

HEALTHY CITY THRIVING FAMILIES



A Quarterly Update from the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support

July - August 2005

Skyway Senior Center Forges New Partnership with MEDICA

Larry Anderson was concerned. It was the end of April, and the financial situation of the Skyway Senior Center was dim. If a miracle did not happen, the center was set to close by June 15. For the past year and a half, Larry had been working hard to guard against this scenario as president of the Friends of the Skyway Senior Center Board. Larry knew so many people who came to the center, some who are attracted to the quality programs such as the foreign policy seminars that he and his wife Jan attend. Larry knew others were lonely, and needed this gathering place to connect with people. Larry's shoulders sagged as he thought about the possibility of his fellow seniors having nowhere to go if the center closed.

With all the drama of a Hollywood movie, Larry found out a day later that an unexpected donation of \$25,000 was coming to the center. Although this donation would not solve the long-term financial issues, it was enough to delay the June closing. Bob Kuehn, Jr, a Minneapolis native who is now a Boston developer, gave the donation in memory of his late father Bob Kuehn, with encouragement from JoAnne Labernick, his stepmother and one of the founders of the center. He wrote, "I hope this modest contribution will help spur other local businesses, foundations, and other benefactors to step up with their support for this impor-

tant resource that does so much good for so many seniors." Larry was elated; he and other board members gave public recognition to this gift at the Volunteer Appreciation Tea on May 19.

Also during May, the *Star Tribune* ran a story called "The Tale of Two Senior Centers" highlighting the Skyway Senior Center and another center in Saint Paul. The story contrasted the financial instability of the Minneapolis center with the more secure Saint Paul center, which has corporate sponsorship. For several months, members of the Friends of the Skyway Senior Center had been pursuing similar strategies with potential sponsors. The publicity generated by the newspaper story helped pull together several courses of activity. There was a flurry of meetings, letters, and phone calls, and at the end of June, MEDICA formally announced their new partnership.

Mark Owen, Vice President at the MEDICA Center for Healthy Aging, put forward a proposal to fund the center at \$125,000 annually for three years, starting in July 2005, in exchange for naming and affiliation rights. Owen will also join the Friends of the Skyway Senior Center, a non-profit board with the mission of securing funding and providing policy direction for the center.

At the July 14 celebration of the newly named MEDICA Skyway Senior Center, Larry stated, "One of our goals for 2005 was to look for a long-term partnership to keep the center viable. The news from MEDICA was so welcome and very exciting, and it looks like we've met our goal."

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Larry Anderson (R), President of the Friends of the Skyway Senior Center with Mark Owen (L), MEDICA at the celebration of the newly renamed MEDICA Skyway Senior Center on July 14th.

Saving babies for another four years

With uncertainty this spring about whether or not Twin Cities Healthy Start would continue beyond May 31, parent members of the Healthy Start Community Consortium hosted an event to draw attention to its work. The event was a gala celebration with jazz music, storytelling, drumming, awards, children's activities and a multicultural food buffet. Although the fate of the Healthy Start application for renewed funding was not known, Consortium members, staff, stakeholders, and community folks celebrated their progress fighting infant mortality over the past six years.

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Skyway Senior Center, continued

Michelle Lodahl, center director, says, "it's been an emotional roller coaster for us. Now we are delighted to have a new beginning."

The Skyway Senior Center opened on November 1, 2001 in the Target building between 9th and 10th Streets on Nicollet Mall. Located near a major transportation hub, the center is an innovative urban concept designed with input from hundreds of older adults. The center averages 70 visitors per day, and has a total attendance of over 52,000 since opening. The center's goals are to provide programs, socialization and relationship-building activities with diverse groups of seniors, and to reduce isolation and depression, providing seniors with skills and resources to lead independent, productive lives. Contact the MEDICA Skyway Senior Center at 612-370-3869 or on the web at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/seniors.

The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS)

VISION:

Healthy residents, communities and environments.



MISSION: to provide leadership in meeting the unique needs of our urban population by engaging partners in promoting individual, community and environmental health and eliminating disparities.

Gretchen Musicant, Commissioner

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Saving Babies, continued

A few days before the end of May, project director Coral Garner received word that Twin Cities Healthy Start had received renewed funding. \$3.7 million will be granted from June 2005 through May 2009 to continue the work of saving babies in the African American and American Indian communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Housed within the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support and funded by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, Twin Cities Healthy Start was created by a group of concerned parents, community members, public health professionals and medical and social service providers to



address the unacceptable death rates of African American and American Indian babies in their first year of life.

Since 1999, Twin Cities Healthy Start has provided case management services to more than 1,000 pregnant women and infants, trained approximately 300 health care workers and distributed \$3,435,056 to 18 different agencies and individuals for outreach, case management and health education services for African American and American Indian families in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. During Healthy Start's existence, there have been dramatic declines in the infant mortality rates for its target populations, as well as the disparities between these groups and the two cities' white population.

Merina Seneviratne and her young son, Justin Neal, enjoyed the music and storytelling at the Twin Cities Healthy Start annual meeting on May 5. Merina and 11 other Healthy Start parents received Consortium Leadership awards at the event. The mission of Healthy Start is to reduce infant mortality and improve infant health among the African American and American Indian communities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Community Development Block Grants awarded for daycare, medical care, education, more

At the request of the Mayor and City Council, the Minneapolis Public Health Advisory Committee developed the first competitive process in thirty years for awarding Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public services funds. The Committee developed the process over the past year with extensive community input. A total of \$650,473 was awarded to 17 agencies, following a thorough review of the 59 proposals submitted requesting a total of \$4.4 million. "The Committee devoted a great deal of time and energy putting together a thoughtful and inclusive process to address the priorities of children and social conditions affecting the health of Minneapolis residents," noted Becky McIntosh, Health & Family Support staff to the Committee. "They did a phenomenal job to ensure that these limited resources were used in the best interest of our residents most in need of services." \$285,000 was also distributed non-competitively for subsidies for early childhood daycare and medical and dental care for uninsured and low income residents. These funds will help make it possible for low income parents to work, and for children to get needed medical and dental care. The grantees started their projects on June 1 for a one year term, with an additional year of renewal likely. The grantees and their projects are posted at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs. Click on "RFP and grant opportunities."

Helping Minneapolis youths develop into happy, healthy adults

MDHFS and the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board have recently joined together to promote youth development in the City. They have created a new youth development specialist position to share between the two departments. This new staff member will lead and coordinate youth development activities (see Page 4 for more information) for the two agencies.

Both departments also believe that all Minneapolis youths should be healthy in body and mind, connected to their families and communities, have opportunities to learn and to become competent. This vision was launched at a town forum held on May 24 for policymakers, service providers and concerned residents. At the forum, youths from 12 Minneapolis neighborhoods shared their community mapping research on the formal and informal resources for

youth in their areas. They spoke with other young people about what would make their neighborhoods a better place to live. They also documented whether or not the adults in their neighborhoods were friendly to them during this assessment process. At the forum, it was revealed that youths want the same kind of neighborhoods that adults want: friendly, involved and positive, with connected neighbors, businesses and programs.

The partnership between Health and Family Support and the Youth Coordinating Board will provide vision, leadership and support in the area of youth development in order for youths in Minneapolis to have the services, supports and opportunities to successfully make the transition into happy, healthy and contributing adulthood.



Jonesh Thomas discusses her role in the youth mapping project at the May 24th Speak Up, Speak Out forum.

Urban Health Agenda: Connecting health and housing

Public health has a long history of involvement in housing issues in urban areas, beginning with a focus on overcrowding and sanitation in the late 19th century. Today, more familiar public health issues related to housing are asthma triggers, allergens, and lead poisoning from peeling paint in older homes. While these are important issues where many more resources are needed, there is a growing recognition of the role housing plays in building the social and economic environment as the foundation for healthy communities. At first, it may not be obvious why public health would be involved in housing redevelopment, but public health includes more than physical health, and MDHFS is using a broad definition to improve livability in Minneapolis.

There are actual health benefits that can be realized, specifically around home ownership and housing stability. Home ownership can improve residents' commitment to their neighborhoods and increase their willingness to help for "common good" causes such as safety and recreational opportunities. Home ownership and stable

housing can also increase social health—cohesion as neighbors work together to improve their neighborhoods. Positive impacts of a stable community may also improve children's school performance and the perception of neighborhood livability. National studies have documented that in equally poor neighborhoods, the ones with poorly maintained housing had higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases than those with well maintained housing. Within the Twin Cities Healthy Start project, many women have unstable housing situations that make it difficult to maintain healthy pregnancies and raise their young children.

Recently, MDHFS has begun to work with the City's Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) to examine the health impact of housing redevelopment through the proposed Northside Housing Partnership. MDHFS researchers will be working with neighborhood groups and CPED staff to track any changes in resident well-being, safety, community involvement, and environmental improvements that arise as a result of this investment. In each of the five areas

chosen by CPED for housing improvements, surveys will capture residents' viewpoints, and observational assessments will note changes in the physical environment, such as boarded properties, broken windows, litter, and graffiti. This information will be used to supplement current data on crime and housing inspections to examine differences before and after the implementation of the Northside Housing Partnership. Results of this cutting-edge approach will be known in the fall.

MDHFS Commissioner Gretchen Muscant states "This is an exciting opportunity to work with other City departments like CPED and Regulatory Services to measure the health impact of City investments that are not thought of as health interventions. This approach is more common in Europe and in Canada and has the potential to be able to eventually enhance the positive health impact of a range of City investments." This is an example of the broad definition of health that MDHFS employs in order to find new ways to improve life in Minneapolis.

Healthy City Updates

It's All About You

This was the theme of the “guy only” open houses held in May for five school-based clinics. The goal of the events was to invite male high school students to tour the clinics, see what services were provided, and meet the staff. Several men from other agencies such as Minneapolis Employment & Training, Employment Action Center and the Young Dads Project also participated in the open houses. Nearly 900 young men came through the five clinics, most of them first-time visitors. After the open houses, many male students have come into the clinics asking for a variety of services, such as counseling, sports physicals, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and nutritional information. These events were funded by a grant from the Sheltering Arms Foundation. For more information, contact Donna Amidon at 612-673-5305.

August sports physicals

School-based clinics are offering sports physicals again this August at Washburn, Henry, and Edison high schools. The sports physicals follow state guidelines and include health behavior assessments and education, complete physical exams, nutritional assessment and education, mental and social assessments and counseling if needed. The check-ups are available to all students from Roosevelt, South, Washburn, Edison or Henry, with or without health insurance, at low or no cost. Please call 612-673-3928 to make an appointment or 612-673-5305 for more information.

Latino Resource Fair

MDHFS is helping sponsor La Feria, a resource fair for Latinos on Saturday August 13th at the Midtown Public Market on Lake and Hiawatha. The event will run from 10 am – 3 pm; for more information, contact La Oportunidad at 612-872-6165 or Metropolitan Health Plan at 612-337-3209.

Thanks

Marnie Wells was publicly thanked at the June 6 Health and Human Services Committee meeting of the Minneapolis City Council for her dedicated service. Marnie has volunteered as both co-chair and member-at-large of the Minneapolis Public Health Advisory Committee for the past two and a half years. A resolution was read extending appreciation for her participation and leadership.

Accessibility guide

The new Accessibility Guide 2005 is a 44 page booklet that lists accessible parking, lodging, dining and other information for visitors to Minneapolis. The Senior Ombudsman's Office, with the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities produced the booklet in collaboration with the Greater Minneapolis Convention & Visitor's Association. Call Stacy Schmidt for a copy at 612-673-3757. The guide is also posted at www.minneapolis.org/travelinfo/accessibility.asp.

Youth development mini-grants

MDHFS will give 14 Minneapolis youth serving agencies mini-grants to enhance their programming. Proposals were reviewed and accepted in April for the \$1,000 mini-grants to be used for the remaining months of 2005. If successful, the mini-grant program will be opened up again for 2006. Contact Ken Dahl at 612-673-2622 for more information.

Email addresses

Healthy City Thriving Families is moving to electronic publication, and your email addresses are needed. To continue receiving this update in your e-mail inbox, please send an email message to dhfs@ci.minneapolis.mn.us, and note “subscribe HCTF” as the title line.

Staff on the move

Shada Buyobe-Hammond, office support specialist for Twin Cities Healthy Start, left MDHFS at the end of May for an educational leave of absence. Shada was often the “first contact” someone would have with TCHS, and she has contributed significantly to the success of TCHS.

Janice Fondell started in April as the new youth development specialist for MDHFS and the Youth Coordinating Board. Jan is working full-time in this shared position, and is responsible for developing strategies to assist the YCB in implementing an ambitious children's agenda (read more on Page 3). Jan will also manage several MDHFS youth-oriented contracts. Jan has spent the last seven years as the homeless prevention coordinator for Dakota County. She can be reached at 612-673-5527.

Interns

Merga Hunde has been interning since March with the New Families Center and the School Based Clinics. Merga, a social work student at Metropolitan State University, is helping families access health care coverage at the New Families Center and will develop several new initiatives for the School-Based Clinics as well. His internship ends in December.

STEP-UP students

MDHFS is employing 2 students through the Step-Up summer employment program for Minneapolis youth.

Samantha (Sam) Esguerra is working part time with Jan Fondell and the Youth Coordinating Board. Sam just finished her sophomore year at South High.

Yer Ly is working full time as an administrative intern to assist with clerical projects. Yer will be a Junior this fall at North High School where she is an honor roll student. She will be working at the New Families Center in August during the school registration rush where her Hmong language skills will be helpful.