

Why Children and the Built Environment?

America has a strong tradition of engineering feats that contribute to our sense of national and civic pride—the development of Central Park, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Mount Rushmore are among them. Yet, across the country the modern built environment—our buildings, roads, sidewalks and neighborhood designs—increasingly fragments our communities and is affecting the health of our children.

Children who live close to school often do not walk or bicycle because there are no sidewalks. Our nation's reliance on cars has contributed to increased pedestrian fatalities and higher rates of childhood asthma due to air pollution. Lack of access to fresh foods has helped lead to increasing childhood obesity and disturbing health disparities in under-served communities. In short, healthy communities are on the verge of being engineered out of existence, especially when it comes to our children.

The good news is that while we created these built environments, we are equally capable of creating healthier ones. Many communities are beginning to do just that, banding together to create more livable communities with better public transit, bicycle paths, sidewalks and more parks. The American Public Health Association (APHA) and thousands of our community partners are dedicating National Public Health Week 2006 to inspiring Americans to build healthier communities and healthier kids.

<http://www.apha.org/nphw/>



National Public Health Week

For more information:
e-mail: nphw@apha.org
phone: (202) 777 APHA

<http://www.apha.org/NPHW/>



Working for a Healthier World

American Public Health Association

800 I Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001-3710 • © (202) 777 APHA

DESIGNING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: RAISING HEALTHY KIDS



National
Public Health
Week



April 3-9, 2006



American Public Health Association

DESIGNING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: RAISING HEALTHY KIDS

National Public Health Week 2006

Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids

April 3-9, 2006

- Monday: *Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids*
- Tuesday: *Surrounding Our Kids with Equal Opportunities*
- Wednesday: *Surrounding Our Kids with Physical Activity*
- Thursday: *Surrounding Our Kids with Safety*
- Friday: *Surrounding Our Kids with Clean Air*

Community Solutions to Create Healthy Communities for Kids

Thanks to the United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association created the Community Solutions to Health Disparities database, which highlights programs across the country that are successfully working to address a variety of health disparities. The following programs from the database focus on creating healthy environments for all children. To contribute programs from your community or to learn more, please visit <http://www.apha.org/NPHW/solutions/>

ACTIVE LIVING BY DESIGN

Physical activity has been largely engineered out of the built environment and, as a result, 70 percent of Americans do not achieve the U.S. Surgeon General's modest recommendation for daily physical activity. In response, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has promoted the national Active Living by Design initiative, which establishes innovative approaches to increase physical activity through community design, public policies, and communications strategies. Active Living by Design is funding 25 community partnerships across the country to demonstrate how changing community design will impact physical activity.

Groundwork Somerville; Somerville, MA

Groundwork Somerville (GWS) works with municipal offices and community agencies to support the healthy development of under-utilized land in the city and to make physical activity a shared value of the entire community. Significant resources are being directed toward developing a rail-to-trail bike/pedestrian path across the city, leveraging this densely packed community as a commuter by-way between Boston and bedroom communities in the metro region. In addition, the project is starting and supporting city-wide walking groups, conducting physical activity audits in neighborhoods in order to create and beautify walking routes that intersect with the existing bike/pedestrian path, and supporting innovative and inter-generational physical activity programs to reach out to the local Portuguese-speaking community. Policy change includes creating filters that will allow policy-makers, advocates and residents to review policy change, such as zoning amendments, to ensure they support active living through physical design. The GWS efforts on the Active Living by Design Partnership complements the organization's work to plant, maintain and engage youth and teachers in transforming concrete schoolyards into edible urban gardens where horticultural and nutritional education takes place.

HEALTHY EATING, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

This initiative sponsored by The California Endowment aims to fight the growing childhood obesity epidemic in California by increasing opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating among school-age children and their families, particularly in low-income and rural communities, and developing state policy changes that will reduce the risk factors for diabetes and obesity. The funding

has helped community organizations, school districts and local public health departments throughout California to work collaboratively to change policies and practices in schools, after-school programs, neighborhoods, media and advertising and in health care services to improve opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity.

South Shasta County

The Healthy Eating, Active Communities collaborative is working to promote "smart growth" in rural South Shasta County, a northern California community experiencing rapid development. By training youth and families as advocates, the collaborative is assessing the environment and providing input based on their findings to planning officials. In addition, the collaborative is working with the local parks and recreation department to expand physical activity and nutrition education programming at local community centers, developing a walking and trail guide, exploring joint use agreements between schools, parks and community centers to maximize the use of limited publicly accessible green space, and exploring the development of a community park.

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) works to protect the fetus and the child from environmental hazards and promote a healthy environment by focusing on the areas of research policy and education. CEHN has successfully assisted diverse communities and organizations in addressing environmental health concerns through effective public awareness and outreach campaigns. CEHN oversees the federally funded Student Environmental Development Program (SEDP).

Student Environmental Development Program (SEDP); Washington, DC

This cross-cultural, community-based, summer environmental education and outreach program provides rising eighth grade public school students with a holistic, experiential environmental education that allows the students to achieve a better understanding of the relationship they have to their natural and social environments. The program aims to develop cultural capital among inner city youth by providing the students with activities that will build the skills they need to succeed in a multi-cultural society, including communication, leadership skills and cultural awareness.