

Plan4Health: Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition

Jackson County, IL

Summary

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition will build off of the existing master plan and community outreach initiatives to expand and reshape policies, systems, and spaces to encourage healthy behaviors in rural Jackson County.

Challenge

Jackson County, located in rural southern Illinois, has a population of 59,814 and a median income of approximately \$32,000, well below the national average. Cardiovascular disease and associated risk factors, including diabetes and obesity, were identified as ongoing concerns. The age-adjusted death rate for coronary heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol are all higher than the target goals set forth by Healthy People 2020. In 2007, only 27% of residents met the recommended physical activity guidelines compared to 52% in Illinois. Additionally, over 80% of residents did not consume the recommended five fruits and vegetables daily. Residents have limited access to retail food stores; convenience stores in Jackson County were rated poorly on healthy foods offerings. Less than 20% of a typical household budget is spent on fresh produce, while more than 40% is spent on processed snack foods.

Solution

The Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition will implement a healthy convenience store program and coordinate existing initiatives to increase the availability and accessibility of healthy foods. New bike plans, multi-use paths and a toolkit for rural communities will be created to promote physical activity. To engage businesses, a worksite wellness forum will be held, and toolkits distributed, that promote existing initiatives. Additionally, an educational workshop will be held for city officials on the importance of utilizing planning principles to enhance public health in rural communities.



Your Involvement is Key

Residents of Jackson County can stay up-to-date on coalition news and events by following @_JCHCC_ on Twitter and visiting the Jackson County Health Department on Facebook (www.facebook.com/JCHDOnline).

To learn more about the Jackson County Community Health Coalition and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us).

Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

Results

Coalition members joined forces to bring at-risk youth who participate in community programs to a temporary, outdoor skating rink. The rink, strategically situated in a parking lot located at the crossroads of diverse neighborhoods, set the stage for a unique experience accessible to all residents. This event not only strengthened existing coalition partnerships, new relationships formed with unlikely partners, including nearby businesses, a local thrift store, and even a regionally-based roller derby club. Extensive media coverage and strong community support demonstrated the program's success. Plan4Health provided another opportunity for a well-established coalition to capitalize on existing partnerships, while developing new relationships in the heart of the community, to tackle public health issues through planned environmental design.

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"Planned development creates a healthy foundation for a community, which was evident in the faces of the children as they enjoyed the recent ice skating experience. Their smiles were shining illustrations of successful planning for health."

- Kathy Renfro, Executive Director, Carbondale Park District

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