

Plan4Health: Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition

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, have been 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.

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 www.plan4health.us. Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media with #plan4health.

"It takes the coalition and our many partners to make this work happen. In rural areas, working together is how we create change and improve the health of our community."

Angie Bailey, Community Benefits Manager, Southern Illinois Healthcare

SOLUTION

The Jackson County Healthy Communities Coalition implemented a healthy convenience store program to increase access to nutritious foods in rural communities. Coalition members also coordinated and expanded existing initiatives to increase the availability and accessibility of healthy foods at farmers' markets. The coalition created new bike plans, multi-use paths and a toolkit for rural communities to promote physical activity for all. The coalition held a worksite wellness forum to engage businesses and distributed Worksite Wellness toolkits and starter kits. Over 100 attendees from across the region attended the forum. Additionally, the coalition developed an educational workshop for city officials, providing expertise, resources, and skills needed to develop strategies using planning principles to enhance public health in rural communities.

RESULTS

The Jackson County Plan4Health initiative focused on equitable access to both healthy nutrition and physical activity. The success of each and every activity was indicated by a highly-receptive community, extensive attention earned by the media, and a strengthened and expanded coalition. It is anticipated that the culminating event, Planning 4 Health in Rural Communities workshop, will successfully highlight the blending of public health and planning professions to address strategic design to enhance the health of the community, particularly in rural areas where resources are limited. Not only will this workshop address myriad planning strategies attainable by most communities, but it will cultivate the use of sustainable interventions that have the potential to infuse healthful living into the culture of the rural community.

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