

MAKE STRIDES!

Steps to a HealthierMN Newsletter



March / April 2008

In this issue

What's New?

Small Steps

Steps Spotlight

In the News

Q&A

Announcements

Did you Know?

What's New?

- ★ Registration for Get Fit Twin Cities 2008 closed on March 1. A total of 7,424 participants on 1,330 teams are participating in the 100-day fitness challenge sponsored by the Steps communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul
- ★ *Steps to a HealthierUS Program Action Institute: Toward a Sustainable Future for Community Health* was held March 18-20 in Alexandria, VA. Representatives from Steps communities across the country were in attendance to share programs and ideas for policy, environmental and systems change.

Small Steps

1. Order your salad dressing on the side the next time you are out to eat for a meal.
2. Do some sit-ups or pushups during the commercials of your favorite television show.
3. The next time you order pizza, ask for extra sauce and veggies and go lighter on the cheese.
4. Do a few stretches when you wake up, it will help you feel refreshed and ready for the day.

For more information and a complete list of small steps you can take for a healthier lifestyle, visit www.smallstep.gov.



Steps to a HealthierMN is part of a national program funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services focusing on the prevention of diabetes, obesity and asthma.

For more information, visit www.stepstohealthiermn.org.

This publication is supported by the Steps to a HealthierUS Cooperative Agreement program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Its contents do not necessarily represent the official view of HHS.

Steps Spotlight

One focus area of the Steps to a HealthierMN program is obesity. To reduce the burden of obesity, our communities conduct a variety of programs aimed at physical activity and nutrition.

Rochester:

Steps to a Healthier Rochester is pleased to announce that Stephanie Heim, who spearheaded the Rochester Area Family Y's Delicious and Nutritious Youth Garden, was selected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to be honored as a Steps to a HealthierUS Community Hero. Stephanie was offered an expense paid trip to receive the award at the National Steps Grantee Meeting in Alexandria, VA this month.

Stephanie, a graduate student in Public Health Nutrition, was referred to Steps to a Healthier Rochester for a community field experience to complete her education. As with many of our interns and students, Stephanie met multiple community partners, attended coalition meetings, helped teach nutrition classes at school and assisted with health fairs. When discussions began between Steps and the Y about the possibility of creating a community youth garden, Stephanie's interest was piqued. She requested to take a leadership role and use the garden experience as her Master's research project. Stephanie provided the project with enthusiastic leadership, background research and project evaluation as part of her coursework.

Stephanie spent hundreds of hours researching the requirements for creating a successful youth garden, scouring curricula, and developing a program that could be implemented as a component of an outdoor summer camp program at the Y. She developed a close working relationship with the RAFY program staff, contacted local partners including the County Extension Office, Master Gardeners, and local businesses. Using the Junior Master Gardener curriculum as a base, she developed a schedule of educational topics for the Y to use as weekly sessions with campers. She scavenged the Farmers' Market on weekends for interesting fruits and vegetables to use in taste testing classes. Using ideas from her Girl Scout troop, she found art projects the campers could do that would beautify the garden. Working with a skilled Master Gardener, she designed the garden, chose plantings, created correlating educational components to each, worked daily in the garden and taught nutrition classes weekly. Selecting recipes to match the garden harvest, she created a recipe book of all the items made during the camp to give to students as a memento of the time spent in the garden and to foster a continued appetite for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Stephanie saw the project through the stages of planning, collaboration, design, fundraising, curriculum development, scheduling, implementation and evaluation. As a role model to the campers and adults, she was willing to roll up her sleeves and get knee deep in compost (literally) to do what was necessary to create a youth garden.

Stephanie took an idea as a seedling and nurtured it into a project that is alive and sustainable. Thoughtfully gathering partners together, she was able to describe a vision in a way that moved partners to be part of the mission. She formed bridges that began new partnerships that may last for years to come. Believing in the goal, and confident we would have a successful garden, she wrote and obtained a grant to help fund the start up costs of the garden project. Bringing additional funds to the project allowed the purchase of sustainable items to see the garden through future seasons.

Our youth benefited by Stephanie's enthusiasm and nutrition lessons, parents gained knowledge from her web postings and newsletters, the Y benefits by the creation of a garden plot in their back yard, the neighborhood benefits by the attractive garden, and our community benefits by having an ongoing opportunity for kids to learn about gardening and healthy eating in an interactive, fun setting.

Stephanie's passion has been planted in the hearts of our youth! We will watch it grow and bloom for years to come.

For a link to the Delicious and Nutritious Garden Cookbook, and what parents and youth had to say about the garden, visit [Rochester's web page](#).

For more information on the Community Hero awards, visit the [National Steps Web site](#).



Willmar:

For the 2008 growing season, Steps to a Healthier Willmar is assisting the community in operating three gardens: the Children's Garden at the YMCA, the 7th Street Garden, and the High Avenue Garden.

Steps has been involved with the Children's Garden at the YMCA for the past three seasons. Steps collaborated with the YMCA and subsequently Rice Hospital's Diabetes and Nutrition Center to provide garden and nutrition education, cultural awareness activities, and physical activity promotion. In addition, during the garden's second year grant funds were secured to further develop and support the program. The funds are assisting in developing program sustainability by allowing the YMCA to invest in curriculum development, materials/supplies, and construction of an irrigation system.

Steps, along with a dedicated Master Gardener, has assisted with establishing and maintaining a community garden on 7th Street for the past two seasons. With each passing year, farmers have asked for bigger plots. All of the 45 garden plots were used last year. New this year will be a second community garden located behind the Willmar Senior Citizen and Community Center, referred to as the High Avenue garden. Although not specifically for seniors, the new location provides an opportunity for more of the community to participate in community gardening.

For all of these gardens, Steps has provided direct garden support including being the main contact for the two community gardens. A plan is in place to sustain the gardens into the future without assistance from the Steps program.

Minneapolis:

Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis has been involved in a variety of nutrition policy activities both in the community and in the schools.

In the community, Steps worked with the City of Minneapolis' Department of Regulatory Services to pass an ordinance requiring convenience stores to increase the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables they sell. The new ordinance requires a variety of staple food items such as meat, poultry, fish, bread, cereals, vegetables, fruits, fruit and vegetable juices, and dairy products. The new language clearly specifies the amount and diversity of fresh, perishable foods that must be available. For more information on the new language, visit <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2007-meetings/20071005/docs/Grocery-Store-Food-Type-Ord-Amend.pdf>. In addition, the City approved a new (easier and less expensive) process for licensing mini farmers markets with fewer than five vendors. To increase access to healthy foods, Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis and the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) will host a training in May for organizations interested in hosting a mini market in their community. For more information, contact Aliyah Ali at 612-673-3861 or aliyah.ali@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

In the schools, Steps helped Washburn High School get their store (The Miller Mart) in compliance with the Wellness Policy. Steps staff made several site visits to the Miller Mart and worked with the parent volunteer to assess the current stock as well as to decide on alternate products that were amenable to the Wellness Policy. Nutrition Services, Washburn administration, store staff and Steps were involved with the decision making and implementation process. Washburn has taken a leadership role by transforming their school store and has set an example of how they can offer competitive foods in the spirit of the Wellness Policy.



Saint Paul:

Steps to a Healthier St. Paul helped support the Hmong Health Resource Group in their recent production of Healthy Eating and Exercise Campaign materials. The campaign is a result of research and testing to make the public health priority of overweight and obesity prevention more applicable and relevant in the Hmong community. Language and culturally appropriate materials, including posters, magnets, and a video were created for the campaign. For more information contact MaoHeu Thao at 651-266-2462 or MaoHeu.Thao@co.ramsey.mn.us.

Steps also hosted a stability ball training in the schools in an effort to introduce more movement in the classroom. Fifty classroom teachers, physical education teachers, therapists and support staff attended the training facilitated by Lisa Witt of WittFitt, and are working to integrate the stability balls into their classrooms, therapy sessions and office spaces. In addition, 30 staff members from Dayton's Bluff Elementary School attended a similar training held at the school. All teachers were given a personal ball and two classroom balls. Students will be trained and then they will slowly start using the balls an hour at a time. Teachers at Dayton's Bluff who decide to implement the program in their classroom will receive a ball for every student. As of February 2008, 450 stability balls have been integrated into the classrooms at Dayton's Bluff

In the News



Sugar-laden soda follows salty chips?

A recently published study in *Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association*, found a significant association between salt intake and the consumption of fluids for children, especially sugar-sweetened soft drinks. Calculations demonstrated that just a reduction in daily salt intake would result in a 100 gram decrease in fluid consumption, including a 27 gram reduction in sugar-sweetened beverages. This decreased consumption of salt and sugar-sweetened beverages could potentially reduce children's risk of obesity, hypertension, and heart attacks. For more information, see the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [Web site](#).

Could you be heavier because of where you live?

A new study from New York University researchers that reviewed 90 studies published from 1997 to 2007, found that obesity rates were higher in neighborhoods with decreased economic and social resources. Some of the neighborhood characteristics taken into consideration while reviewing the studies included income level, the built environment and access to healthy food, which suggest a direct affect on obesity prevalence. For more information, see the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [Web site](#).

Not my child

New research suggests many parents of children classified as overweight or even extremely overweight do not perceive their child as being excessively heavy, with some wrongly believing that their child is "about the right weight." These findings are a cause for concern because recognition that a child is overweight is a critical first step to making diet and lifestyle changes to promote weight loss. Researchers concluded that addressing misperceptions of weight by children and their parents may be an important first step to improving weight in these patients. (Source: Diabetes Care, February 2008)

Q&A



Q: What is BMI?

A: Body Mass Index or BMI is a tool for indicating weight status in adults. BMI can be determined by dividing one's weight in pounds by their height in inches squared and then multiplying by 705. For example, a woman who is 5'6" and weighs 190 would have a BMI of 31.

For children and teens, BMI is age-and sex-specific and is often referred to as BMI-for-age. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention prefers to use the terminology "at-risk for overweight" and "overweight" when referring to children and adolescents. This is partly because body fatness changes over the years as children grow; therefore BMI is interpreted differently for children versus adults. The same formula is used to calculate BMI for children and adults. However, for children age 2-20 BMI relies on age and gender. Growth charts are used to determine BMI in children and can be found at the [CDC's National Center for Health Statistics](#).

To determine BMI for adults or children and teens, use the [BMI Calculator](#).

Q: Do I need to lose weight?

A: Being overweight means your weight is higher than what is considered normal weight for your height. If and when your weight affects your daily well-being, and/or you have higher risks for disease or illness (and/or family history) due to your excess weight, then it's time to start losing weight. One way to determine whether or not you need to lose weight is to determine your weight status by calculating your BMI. The following applies for adults 20 years of age and older:

- An individual is considered underweight if their BMI is less than 18.5.
- A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered a "normal" weight.
- A BMI of 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight.
- A BMI of 30 or more qualifies as individual as obese.
- A BMI over 40 indicates that a person is morbidly obese.

Q: How much weight do I need to lose to see some benefits to my health?

A: A weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of your initial body weight can improve your health by lowering blood pressure and other risk factors for obesity-related diseases. In addition, research shows that people at high risk for diabetes or who have pre-diabetes (a condition in which a person's blood glucose level is higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes) are able to delay or prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes by adopting a low-fat, low-calorie diet and exercising for 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

Myth: BMI Measures Body Fat

Two people can have the same BMI, but a different percent body fat. A bodybuilder with a large muscle mass and a low percent body fat may have the same BMI as a person who has more body fat because BMI is calculated using weight and height only. This is a good reminder that BMI is only one piece of a person's health profile. It is important to talk with your doctor about other measures and risk factors such as waist circumference, smoking, physical activity level, and diet.

Myth: BMI is a Diagnostic Tool

BMI alone is not diagnostic. It is one of many risk factors for disease. As a person's BMI increases, the risk for many diseases increases as well. As mentioned above, if you are concerned about your BMI, it is important to talk with your doctor about other measures and risk factors for chronic diseases.

Announcements

March

National Nutrition Month®
American Dietetic Association
www.eatright.org

National School Breakfast Week, March 3-7
School Nutrition Association
www.schoolnutrition.org

American Diabetes Alert Day
American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org/communityprograms-and-localevents/americanidiabetesalert.jsp

April

National Public Health Week is almost upon us! This year, the American Public Health Association (APHA) has chosen to focus on Climate Change: Our Health in the Balance from April 7-13, 2008. APHA feels there is a direct connection between climate change and the current health of our nation. For more information visit www.nphw.org/nphw08.

Turn Off the TV Week from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness will be held the week of April 21-27, 2008. Children are watching more and more television and this sedentary activity can lead to obesity and a variety of potential chronic diseases. Turning off the television, even for just a week, can help children explore other activities they may enjoy. For more information, visit www.screentime.org.

Steps Events in March/April:

Please see the Steps to a HealthierMN Web site for a listing of other various community activities and events in March and April.

For questions, comments or suggestions about *MAKE STRIDES!* or to be added to or removed from the distribution list, please contact Rachel Cohen at Rachel.Cohen@health.state.mn.us or 651-201-5442. You may also sign up to receive the newsletter on the Steps to a HealthierMN Web site: www.stepstohealthiermn.org.

Did you Know?

In 2006 in our four Steps communities:

- 34% - 35% of adults were considered overweight (Body Mass Index above 25 but less than 30)
- 18% - 23% of adults were obese (Body Mass Index above 30)
- Only 20-30% of adults consumed five fruits and vegetables daily

For high school students in three of our Steps communities (Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester):

- 6% - 18% were overweight (at or above 96th percentile for body mass index, by age and sex (CDC growth chart))
- Only 17% - 28% consumed five fruits and vegetables daily

For additional community-specific data surrounding the Steps focus areas, visit our Web site.

Sources: Steps BRFSS and Steps YRBS, 2006.

