

HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN

THE PROBLEM:

Across the country, the built environment - the design of neighborhoods and manmade structures such as buildings, roads, and sidewalks - is having detrimental effects on the health of children and adults. Today, communities across Michigan are challenged by:

- epidemic rates of obesity and diabetes
- high rates of death from heart disease, stroke, and cancer
- poor nutritional and physical activity habits
- high health care costs
- the implications of an aging population on health care costs and the burden of disease
- disparities in health status among citizens

These health problems cannot be solved solely through changing individuals' actions and health choices.

SOLUTIONS:

Making changes in policies and settings where people live, work, and play can support individuals to increase daily physical activity, select healthier foods, and decrease exposure to tobacco and its byproducts.

Policies and environmental changes can assist large groups of people with living a healthy lifestyle, rather than just one or two individuals helped by traditional health promotion intervention focused on behavior change alone.

Policies are laws, regulations, and rules (both formal and informal) and they can support **or** inhibit healthy lifestyles. Examples of supportive health policies include: laws and regulations that restrict smoking in public buildings, and organizational rules that provide time off during work hours for physical activity.

Environmental interventions are changes to the economic, social, or physical environments. Examples of healthy environments include: incorporating walking paths and recreation areas into new land development plans, making low-fat choices available in cafeterias and restaurants, and removing ashtrays.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Resources from Michigan Health Tools: A gateway to better health in Michigan—Tools to create healthier communities, schools and worksites are available at www.mihealthtools.org.

Visit the Michigan Steps Up website: www.michiganstepsup.org and click on the “Healthy Communities” icon.

For further assistance, contact the Michigan Department of Community Health Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition & Physical Activity Section at (517) 335-8766.



HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN: SUCCESS STORIES

Washington Elementary School formed a *Safe Routes to School* team. They surveyed students in grades 3-5 and their parents about commuting to school as part of Michigan's two-year pilot Safe Routes to School initiative in 2004 and 2005. The team conducted a walking audit of commonly used routes to school and identified barriers to safety, such as loose dogs, abandoned buildings and damaged sidewalks. To further address safety, Mott Community College included Washington School in its daily patrols, particularly during drop-off and pick-up times. Parents and neighbors can call Mott 24 hours a day with safety concerns.

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For more information about Safe Routes to School, visit: www.saferoutesmichigan.org

Washtenaw County is dedicated to promoting long-term health improvement in the areas of physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco use reduction through environmental and policy change. The **Washtenaw County Public Health Department** is partnering with five communities (**Saline, Chelsea, Manchester, Dexter and Ypsilanti**), and each community has an established health coalition that has demonstrated need and capacity to implement policy and environmental change. By creating a healthier environment, Washtenaw County hopes to decrease cardiovascular disease and deaths in the future.



Bike rack installation in Ypsilanti



Walking Map in Chelsea

Additional programs demonstrating commitment to improving the health of children in Washtenaw County community include, but are not limited to: **Safe Kids Washtenaw County**, the **Corner Teen Health Center**, and the **Washtenaw Asthma Coalition**.

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ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

THE PROBLEM:

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Michigan, placing a heavy burden on the state's physical and fiscal health. Additionally, obesity is a known risk factor for cardiovascular disease, as well as many other serious health problems. Improving diet quality plays an important role in CVD and obesity management, while reducing associated health risks.

Unfortunately, an estimated eight out of ten Michigan adults **do not** consume fruits and vegetables five or more times per day and less than five percent of preschoolers eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables daily. Fewer than one in five Michigan high school students eat five fruits and vegetables a day.

SOLUTIONS:

It is increasingly important for individuals and organizations to develop a community-wide approach to increasing access to healthy foods. Policy and environmental changes can have a positive impact on eating habits for entire communities.

Examples of environmental changes include:

- Creation and use of community and school gardens.
- Creation and support of local farmers' markets or mini-markets.

Examples of policy changes include:

- Vending machines including healthy options such as low fat milk, water, fruit and vegetables.
- Zoning changes to allow local farmers to sell their products.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



Resources from Michigan Health Tools: A gateway to better health in Michigan—Tools are available to address healthy eating in communities and schools at www.mihealthtools.org.

Contact the Michigan Department of Community Health, Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition & Physical Activity Section at (517) 335-8766.

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS: SUCCESS STORIES

Earth Works Garden of Detroit started in 1999 as a partnership between the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and Gleaners Community Food Bank. The garden started as a small plot of land in the inner city of Detroit and has grown to three-quarters of an acre on three plots near the Meldrum Street Soup Kitchen. Complete with a greenhouse, the program's primary goal is to educate local youth through hands-on projects in the areas of nutrition and cooking, organic agriculture, and on diversity, both socially and environmentally. The project also yields fresh produce to benefit such programs as WIC and Soup Kitchen guests.



Volunteers discuss the fine art of tomato picking

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A grade school student learns to extract honey

The Henry North Elementary School Children's Garden in Lansing is a service-learning project that involves students in all phases of the gardening process. Vegetables, herbs, flowers, and some fruit and nut trees are grown. Fresh produce from the garden is shared with the students and their families. Produce is also donated to a local food bank and the Salvation Army to help fight hunger and to a senior center to provide nutritious meals to senior citizens. Students develop skills that can be applied throughout their lives. These skills include planning, budgeting, problem solving, teamwork, awareness of nutrition, and concern for others. By taking responsibility for plants and helping others to fight hunger, students establish a positive role in their community and bolster their sense of self-worth.

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Third and sixth grade students have fun digging weeds in the orchard

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS: SUCCESS STORIES (CONTINUED)

Mixed Greens of Grand Rapids inspires, sustains, and supports a legacy of fresh foods and gardens. Mixed Greens also partners with the community to create, promote, and support schoolyard gardens and kitchen classroom programming. Using mobile, raised-bed vegetable gardens, kids learn basic horticultural practices and environmental stewardship by growing a wide range of delicious, nutritious food. The



Children from Wyoming Public Schools learn about local agriculture at Trillium Haven Farm

vegetables from the garden, supplemented by produce from local farms, are offered to the students so they can experience new foods. Coupled with a field trip to local farms, the children learn about local agriculture while expanding their knowledge about vegetables.



Kids get the chance to sink their hands into the soil while learning to grow food

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Lakeview High School (LHS) of Battle Creek has made student health a top priority and increased access to healthy food and beverages for students. LHS adopted the Michigan State Board of Education Policy on Healthy Food and Beverages and over a two-year period, targeted its implementation on the snacks sold within the food service program. In the first year alone, \$20,000 fewer baked goods were purchased. The LHS student senate adopted a policy to prohibit carbonated beverages from being sold during the school day. Menu selections now feature a healthy entrée as one of the three selections offered daily.

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Lakeview High School Student Senate
(with Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom, Michigan Surgeon General)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH COMMUNITY DESIGN

THE PROBLEM:

Children in the United States today are less fit than they were a generation ago. Many are showing early signs of cardiovascular risk factors such as physical inactivity, excess weight, higher blood cholesterol and cigarette smoking. Inactive children, when compared with active children, weigh more, have higher blood pressure and lower levels of heart-protective high-density lipoproteins (HDL cholesterol). And although heart attack and stroke are rare in children, evidence shows that the process leading to those conditions begins in childhood.

Data from the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that 33.4 percent of youth don't engage in physical activity that promotes long-term health. Children spend an average of three to four hours per day watching TV. Inactive children are more likely to become inactive adults.

SOLUTIONS:

The American Heart Association reports that increased physical activity has been associated with increased life expectancy and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease. Physical activity produces overall physical, psychological and social benefits.

Healthy community design can benefit children in many important ways. School design is one example of how the built environment can influence children's health. When new schools are built far from where families live, children must be driven to school, depriving them of an opportunity for physical activity and contributing to air pollution and risk for automobile crashes. On the other hand, if schools are located within walking or biking distance of where people live, and if safe routes to school are provided, then children can make walking or biking a part of their daily lives, establishing healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Parks and green spaces are another example. Research increasingly suggests that children benefit from the opportunity to play outdoors, where they can explore and enjoy natural environments. Planning parks near residential areas -- and making sure that the parks include attractive landscaping, well-designed amenities such as playgrounds and sports facilities, and safe routes leading to and from them -- can be invaluable as part of a community design strategy that is healthy and nurturing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Resources from Michigan Health Tools: A gateway to better health in Michigan—Tools are available to address physical activity in communities and schools at www.mihealthtools.org.

Contact the Michigan Department of Community Health, Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition & Physical Activity Section at (517) 335-8766.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: SUCCESS STORIES

The City of Kalamazoo Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to helping the city of Kalamazoo plan for future development with physical activity in mind. Department leaders have facilitated many changes to make Kalamazoo a safer, healthier city. Improvements such as readily accessible bike racks downtown, walking paths, an all-season park with non-motorized trails, and a playground designed for children of all physical capabilities offer Kalamazoo residents opportunities to be



Bridge installed to increase accessibility between the Youth Development Center and Upjohn Park

physically active. This summer, the city will undergo a major project that focuses on walking trails, new basketball courts, t-ball fields, and a new skateboard park.

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Children designing the Boundless Playground in Upjohn Park on *Day of Play*

The Haskell Community Center in Flint is a safe haven for seniors and youth on Flint's northwest side. In addition to a kids' café that provides after-school snacks before tutoring sessions, the center has a playground, tennis courts, and a basketball court and is easily accessible to nearby neighborhoods by walking and biking.

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Bridges to the Future in Flint is a community collaboration between various schools, organizations, and volunteers that provides a before-and-after school program to over 5,000 students in grades K-9 in 30 Flint-area schools. The program builds positive assets and promotes youth development through academics, social, and cultural enrichment, including fitness and nutrition activities.

A particularly noteworthy program is the **Bridges Running and Fitness Club** at the **Durant - Tuuri - Mott Elementary School in Flint**. In October 2004, the club ran with Michigan's First Gentleman in the Detroit Free Press Marathon.

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: SUCCESS STORIES

Hale Area Schools received a \$15,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health to construct two walking paths on elementary school grounds. The District's Coordinated School Health (CSH) Team – led by Michelle Kalafut of St. Joseph's Health Systems, Principal Robin Andress, and school registered nurse Edie Hoyle – advocated for an enhanced fitness environment. The CSH team worked with Hodgins Asphalt Paving to design a walking path and a larger path for running. The construction of the paths prompted the CSH committee to begin a Walking Club and an after school walking group. The paths are also available to community members when school is not in session.



Second graders enjoy the walking path during a Healthy Kids Class

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The Industrial Mutual Association Children's Recreation Fund in Flint provides recreational opportunities for children in Flint and Genesee County, including summer baseball leagues, a drop-in youth program at a local community center, one-day athletic clinics, and a wide range of other healthy, stimulating, recreational activities for children and adults in the community.



Summer Golf Program at Brookwood Golf Club

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Fun, Fitness and Sports
After School Program

SAFETY ON THE GO: INJURY PREVENTION

THE PROBLEM:

Accidental injury is the leading cause of death among Michigan children. Despite an overall decline in injury-related death, death rates for children of low-income families continue to increase.

Not only are accidental injuries and violence a leading cause of death and disability in both Michigan and the United States, they also result in much physical and emotional suffering and are very costly in terms of medical care expenditures, lost income, and lost productivity.

SOLUTIONS:

By taking simple precautions, almost 90 percent of accidental injuries can be avoided. Through proper use of safety devices, eliminating unsafe environments and behaviors, and ensuring adequate adult supervision, we can all play an important role in protecting Michigan's children.

- The single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes is a helmet.
- All children ages 12 and under should be properly restrained in a back seat on every ride. Children under eight years of age or shorter than 4'9" typically need to use a child restraint (car seat or booster seat) to be properly protected from motor vehicle crash injuries.
- Parents are the most important models of proper pedestrian behavior for children. By crossing streets safely and walking on sidewalks or paths, adults can model safe behavior.
- Ensure there is safe surfacing beneath and surrounding all playground equipment to minimize the risks of falling. Ensure that all playgrounds are inspected and maintained by qualified personnel. Children should be supervised when they are using playground equipment.
- Children under the age of 16 should never ride or operate All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) of any size, including youth-sized ATVs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



For more information on Safe Kids Michigan, visit:

www.michigansafekids.org.

For additional information and a complete list of resources, see the "Safety on the Go Fact Sheet" at www.michigan.gov/documents/Safety_on_the_Go_Fact_Sheet_154684_7.pdf

SAFETY ON THE GO: INJURY PREVENTION SUCCESS STORIES

Safe Kids Lakeshore of Holland reaches out to the community in all areas of safety including water, bicycle, home, sport, equestrian, and child passenger safety. Through its Child Safety Seat Inspection Station, Safe Kids Lakeshore provides car seat checks and free or reduced cost car seats to families in need. The Bike Safety Team distributed more than 1,000 free bike helmets and educational materials to families. The coalition works with community partners such as the Zeeland Police Department, Ottawa County Sheriff's Department, the Grand Rapids Griffins, Kohl's Cares for Kids program, local townships, local health departments, Holland Community Hospital, Head Start, Boys and Girls Club of Holland and many other organizations. DeVos Children's Hospital serves as the lead agency.

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Safe Kids Lakeshore's Child Passenger Safety Team at a car seat checkup event at Todd Wenzel Chevrolet in Hudsonville

Safe Kids Marquette-Alger Counties has worked to improve child passenger safety, bicycle, firearm, and fire safety since 1996. The lead agency for this chapter, Marquette County Sheriff's Office, received a \$100,000 grant in 2005 and another \$100,000 for 2006 to provide support for child passenger safety efforts throughout the Upper Peninsula. The program has also received funding from AAA Michigan, State Farm Insurance, Safe Kids Worldwide, the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Office of Highway Safety Planning to fund public educational events, training, and car seat checks and distribution. Partner organizations for this chapter include the Marquette County



Firefighter Jeff Haile at the annual Marquette Car Seat Check Event

Health Department, city police department, Marquette General Health System and the Munising and Negaunee State Police posts.

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2005 Marquette Bike Rodeo

SAFETY ON THE GO: INJURY PREVENTION SUCCESS STORIES

Safe Kids Muskegon County (SKM) works to protect children from unintentional injury by implementing model injury prevention programs and educational activities through multi-agency cooperation. The SKM program was launched in 2000 to educate residents and prevent injuries and deaths from auto accidents, bicycle accidents, water emergencies and fires. The program focuses on educating parents, caregivers and children about behavioral modifications to prevent needless tragedies. SKM also distributes safety devices (car seats, bike helmets, smoke detectors) to help keep kids safe. SKM collaborates with health and safety organizations to promote child safety in Muskegon County, including the Muskegon area Police and Fire Departments, hospitals, county health department, Red Cross, and Med Team Ambulance.

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Safe Kids Van Buren County works to promote the health and safety of children by participating in local school health fairs, promoting bike and bike helmet safety in schools and summer camps, and offering a bi-lingual bike safety program to children in a migrant summer program. The program also focuses on booster seat education and child passenger safety and partners with local schools, MSU Extension, the local health department, Michigan State Police, the local Sheriff's Department, Head Start, and many other organizations to provide fun and engaging educational activities for children and adults.

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SAFETY ON THE GO: VIOLENCE PREVENTION

THE PROBLEM:

Children are extremely vulnerable to violence. Children under the age of four are most likely to be victims of child maltreatment or sexual abuse. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for all children and the second leading cause of death for African American children.

School-aged children are more likely to encounter school violence and bullying behavior. In the 10-14 year old age group, suicide overtakes homicide as the third leading cause of death, and homicide is now the fifth leading cause of death. Gun and street violence create additional risk factors. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for the 15-19 age group. For African American males and females, it is the leading cause of death.

SOLUTIONS:

A built environment that encourages community involvement and shared responsibility works to reduce violence—and the fear of violence—that so often threaten children’s ability to learn, develop healthy relationships, and become productive adults. Efforts to prevent violence will be most effective if designed around an integrated, multi-level response.

A few ideas for communities to consider:

- Identify and reduce the risks and negative opportunities children encounter between home and school. For example, organizing a neighborhood cleanup can reduce physical risks and build a support network.
- Identify and reduce the risks and negative opportunities in areas adjacent to school property. For example, change fencing and landscaping to open up areas that are hidden from view.
- Identify and mitigate potential high-risk areas at school. For example, changing the direction in which cars are parked can enhance staff ability to monitor parking lot activities. Staggered schedules limit crowds in hallways or other gathering places and can reduce conflict.
- Require that new development or retrofitting of existing neighborhoods includes green space, a mix of commercial and residential uses, and narrower streets in neighborhoods. For example, narrowing streets to slow and/or reduce traffic encourages more interaction between neighbors and make it safer for children to play.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.safeyouth.org (a Federal resource for professionals, parents and youth working to prevent violence committed by and against young people)

www.michigan.gov/injuryprevention (The Michigan Department of Community Health Injury and Violence Prevention website)

www.lgc.org (Local Government Commission—working to build livable communities)



SAFETY ON THE GO: VIOLENCE PREVENTION SUCCESS STORIES

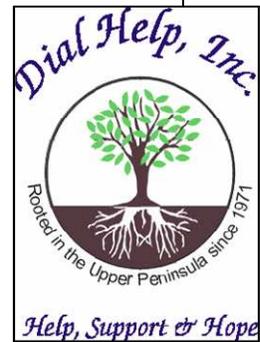
Dial Help's Project STARR (Students Talking About Responsible Relationships) of Houghton, Keweenaw, Ontonagon and Baraga Counties is committed to preventing sexual violence. Since its inception in 1996, Project STARR has partnered with schools in the four-county area to help middle and high school-age youth develop skills to prevent sexual violence perpetration and victimization. In addition to providing resources to parents and school staff, the program also works with community leaders to build communities that do not tolerate sexual violence.

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Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan in Petoskey created a school-based sexual violence prevention program to reach youth, parents, school staff, and community leaders in northern Michigan. The Center has developed a gender-specific curriculum for youth to raise awareness about sexual violence and how to prevent it. The program targets ninth and tenth grade students in 17 area high schools throughout five counties in northwest lower Michigan. The program also includes school/community involvement and family-based activities to heighten awareness and increase skills to deal with this important issue.



Sarah Phillips teaches "Just the Facts," a seven-week curriculum, to 9th grade girls at Petoskey High School

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CLEAN AIR: SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

THE PROBLEM:

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Michigan. It is linked to all leading causes of death, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes.

Approximately 23% of Michigan high school students smoke, and nearly 30,000 Michigan youth under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year. Cigarette smoking results in 15,000 deaths each year in Michigan, and exposure to secondhand smoke results in approximately 2,500 deaths each year.

Exposure to secondhand smoke is the second leading cause of preventable death in Michigan. Children and adolescents exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk of asthma, ear infections, colds and pneumonia. Between 1,400 to 2,500 adults, children and babies in Michigan die each year from exposure to secondhand smoke.

SOLUTIONS:

Policy and environmental changes can make living a tobacco-free lifestyle easier for Michigan communities and youth.

Examples of policy and environmental changes:

- Prohibiting tobacco use in recreational areas where youth and families play, such as parks, walking and biking trails, skate parks and skating rinks
- Prohibiting tobacco use in work sites and other public places
- Prohibiting tobacco use at all times in schools, on school property, and at all off-campus school-sponsored events

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Resources from Michigan Health Tools: A gateway to better health in Michigan—Tools are available to address tobacco-free communities and schools at www.mihealthtools.org.

For additional information on smoke-free communities and a complete list of resources, see the “Clean Air: Smokefree Communities Fact Sheet” at www.michigan.gov/documents.

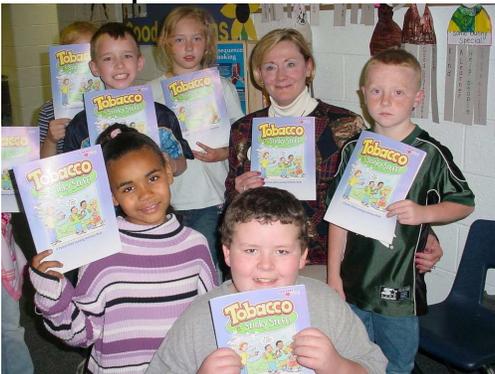


SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS: SUCCESS STORIES

The City of Vassar in Tuscola County has made all of its parks and recreational areas smoke-free. Vassar's newly amended city policy was adopted in 2005 and allows city residents, both children and adults, to enjoy physical activity and relaxation in a healthy, smoke-free environment within the city's parks and recreational areas. Even the city's walking trails are now designated off-limits for smoking. The adoption of the new policy was a collaborative effort between the City of Vassar and the Tuscola County Safe Communities coalition.

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Bendle Public Schools adopted a 24/7 tobacco-free school policy to protect students, staff, parents, and visitors from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The policy prohibits tobacco use at all times in school buildings, property, and at all on- and off-campus school-sponsored events, including all athletic events. The policy has the potential to prevent youth tobacco use and can encourage youth



Linda Hailey, Coordinator of Bendle Family Health Services, with Bendle students

and adult smokers to quit by changing social norms about tobacco use, specifically by demonstrating that most people do not use tobacco and decreasing the acceptability of tobacco use. The Bendle Public School District has also completed the *Healthy School Action Tool*, demonstrating its commitment to assessing the needs of students and staff to improve health behaviors.

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SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS: SUCCESS STORIES (CONTINUED)

Marquette County Health Department's "Youth for Truth" campaign was created to prevent youth tobacco use and increase community awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and secondhand smoke. The campaign is associated with a 28% reduction in youth smoking after the first two years of implementation. Marquette has also become one of eleven Michigan counties to adopt a smoke-free public places and worksites regulation, which protects thousands of residents from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke where they live, work, and play. The regulatory effort was accomplished through collaboration between the Marquette County Tobacco-Free Community Coalition and other local agencies, partners, and the Michigan Department of Community Health, Tobacco Section.

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Kristen Williamson, 13, posts information about the dangers of smoking at the Taco Bell restaurant in Marquette as part of Kick Butts Day 2002. (Journal photo by Brian Halbrook)

Kingston Community School District in Tuscola County adopted a 24/7 tobacco-free school policy in January 2006 for all schools in the district. The policy

protects all students in K-12, school staff, parents, and other community members that attend, work in, and visit Kingston schools from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The policy, which has the potential to prevent youth tobacco use and encourage youth and adult smokers to quit, prohibits tobacco use at all times in school buildings, property, and at all on- and off-campus school-sponsored events, including all athletic events. The adoption of this policy involved collaboration between the Kingston School District and the Tuscola Safe Communities Coalition.



Kingston Community School students display their tobacco-free posters. (Photo Courtesy of the *Tuscola County Advertiser*)

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CLEAN AIR: REDUCING POLLUTION

THE PROBLEM:

Children are exposed to toxins in a variety of settings that can cause serious diseases.

Air Pollution

The short- and long-term effects of air pollution on the environment are varied and profound. Particle pollution, ground-level ozone, acid rain, global warming, and the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer are just a few of the most alarming results of pollution. Air pollution also poses a significant human health risk. High concentrations can cause serious respiratory, heart, and other illnesses.

Radon

Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon is impossible to see, smell, or taste. Radon seeps into homes from the surrounding soil, and sometimes contaminates well water. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. – only cigarette smoking causes more lung cancer deaths.

Lead Poisoning

Lead paint was used in many homes built before 1978. The older the home, the more likely that windows, cabinetry, doors, porches, and outdoor surfaces contain lead paint. Lead poisoning can cause health and behavior problems in young children and can make them less able to learn when they get to school. Lead poisoning can affect a child for a lifetime.

Mercury

Mercury is a very toxic or poisonous substance to which people can be exposed in several ways. If swallowed, very little is absorbed. If touched, a small amount may pass through the skin, but not usually enough to cause harm. Mercury is most harmful when inhaled (released when a container is open or a spill occurs). Pregnant women, infants and young children are particularly sensitive to the harmful effects of mercury.

Asthma

Poor indoor and outdoor air quality leads to more severe symptoms of asthma, the most common chronic childhood disease. Asthma is a serious chronic disease of the lungs that is caused by swelling (inflammation) in the airways. More than 15 million people in the U.S., and more than a half-million people in Michigan, have asthma.

SOLUTIONS:

Air Pollution

People with certain chronic health conditions are more susceptible to higher levels of air pollution. Fortunately, air quality information is readily available from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and can help people adjust their daily activities when levels of air pollution are higher than normal. DEQ air quality information includes the *Air Quality Index*, or AQI, an easy way to understand how clean the outside air is, and *EnviroFlash*, a service that automatically delivers air quality forecasts directly to the public via email or cell phone. (Continued on page 22)

CLEAN AIR: REDUCING POLLUTION

SOLUTIONS (CONTINUED):

Radon

Radon is easy and inexpensive to detect, and homes with high levels can be fixed. Because radon is completely invisible to sight, smell or taste, detection kits are necessary. Kits can be purchased from local health departments and some hardware stores or other retail outlets. When high levels of radon are detected, a radon mitigation contractor can install a special vent system to help reduce the levels.

Lead Poisoning

Blood lead tests are important for children who live or spend time in older houses that may have lead paint. Children should be tested for lead poisoning at one and two years of age or more often depending on their contact with sources of lead. Steps should be taken to protect children from lead poisoning. For example: Wash children's hands, bottles, pacifiers, and toys often; take off shoes when going into the house; and keep dust and dirt off floors, windowsills, and other surfaces.

Mercury

The health effects that can result from mercury exposure depend on the amount of mercury and the length of time that mercury exposure occurs. Some acute effects (those that may come soon after exposures to high concentrations of mercury) include headaches, chills, fever, hand tremors, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. Chronic or longer-term exposure to mercury vapor may result in personality changes, decreased vision or hearing, and elevated blood pressure. Blood tests can measure whether exposure to mercury has occurred within the past week. Urine tests can determine whether mercury exposure has happened over a period of several weeks or more. If blood or urine tests indicate a large exposure, health care providers can prescribe medications that will remove the mercury from the body.

Asthma

There is no cure for asthma, but it can be prevented and controlled with proper care. People with asthma can live normal, active lives. Health care providers, people with asthma, and their caregivers can learn ways to prevent, treat, and control asthma, and reduce the number of hospital visits and missed days of school or work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

DEQ Air Quality Index: www.deq.state.mi.us/documents/DEQ-AQD-AQIFACTS.PDF

EnviroFlash: www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3310_4195-101321--,00.html

DEQ Indoor Radon Program: 1-800-RADON GAS (723-6642) or www.michigan.gov/degradon



MDCH Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Brochure: www.mich.gov/documents/Brogan2002ProgramBrochure_71285_7.pdf

MDCH Environmental & Occupational Epidemiology Division Mercury Fact Sheet: www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch_MercurySpillFactsheet_85689_7.pdf

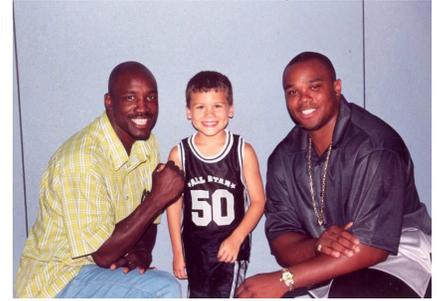
Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM): www.getastmahelp.org/outdoor_pollution.asp

REDUCING POLLUTION: SUCCESS STORIES

The Genesee County Childhood Asthma Task Force provides disease management services to children age 19 and younger who have a diagnosis of severe-persistent or moderate-persistent asthma and are under the care of the Hurley Child and Adolescent Asthma Center at the Hurley Medical Center. In addition to its educational and clinical assessment activities, the CATF also provides assessments of indoor environmental exposures that trigger asthma and develops plans to control asthma triggers. The Task Force also runs a day camp for children with asthma as well as an asthma support group for teens.



2005 Asthma Camper
pretreating before activities



Asthma Camp 2005 participant
Sheridan Cox with basketball coaches
from IMA Foundation

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Okemos Public Schools (OPS) "Clean Air Program for School Buses Plus"

recognized the need to reduce students' exposure to diesel exhaust and address school bus emissions. OPS's leadership efforts resulted in a successful public-private partnership and created the opportunity to receive a competitive grant through the EPA Clean School Bus USA program. In 2004, grant funds were used to purchase 78 retrofit technologies for OPS and ten other school districts in the mid-Michigan area. In 2006, OPS was awarded another EPA Clean School Bus USA grant to retrofit an additional 283 buses in school districts located in 25 counties that did not meet national standards for certain air pollutants. Due to OPS's leadership, EPA has made this program a national case study to help other school districts that are interested in the Clean School Bus USA program.



Michigan Clean Fleet Conference-March, 2006

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This publication was created by the 2006 Michigan Public Health Week Planning Committee, comprised of the following partners representing state government, local government, research, non-profit, education, and advocacy sectors: The Michigan Department of Community Health; the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports; Michigan Association for Local Public Health; Michigan Public Health Association; Michigan Public Health Institute; and the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

The Committee is grateful to the 2006 Hometown Health Heroes for sharing their photos and stories, and most of all, for the exceptional work they do everyday to improve the health of their communities.



Captions for Cover Photos:

Children Eating Vegetables: Mixed Greens is revolutionizing the way kids in Grand Rapids eat by teaching them to grow and cook food, and visit local farms.

Children on Path: Hale Area Schools students enjoy their new walking path.

Boys in Garden: Mixed Greens programs restore a sense of wonder as children reconnect with the plants and the places from where their food comes -- whether it is from local farms or their own vegetable gardens.

Group of Girls with Basketball: Industrial Mutual Association's Summer Program in Ballenger Park, Flint.

Bicycle Helmets: Safe Kids Marquette/Alger Bike Rodeo 2005.

Kayakers: Kayaking on the Kalamazoo River after River Clean-Up Days.

Basketball Team: Genesee County Childhood Asthma Task Force's Hurley Asthma Camp 2005.

Urban Farm Site: Roof top view of Earth Works Urban farm site at Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan.