

# Communities Putting Prevention to Work



## INDEPENDENCE COUNTY, ARKANSAS 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.*

“HEALTH CARE IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN HOSPITALS AND LAB TESTS; IT’S ALSO ABOUT EDUCATION AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES.”

— Mike Ross, Congressman, Arkansas

### Community Overview

Independence County, Arkansas, is tackling obesity throughout the rural community, which is home to 36,647 residents. The adult obesity rate in Independence County is 29%. Additionally, 38.5% of the students enrolled in the Independence County public school system are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight, which is higher than the state average of students (27.8%) who are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight. Further, 22% of youth in the county live below the Federal poverty level, compared to the 18% of children nationwide who live in poverty. Research suggests that students from low-income families have less opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, including athletics and other physical activities; they are also more likely than others to consume less nutritious food. In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at Independence County’s entire population, certain initiatives specifically target youth.



### Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Independence County:

- Encouraged schools to develop wellness plans that foster increased physical activity and healthy eating for students.
- Began development and implementation of the *Eat Smart* initiative that leverages school meals as an opportunity to encourage children to learn, practice, and adopt healthy eating habits.





### Community Successes *(continued)*

- Supported the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) family initiative, which fosters the involvement of students, parents, and extended family members in practicing and adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviors at home.



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

### Independence County Encourages Active, Healthy Lifestyles Among Residents

Independence County is implementing changes in the community to increase physical activity levels among residents. For example, joint-use agreements ensure that all four county school districts make school facilities, such as gymnasiums and tracks, available to the public outside of school hours. This change has enabled the community to offer free fitness classes to low-income residents whose opportunities for physical activity are otherwise limited. Local media, including a newspaper, television station, and magazine, have covered the joint-use agreements, increasing awareness of new physical activity opportunities among county residents.

“THE *CPPW* INITIATIVE AT THE SCHOOLS HAS CHANGED MY LIFE. I WAS OVERWEIGHT AND EXPERIENCING HEALTH PROBLEMS. NOW THAT THE SCHOOLS HAVE OPENED THEIR DOORS AFTER HOURS TO PROVIDE EXERCISE AND NUTRITION CLASSES, I HAVE HAD THE TOOLS I NEEDED TO IMPROVE MY HEALTH. THESE CLASSES ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE.”

— *Jennifer, Independence 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 Independence County’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Arkansas Department of Health
- Batesville School District
- Cedar Ridge School District
- City of Batesville
- Independence County Hometown Wellness Coalition
- Independence County Sheriff’s Office
- Lyon College
- Midland School District
- Southside School District
- University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

### Additional Information

For more information, please visit [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov).