

MAKE STRIDES!

Steps to a HealthierMN Newsletter



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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.

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What's New?

- Sapna Swaroop, from Denver, Colorado, is the new Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator for Steps and the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). Sapna received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Michigan, where she specialized in demography. Most recently, she was faculty at the State University of New York at Albany and has conducted research on a variety of health outcomes for residents of Chicago communities.
- It is with sadness we said goodbye to our CDC Public Health Prevention Service Fellow, Leslie Gross. Leslie was with the Steps team for one year and had to return to Atlanta, Georgia for family medical reasons on October 9. We will miss Leslie, her amazing attitude, and her outstanding ability to develop and implement public health programs. We thank her for her work on Steps and wish her the best!
- September 22 marked the beginning to the fifth and final year of the Steps Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our funding with CDC concludes September 21, 2009. As we continue to work on the Steps goals and objectives this next year, we will also be preparing to transition to SHIP.
- The Steps Community Retreat will be held on October 14 at the Eagan Community Center. Staff from each of the four communities will once again gather for training and program sharing.
- Steps will be teaming up with the Minnesota Asthma Program to display information at the Education Minnesota Conference October 16. Open to all Minnesota public school teachers, this conference has numerous workshops, speeches and exhibits providing information for teachers to take back to their classrooms. We hope to be able to provide attendees with nutrition and physical activity ideas for their classrooms based on the programs and experiences of the Steps program in the schools.

Steps Spotlight

September/October brings fall and the start of a new school year. Below are highlights of a variety of programs currently taking place across our four communities in the school setting.

Rochester

As the school year gets rolling, many programs will commence again. The Coordinated School Health team will resume as a way to provide communication and training to all Rochester schools. Also, Rochester is working to incorporate more Farm to School items by starting background research on what is available locally and developing a template for farmers to submit bids to schools.

On the weekend of September 6-7, the Rochester school district put on the Rochester Education Summit. Attended by 500 people, the summit featured a display on the Walking School Bus as well as presentations on the Walking School Bus and Raising Healthy Children. The Walking School Bus program, formed by Steps, schools and neighborhoods, is made up of elementary students, parents and adult volunteers to help kids walk safely to and from school.

In October, Steps will partner with their Tobacco Grant to offer classroom tobacco education in conjunction with the Hockey team the Ice Hawks. Approximately 2000 youth and their parents are expected to cheer on the MN Ice Hawks Hockey team and participate in the "Keep Your Health in Check" promotion. Steps will support the Tobacco Grant program and the Olmsted County Youth Commission for the sixth consecutive year of this exciting event. At the game, students and their families can play interactive educational games, view health education props and handouts, sign pledges to remain tobacco free, and skate with the Ice Hawks players after the game. During the two weeks leading up to the game, OCPHS staff/Steps staff and Ice Hawks hockey players will visit local schools to educate students on the importance of making healthy food choices, being physically active and staying tobacco-free. The players will hand out free tickets to the game and sign autographs.

Willmar

In September the Farm to School program began another successful year. Farm to School helps reconnect communities, through children, to the food system and the impact of their food choices. The Farm to School Program strives to increase the consumption of healthy foods through early childhood and K-12 using the approach based on the 3 C's: using healthy, local foods in school Cafeterias; integrating lessons in classroom Curriculum; and partnering with Community for experiential learning with farm field trips, gardening and cooking experiences. During the 2008-2009 school year Willmar will be featuring sweet corn, apples, cornmeal, wild rice, potatoes, cheese, oatmeal, whole grains, beans, honey and bison.

Minneapolis

This year, Minneapolis Public Schools are focusing on getting kids to walk to school with the Safe Routes to School initiative. Safe Routes to School is a new federal program designed to improve the conditions and quality of bicycling and walking to school. The goal of the program is to reverse the 30 year decline in the numbers of children walking to school and reintroduce opportunities for regular physical activity. Safe Routes to School relies on the community keeping an eye out for children; the school identifying areas of improvements; and the city helping provide services the district otherwise might not.

Driving to school not only creates congestion and air pollution, but impresses upon people the idea that walking or biking to school is not a possible alternative. Recommendations to the city include increasing enforcement of crosswalk laws and speed limits near schools; teaching bike and traffic safety to students; and creating "car-free zones" around schools. Safe Routes to School also highlights small changes. The number of bike-riding students at South High School quintupled after the school installed new bike racks.

Source: Minneapolis schools want more kids to walk to class, Minnesota Public Radio.

Saint Paul

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation (AHG) is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation to fight childhood obesity. The Alliance provides a four-pronged approach that works with schools, children, families, the food and beverage industries, healthcare insurers, and pediatricians. The AHG supported St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) district wellness initiatives by assisting in facilitating champion trainings and moving schools into the Healthy Schools Program. The goal of the Healthy Schools Program is to create a nation where a healthy school environment is the norm and not the exception.

The AHG recruited 13 schools from SPPS to participate in the on-site delivery of the Healthy Schools Program during the 2007-08 school year. Twenty-six additional schools enrolled for on-line assistance. Thirty-nine schools participated by completing the Healthy Schools Builder (HSB) Inventory (an online survey of school policies and practices). The HSB measures eight different domains that reflect key dimensions of a healthy school: Policy and Systems, School Meals, Competitive Foods and Beverages, Health Education, Physical Education, Physical Activity, Before- and After-School Programs, and School Employee Wellness. The scoring rubric designates four levels of recognition of achievement: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum in each domain. Many Saint Paul schools scored well in all domains and will be eligible to apply for national recognition.

For the 2008-09 school year, three additional schools have enrolled and it is St. Paul's goal to get over 75% of all schools in the district involved in the Healthy Schools Program. On October 1 and 8, SPPS in partnership with AHG held a Wellness Champion Training to inform educators about inventory updates, writing new action plans and on-line support with the website.

Source: Saint Paul Public Schools 2007–2008 Results, RMC Research Corporation

In the News: Tips for Back to School

Going Back to School with Asthma

As the school bells get ready to ring, parents and other caregivers of children who have asthma should prepare for a possible peak in asthma episodes (also known as attacks or exacerbations). According to the Minnesota Department of Health, the greatest number of asthma hospitalizations occurs in the fall, usually September. The fall increase may be caused by respiratory infections, increased pollen, and outdoor mold counts. Children going back to school also have more contact with other children in an indoor environment, possibly increasing their exposure to viral and bacterial respiratory infections which can lead to an asthma episode.



Parents and guardians can prepare for this possible increase in asthma episodes by scheduling a “well-asthma” visit with the child’s asthma provider. At this visit, health care providers should review or develop an Asthma Action Plan for the child.

Parents and guardians should:

- Obtain an up-to-date Asthma Action Plan from the health care provider and forward copies to the school health office and/or childcare provider.
- Reduce exposure to things that could trigger an asthma attack such as allergens and secondhand smoke.
- Schedule an influenza vaccine appointment when the vaccine is available.

- Ensure the child has rescue medications (often called albuterol) and holding chambers (also called spacers) available at home and school/childcare. Make sure rescue medication inhalers are not outdated or empty.
- Ensure the child has access to his/her asthma medications and knows how to use them.
- Reduce exposure to things that could trigger an asthma attack such as allergens and secondhand smoke.
- Schedule an influenza vaccine appointment when the vaccine is available.
- Teach children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water both at home and school.

Children whose asthma is well-controlled can participate in all activities just like anyone else, including sports, gym and other aerobic type activities by following an Asthma Action Plan and providers' instructions. Signs that a child's asthma is well-controlled include:

- Ability to participate in all physical activities without developing asthma symptoms.
- Sleeping through the night without episodes of coughing and wheezing.
- No missed school days due to asthma or other reparatory illnesses.
- No emergency room, urgent care or unscheduled provider office visits.

If your child is having symptoms or asthma episodes, Stephanie Kimmes, RN, CNP, from the Metro region of the Minnesota Asthma Coalition advises parents and caregivers to schedule an appointment with the child's health care provider as soon as possible to resolve these issues. For more information, visit www.health.state.mn.us/asthma.

Thank you to Stephanie Kimmes for providing this article.

Sources:

Minnesota Department of Health Asthma Program, <http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/>

Minnesota Department of Health Fact Sheet, *Asthma in Minnesota*, April 2007.

Minnesota Department of Health Fact Sheet, *Asthma Hospitalizations Peak in September*, July 2008.

Did You Know?

- In a typical physical education class, only 27% of actual physical education time is devoted to motor activity.
- Thirty percent of youths (10-19 years) have negative or neutral attitudes towards physical activity.
- Children exercise less as they get older, boys about 3% less each year; girls, 7.5%.
- 55 million students are projected to be enrolled in the nation's elementary and high schools (grades K-12) this fall. That number exceeds the total in 1969 (51.6 million) when the last of the "baby boom" children expanded school enrollments.

Source: www.fitnessforyouth.umich.edu

Small Steps

1. Apple picking is a great way to be active and have fresh, healthy snacks on hand.
2. Do stretches, exercises or pedal a bike while watching television.
3. Fill up your burgers or pizza with vegetables. Using low-fat cheese cuts calories and still tastes delicious.
4. Get off the bus one stop early and walk or skate the rest of the way.

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

Announcements

A summary of national health observances in September and October are listed below.

September

America On the Move Month: "Steptember"
<http://steptember.americaonthemove.org>

Fruits and Veggies- More Matters Month
www.frutisandveggiesmorematter.gov

Women's Health and Fitness Day, Sept 24
Health Information Resource Center
www.fitnessday.com

Family Health and Fitness Day, Sept 27
Health Information Resource Center
www.fitnessday.com

October

Healthy Lung Month
American Lung Association
www.alamn.org.

National Child Health Day, October 6
www.mchb.hrsa.gov/childhealthday/

Walk to School Day, Oct 8
National Center for Safe Routes to School
www.walktoschool.org

National School Lunch Week, October 13-17
www.schoolnutrition.org/

Lung Health Day: October 27
American Association for Respiratory Care
www.aarc.org



Steps Events:

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

Many Faces of Community Health Conference
October 30-31, 2008
Doubletree Park Place Hotel, St. Louis Park, MN
Registration fees vary (scholarships are available)

Many Faces of Community Health is a two-day conference on improving health and reducing health disparities in underserved populations and among those living in poverty. Speakers include those who have worked internationally or in local community health settings serving populations who face significant health disparities. For more information: www.manyfacesconference.org

For questions 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.

