A CULTURE CHANGE WHICH STRENGTHENS THE LINK BETWEEN STUDENT HEALTH AND LEARNING.”

— Martha Petty, District Wellness Coordinator for the Flowing Wells School District

Community Overview

Pima County, Arizona, is tackling obesity throughout the community. Covering 9,184 square miles, the county is one of the largest in the United States. Approximately 26.6% of adults in Pima County are obese, which is higher than the state’s obesity rate of 24.7%. High school students are at an increased risk for obesity, with physical activity levels and fruit and vegetable consumption of Arizona youth ranking lower than those of their national counterparts.



In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at Pima County’s entire population, some initiatives target high-risk populations, such as certain ethnic and racial groups and low-income residents. The obesity rate among Hispanics in Arizona (33.1%) is disproportionately high and exceeds the national Hispanic obesity average of 30.6%. Approximately one-third of Pima County’s 980,263 residents are Hispanic. Additionally, low-income groups, which account for approximately 15% of Pima County’s population, bear a disproportionate burden of obesity. In Arizona, 53.3% of children from families living under the Federal poverty level are overweight or obese, compared with 44.8% of children from families living under the Federal poverty level nationally.

Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Pima County:

- Enhanced the Community Food Bank Gardening Cooperative through a new partnership with the Composting Cooperative. Since this partnership was established, the Gardening Cooperative has enrolled hundreds of members, and participation of students from high-risk schools increased.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Community Successes *(continued)*



- Teamed up with the Tucson Padres minor league baseball team to offer new ways for fans to make healthy choices while enjoying baseball games at Kino Stadium, including choosing healthy concession fare and walking the “Padre Path” before and during games. An estimated 300,000 guests are expected to attend the season’s 68 home games.
- Established a year-round farmers’ market and biweekly farm stands throughout Pima County, many of which are located in low-income and underserved neighborhoods and all of which enable participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to use Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) to purchase fresh produce.
- Launched more than 150 School Health Advisory Councils in 11 school districts, and trained wellness and district coordinators on how to improve nutrition and physical activity in public schools. Approximately 160 produce bars have been established in county school cafeterias to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption among students.
- Promoted awareness and use of Pima County bicycle and multiuse paths for recreation, fitness, and active transportation.
- Engaged local restaurants to participate in a healthy restaurant designation program. Participating establishments offer and identify healthy dining choices on menus.
- Began assisting in the development of initiatives at work sites, childcare providers, and faith-based organizations that increase access to physical activity and healthy food for more than 75,000 employees, 110,000 parishioners, and nearly 10,000 children.

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

Local Gardens Offer Residents Healthy, Affordable Food

Pima County is increasing residents’ access to healthy and fresh food. The county has implemented nine school gardens, more than 350 new family gardens (including gardening opportunities for those with limited space or mobility), and 12 community gardens in low-income neighborhoods at high risk for obesity. The combined production of these school, home, and community gardens accounts for more than 12,000 pounds of locally grown fruits and vegetables. More than 800 community members have been identified as benefitting from this initiative. Further, an estimated 350 families have already joined the gardening cooperative, and more than 2,000 people have attended gardening classes—a strong indication that the community is eager to learn more about gardening and healthy food options. Given the success of this effort, Pima County has scheduled the installation of 17 additional community gardens, which will reach approximately 2,000 residents.

“IT TEACHES ME WHAT I’M SUPPOSED TO EAT AND WHAT’S GOOD FOR MY BODY.”

— *Challenger Middle School nutrition program participant and Pima County resident*

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

- City of Tucson Mayor’s Office
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Ascension Health and Carondelet Health Network
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Health Department
- Pima Association of Governments, a Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Pima County Board of Health
- Pima County Board of Supervisors
- Pima County Business Community
- Sunnyside School District
- University of Arizona, Arizona Health Sciences Center
- YMCA of Southern Arizona

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.healthypima.org