

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



WOOD COUNTY, WISCONSIN 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 DON’T THINK THAT THIS WILL EVER GO OUT OF OUR VEINS ... NOW THAT WE’VE UNDERSTOOD AND GOTTEN OUR ARMS AROUND THE NEED TO MAKE IT EASIER TO GET THE AVAILABILITY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO OUR SCHOOLS AND TO OUR FAMILIES.”

— Mary Jo Carson, Mayor,
Wisconsin Rapids

Community Overview

Wood County, Wisconsin, is tackling obesity throughout the community, which is home to 74,749 residents. In Wood County, the combined adult overweight and obesity rate is 64.4%, and 34% of third graders are overweight or obese. Poor diet is an established risk factor for obesity. Only 50% of Wood County ZIP codes have grocery stores or farmers’ markets and less than 25% of county adults meet the Federal government’s guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption.



Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Wood County:

- Launched the *Get Active. Cause. Community. Change.* public awareness initiative to build community support for local efforts aimed at improving nutrition and increasing residents’ physical activity.
- Created 19 new gardens at childcare centers serving 1,800 children to support increased fruit and vegetable consumption and early learning about healthy meal choices.
- Provided 22 childcare centers with resources—including training, tools, and curriculum—to improve children’s nutrition and increase their physical activity. This effort has affected more than 80% of children in these programs.
- Improved courthouse visitors’ and employees’ access to nutritious snacks by ensuring that 75% of vending options are healthy. The courthouse also is in the process of implementing the Go-Slow-Whoa labeling system to help individuals better understand the nutritional value of different vending items and encourage healthy choices. This effort will be expanded to include additional work sites and the county’s six school districts.



“MOST PARENTS HAVE BEEN PRETTY IMPRESSED BECAUSE IF THE KIDS TRY THE FOOD HERE, THEY’LL GO HOME AND ASK FOR IT.”

— Pat Herman, Owner and Director, Bows & Britches Childcare

Community Successes *(continued)*

- Integrated nutrition- and physical activity-based curricula into the classroom as part of an effort to encourage students to increase physical activity levels and try nutritious foods in cafeterias and at home. More than 200 second through fourth grade students at 10 Wood County elementary schools participated in Fit-tastic, an eight-week afterschool program that helped them develop healthier eating and physical activity habits.
- Began developing farm-to-school programs in the six school districts in Wood County. Efforts include connecting local farmers to food staff directors, coordinating food service staff trainings, and providing students with taste testings and nutrition education.

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

Multi-use Agreements Encourage Nutrition Education and Physical Activity

Wood County is expanding community members’ access to safe places for physical activity and nutrition education through establishing multi-use agreements. An agreement with the Opportunity Development Center, Inc. (ODC) will enable qualified instructors and organizations to use the ODC’s commercial kitchen to teach classes on a variety of subjects including cooking healthy meals and freezing and canning produce. Similarly, the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District will open their gyms, classrooms, and fields to the community when school is not in session. Both multi-use agreements have the potential to reach the entire community, and, on the basis of school district enrollment and the location of the ODC, an estimated 4,000 people will directly benefit from this effort.

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

- Office of the Mayor, Marshfield
- Office of the Mayor, Wisconsin Rapids
- Aspirus Wausau Hospital
- Auburndale School District
- Heart of Wisconsin Business Alliance
- Marshfield Area Community Foundation
- Marshfield Area YMCA
- Marshfield Clinic Center for Community Outreach
- Marshfield School District
- Nekoosa School District
- Pittsville School District
- Port Edwards School District
- Riverview Hospital
- Security Health Plan
- South Wood County YMCA
- *The Voice*
- University of Wisconsin-Extension
- University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
- Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools
- Wisconsin Restaurant Association
- Wood County Health Department

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.getactivewisconsin.org/woodcounty/.