

MINNEAPOLIS

HEALTHY CITY THRIVING FAMILIES



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

April - June 2008

Ensuring that Children can Walk and Bike to School Safely

Helping children to walk and bike to school safely could be a win-win approach to addressing childhood obesity, rising gas prices and the negative impact of vehicle emissions on the environment. Safe Routes to School (SRTS), an international movement to ensure that children can safely walk and bike to school, can produce a number of benefits:

- Safer neighborhoods and healthier families

- Improved academic achievement and student attendance
- Stronger communities and more active parent involvement
- Fewer parents driving and less traffic congestion around schools
- Reduced school transportation costs

Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS) and the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) formed a SRTS Task Force

to develop a plan for creating a safe, efficient, sustainable and healthy way for children to travel to school. The plan addresses parents' concerns about safety, and MPS busing policies and practices. The plan calls for changes to policies, practices and funding at the district level, combined with school-based programming and community-wide promotion.

The findings of the SRTS Task Force, which included principals, parents, and other stakeholders will be released this spring; a full report will be available at the Department of Health and Family Support's Web site: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs. For questions, contact Patty Bowler at (612) 673-3009 or patty.bowler@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Goals of Safe Routes to School

1. SRTS is viewed as safe transportation, as safe as busing or driving to school. To reach this goal, SRTS must:
 - Address crime and perceptions of danger
 - Address traffic concerns
 - Build community through walking and biking
 - Revise state laws to improve safety
2. SRTS is integrated into messaging, policy and initiatives in both the City of Minneapolis and MPS. To reach this goal, SRTS must:
 - Promote walking and biking as good for the community and for learning
 - Provide incentives for students who walk and bike to school
 - Embrace sustainability
3. SRTS has adequate staff and resources within both the City and MPS to influence policy, support schools, facilitate community involvement, and advocate for additional funding. To reach this goal, SRTS must:
 - Dedicate a full-time, shared SRTS position housed at MPS but working closely with City staff
 - Collaborate on a citywide SRTS advisory committee
 - Support training for SRTS champions at local schools
 - Expand school transportation coordinators' duties to include biking and walking responsibilities

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Alcohol Use Among Pregnant Women

Prenatal exposure to alcohol is a leading preventable cause of birth defects and mental retardation. Prenatal drug use also poses risks to a developing fetus. As a part of the Twin Cities Healthy Start program, clinics and social service agencies screen pregnant women for alcohol and drug use and other risk factors. Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support staff has examined screening responses of 1,492 prenatal care patients between November 2005 and June 2007. The study found that most women report quitting alcohol and drug use after learning they are pregnant. Those who do not quit tend to report heavier use and psychosocial stressors. Highlights of the study include:

- More people quit alcohol (87 percent) than drugs (56 percent).
- Pre-pregnancy alcohol and drug use were much higher among women born in the U.S. than among immigrants and much higher among unmarried women than married. American Indians had the highest rates among racial and ethnic groups.
- In analyses where a variety of factors were examined simultaneously, older age, current smoking, and lack of transportation predicted both alcohol and drug use continuation.
- Continuation of alcohol use during pregnancy was also predicted by the frequency of use before pregnancy, depression, and physical/sexual abuse by someone other than an intimate partner.
- Drug use continuation was predicted by race (higher for American Indians and African Americans) and the frequency of drug use before pregnancy.

These findings suggest that reducing alcohol and drug use during pregnancy may require approaches that simultaneously address habitual drinking, drug use, and cigarette smoking, in conjunction with depression, abuse victimization, and other psychosocial stressors. The current delivery system does not support such a multi-faceted approach. For more information on this study, please contact Pat Harrison at (612) 673-3883 or Pat.Harrison@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

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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Public Health Advisory Committee

The Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) advises the Minneapolis City Council on policy matters affecting the health of residents. PHAC serves as a liaison between the City and residents on concerns related to health care access, youth violence prevention and environmental health. PHAC responsibilities also include:

- Advising the City Council on the functions and priorities of MDHFS and making recommendations to the City Council regarding those priorities.
- Making recommendations to the City Council on the allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds to community agencies (\$680,000 in the most recent cycle)
- Reviewing the Community Health Services Plan, which determines priority health issues for Minneapolis.

Past PHAC recommendations have addressed lead poisoning and HIV prevention, arsenic poisoning testing of Minneapolis properties and biomonitoring of children, calorie labeling on restaurant menus and a ban on the use of trans fats in food outlets, support of the State Children's Health Insurance Program and the Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Parity Act. The PHAC has also developed recommendations to reform the health care system and expand health care coverage to more citizens.

Composition of the PHAC is intended to reflect Minneapolis' cultural, ethnic, racial and economic diversity. Committee members are appointed or nominated by the City Council, the mayor, Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and the Urban Health Professional Advisory Committee. The committee also includes three at-large appointees. All appointments are confirmed by the City Council. For more information about the PHAC or to apply for membership, contact Emily Wang at (612) 673-2144 or emily.wang@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Maintaining Efforts for Lead-Safe Kids

Since 2003 the Minneapolis Project for Lead-Safe Kids (MPLS Kids) has worked toward a 2010 goal of zero lead-poisoned children in Minneapolis. Spearheaded by MDHFS, Lead Safe Kids is a partnership between Hennepin County and community-based agencies to provide lead poisoning prevention outreach and education in Hennepin County. Its activities have included:

- Providing lead education at more than 700 community events.
- Reaching more than 27,000 parents, health professionals, property owners, landlords and contractors with information about how to prevent lead poisoning.
- Testing 780 children and pregnant women for lead in community settings.

- Referring 1,423 low-income housing units to grant programs for lead remediation.
- Implementing a new ordinance requiring Lead Safe Work Practices certification when rental property owners address chipping and peeling paint citations.

Between 2002 and 2006, there was a 25 percent increase in lead testing of 1 and 2-year-old children in Minneapolis and a 36 percent decrease in elevated blood lead cases in children under age 6. In 2006, 208 Minneapolis children were lead-poisoned.

This critical work had been funded through an \$870,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While this

grant ended in 2007, project partners (Sustainable Resources Center (SRC), Way To Grow, Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency, Minneapolis Public Schools and Stairstep Foundation) will continue some of their lead activities. For example, a HUD grant to Hennepin County will provide funding to SRC and MDHFS to continue outreach activities, including expanding relationships with faith communities in north Minneapolis. With a \$40,000 Medica Foundation grant, MDHFS and SRC will also visit 25 Minneapolis primary care clinics to provide staff with education and resources about lead poisoning prevention. For more information, please contact Megan Ellingson at (612) 673-3817 or Megan.Ellingson@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Urban Health Agenda: Promoting Health through Storytelling

Responding to the recommendation of community advisors, MDHFS piloted the Urban Health Storytelling project, an innovative way to engage Minneapolis' communities in the department's health policy and programmatic work. Working from the primary question – Tell us about a time when your family/community was healthy – these intergenerational dialogues elucidated cultural values and strengths that public health can build upon.

Each community used a storytelling process most comfortable to them. For example, some communities relied on storytellers in their respective communities to begin the events, while others recruited specific individuals to listen to a storyteller followed by a group dialogue. To date, nine storytelling events have been held with members of Somali, African American, American Indian, Hmong, Vietnamese, white and Latino communities. Gender-specific events were also held for some communities.

As a result of the storytelling, MDHFS has been able to highlight important community values around health. While more than 20 themes have been initially identified, six themes have been common across all groups:

- Extended kinship networks and social interaction promotes health.
- Access to and engagement in physical activity is important to health.
- People can be extremely resilient despite great hardships.
- Health is viewed holistically, with physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects.
- Racial/cultural pride, and maintaining cultural traditions and ties to a cultural community, are important to health.
- Culturally sensitive and language-specific services are essential.

Results of these storytelling events have been shared with a wide array of state and local public health organizations. The results have precipitated discussions and ideas for shifting the focus of the health paradigm from the individual to family.

Currently, MDHFS is developing a video that will document the storytelling process and initial findings. The video is part of a comprehensive strategy to communicate this project to policymakers, health decision makers and most importantly, community members. For more information on the storytelling project, contact Emily Wang at (612) 673-2144 or emily.wang@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.



Thirty-two participants attended the May 16, 2007, Vietnamese Urban Health Storytelling event at the Center for Asian Pacific Islanders.

Healthy City Updates

• Fair Housing Month

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, handicap or family status. In recognition of its 40th anniversary, MDHFS' Housing Services and Senior Ombudsman programs hosted an educational session on April 17th that focused on senior housing. The keynote speaker was Attorney Aisha Bierma from the Borchard Law and Aging Center Fellow at the Minnesota Legal Aid Society. Housing and Urban Development, Minneapolis Office of Civil Rights, Minneapolis Housing Authority and Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis cosponsored the event.

• Public Health Week - Unnatural Causes

On April 9, the National Public Health Week Film Festival featured Unnatural Causes, a four-hour documentary series highlighting social and health inequities. MDHFS co-sponsored the showing of two episodes from the series: Becoming American and In Sickness and in Wealth. For more information, please contact Gretchen Musicant at (612) 673-3955 or gretchen.musicant@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

• Get Fit Twin Cities 2008

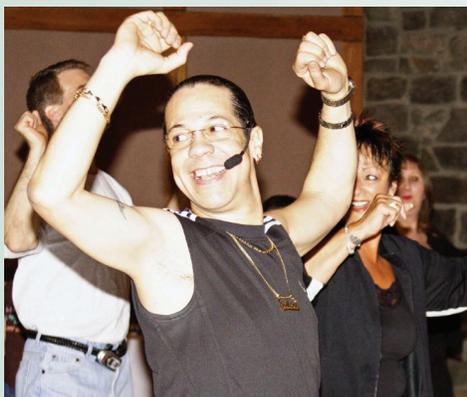
Get Fit Twin Cities has had another successful year at motivating people from across the Twin Cities to move more and eat better. A total of 1,328 teams and 7,420 participants formed teams and logged their minutes of activity over the 100-day challenge. Participants received weekly e-mails with tips for healthy living, free and reduced rates to fitness centers and the chance to win prizes. For more information, visit www.getfittwincities.org or contact Lara Tiede at (612) 673-3815 or info@getfittwincities.org.

• Staff Awards

Congratulations to MDHFS Preparedness Manager Pam Blixt who was honored on March 28 by the Minnesota Social Service Association for her outstanding work with the Metropolitan Regional Behavioral Health collaborative dealing with disaster mental health. Blixt was also recognized on Feb. 12 by the Minneapolis Police Department for her exceptional work around the 35W bridge collapse.

• Medica Skyway Senior Center Art Opening and Silent Auction

Join art enthusiasts in an art opening and silent auction on Thursday, May 15 from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. to support the Medica Skyway Senior Center. Jean Stephen Galleries and other partners donated pieces from internationally recognized artists such as Parkes, Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss), Cheret, Joan Miro and Luongo. Admission is free; complimentary hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served. The art display will run from May 15 to May 30. The Medica Skyway Senior Center is located at 950 Nicollet Mall, Suite 290. For more information, call the Medica Skyway Senior Center at (612) 370-3869.



Dance instructor René Thompson leads Get Fit Twin Cities participants in salsa dancing at the "Get Your Get Fit Groove On" mid-point event at the Mall of America. More than 100 Get Fit participants enjoyed the March 8 dance-themed event where they racked up their minutes of physical activity through dancing.



Pam Blixt receives an award from Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan

Staff Updates

- **Diane Haugesag** joined the Senior Ombudsman's Office as the new office support specialist. Before coming to the City, she worked for the YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis for Youth in Government and in the association offices.
- **Mary Tkadlec-Nelson** is a certified medical assistant who joined the school-based clinic team in February. She is stationed at the Washburn High School clinic.
- **Ae Her** was hired by MDHFS Public Health Lab in December but began work as a temp in June 2007. Ae works at the new Hennepin County Public Health Clinic (Previously Health Assessment/Promotion and Red Door Clinic).
- After six years working with the department's Healthy Start project, **Stephanie Graves** is now the new Maternal and Child Health (MCH) coordinator primarily addressing health disparities in early childhood. Stephanie brings almost 20 years of health care experience, much of that working with low-income and at-risk women and children.