

Celebrating Healthy



and other SHIP stories.

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and other SHIP stories.**

March 2014

Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program
Office of Statewide Health Improvement Initiatives

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SHIP Stories.

How Communities are Improving Health for All.

How do we improve, protect and maintain the health of all Minnesotans?

That is the mission of the Minnesota Department of Health. That is also the goal of communities across the state.

We all want good health for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Yet too often it eludes us as we hurry through our day, battle competing interests for our attention, and for many, struggle to make ends meet. Too often many of us find healthy choices are just beyond our reach. What are the transportation options for getting to work or school? Do our neighborhoods and towns have safe sidewalks so that both eight-year-olds and eighty-year-olds can take a walk? Can one realistically bike to the market, to parks, to work?

We live in one of the richest farming areas of the world, yet for many, healthy eating is not the norm. Are fruits and vegetables—especially local, Minnesota grown produce—available to all? What do children have available in school? What do we have to choose from at work?

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in America. Do all kids get to grow up avoiding tobacco smoke? If they live in multiunit housing, just because their parents don't smoke does not mean they aren't exposed to carcinogens from a neighbor's cigarette, even if the smell isn't apparent. What are we teaching kids in college? Learning not only happens in the classroom, but also from peers on campus. Is there help for those who want to quit?

These are the challenges we face if we are to improve health for all Minnesotans.

The good news is: we can and are solving these problems.

By working together as a community, we are making healthy living easier for more people. Healthy eating is more available through farmers markets, corner and convenience stores, and—for those without access to land—community gardens. As we continue to build and rebuild our communities, we are making sure that we are moving people and not just cars, that more and more children can once again play and ride bikes and that we don't feel like we are risking life and limb by crossing the street. Colleges are going tobacco-free, as are rental housing. At work, most employers are now thinking health, and in health care more people are getting the services they need to help them quit smoking, lose weight, and be healthier.

Often times, these changes do not come about easily or without challenges. Change is hard. Change is slow.

But when these changes are made, they stick. That's because these changes are not about what MDH wants, or local public health, or even school boards or transportation planners. It is because that's what the community wants.

What follows are just a few examples of how Statewide Health Improvement Program communities are making good health the norm. There are many, many more examples we can draw from, and surely tenfold more that we have not heard of yet.

Together we are building a healthier Minnesota.

--Julie Myhre RN, MS, Director of the Office of Statewide Health Improvement Initiatives, Minnesota Department of Health



What is SHIP?

Tobacco use and exposure, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition are the top three preventable causes of illness in the U.S. This amounts to 35 percent of all deaths in the U.S., or 800,000 deaths each year. In Minnesota, these are also the leading drivers of health care expenses, together racking up medical costs of nearly \$6 billion annually.

So what's being done to help reduce these costs and help Minnesotans live longer, healthier lives? SHIP.

The Statewide Health Improvement Program—or SHIP—was implemented by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in 2008 as part of Minnesota's Vision for a Better State of Health, a bipartisan reform package to improve health by encouraging healthier eating, more physical activity and avoiding tobacco.

How SHIP works

SHIP communities across the state work to improve health by making it easier for Minnesotans to choose healthy behaviors. Their strategies represent the best evidence from across the nation, and are proven to be both effective and long-term. Examples include:

- Working with schools to encourage “Safe Routes to School” programs, so that kids arrive to school focused and ready to learn, and “Farm to School” programs, so that kids get healthy Minnesota produce and learn where their food comes from, all while benefiting local farmers.
- Supporting employers in offering comprehensive workplace wellness programs, which have been estimated to return from three to six dollars for every dollar spent.
- Working with communities to encourage biking and walking, including “Complete Streets” with sidewalks and crosswalks, all designed to make it easier for people of all ages to get the physical activity they need.
- Better access to healthy fruits and vegetables in corner stores in cities and convenience stores in greater Minnesota, and through more farmers markets, especially those accepting Electronic Benefit Transfer, so that more people can get the healthy food their families need.
- Healthier eating and more physical activity in childcare through successful, proven early childhood programs.
- Helping colleges go tobacco-free and connecting students and staff to smoking cessation services, as well as helping apartment building owners to voluntarily adopt smoke-free policies.
- Working with health care providers to offer the services and referrals their patients need to eat healthier, get more physical activity, quit smoking, and encourage breastfeeding for newborns.

Locally driven, community owned

It is one of the key tenets of SHIP that local governments, businesses, schools and leaders are the experts when it comes to their communities. Strategies that work best in Minneapolis may or may not be the best option for Martin County or the Leech Lake Tribal Community. Therefore, the key to SHIP's success is working with communities so that their health improvement strategies are effective and relevant for them, fitting the needs of that particular community.

Partnerships

Improving health outcomes requires strong public-private partnerships. SHIP has launched new community partnerships across the state not only with local public health and tribal grantees, but also with businesses, farmers, schools, community groups, chambers of commerce, hospitals, health plans, city planners, county boards, tribal officials and more. These partnerships have successfully implemented changes in schools, health care systems, workplaces, and the broader community level that help assure the opportunity for better health for more Minnesotans.

History

In 2010, SHIP awarded its first round of grants. Covering the entire state of Minnesota, the 41 grantees included 87 counties, 53 community health boards, and 9 tribal governments. For the following fiscal years, 2012 and 2013, SHIP received reduced funding of \$15 million and was only able to award 18 grants, covering just over half the state. In 2013 the Legislature supported SHIP with \$35 million for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, and SHIP funding was once again available statewide.



SHIP Stories.

Communities working to improve health for all Minnesotans, one story at a time. SHIP, the Statewide Health Improvement Program, helps communities across Minnesota to work together to make healthy living the norm.

SHIP WORKS WITH



COMMUNITIES



SCHOOLS



WORKPLACES



HEALTHCARE

IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE



ACTIVE LIVING



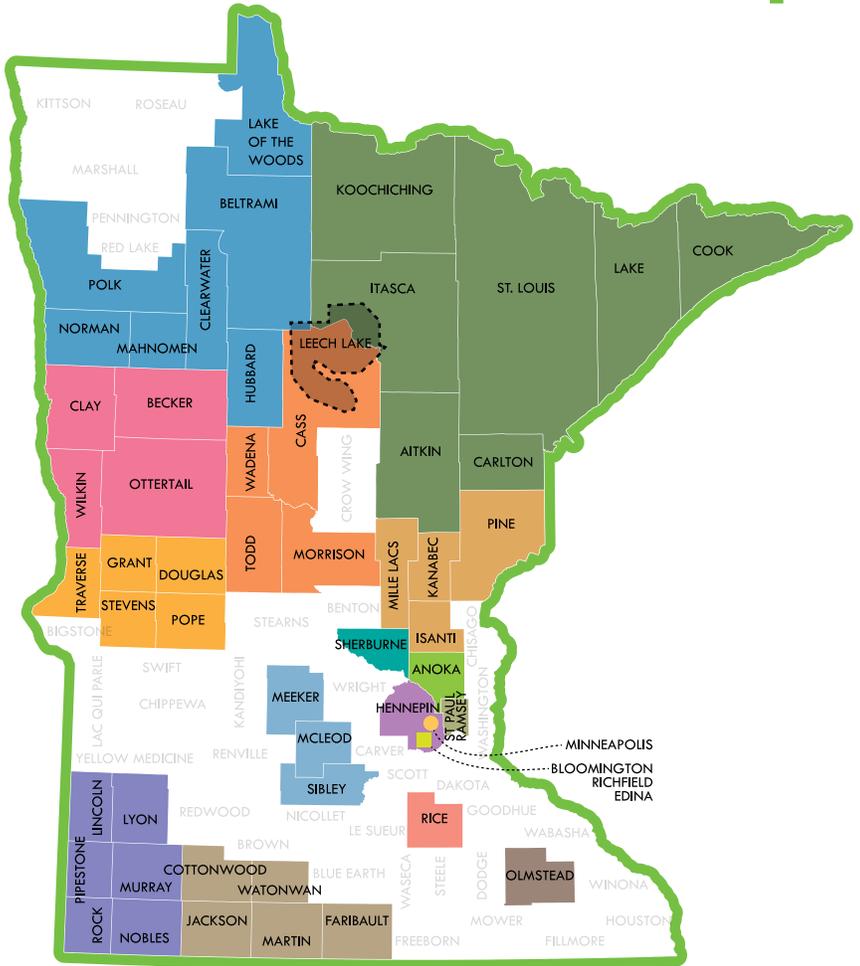
HEALTHY EATING

& REDUCE

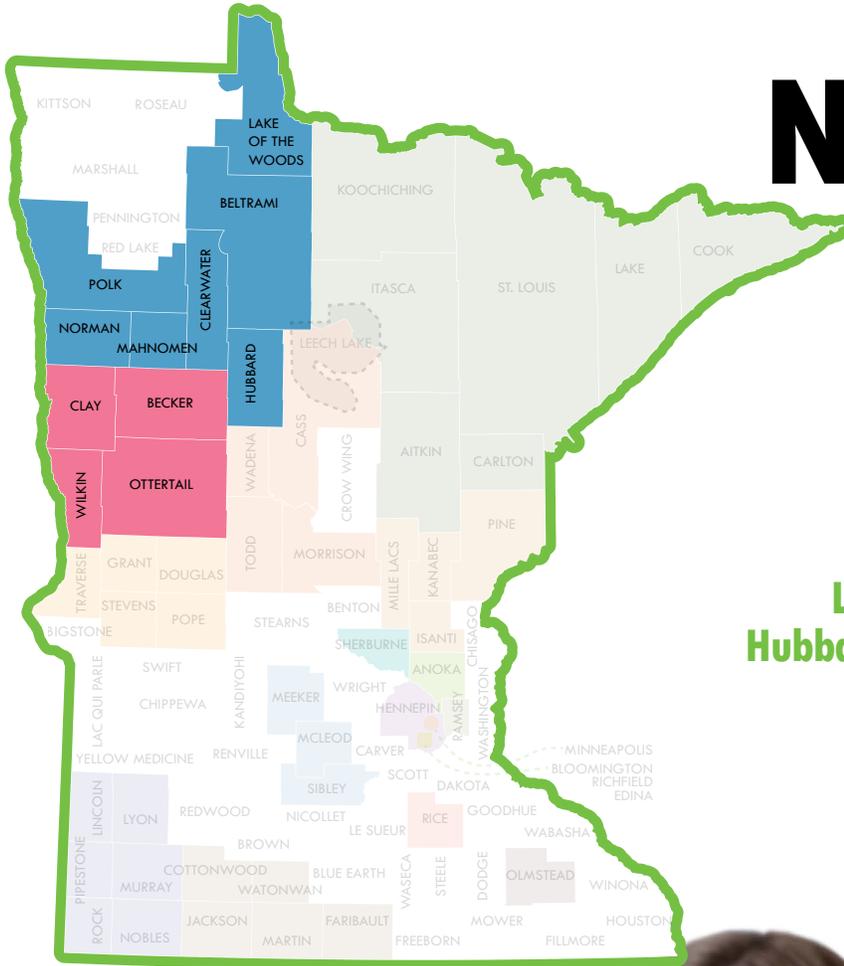


COMMERCIAL TOBACCO USE & EXPOSURE

FY 2012-13 Grantees Map.



- Anoka County
- Bloomington Edina Richfield
- Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Koochiching, Itasca, Aitkin, Carlton Counties
- PARTNERSHIP4HEALTH: Clay, Wilkin, Becker, Otter Tail Counties
- Faribault, Martin, Watonwan, Cottonwood, Jackson Counties
- Hennepin County
- WEST CENTRAL WELLNESS: Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse Counties
- Kanabec, Pine, Mille Lacs, Isanti Counties
- Leech Lake Tribal Community
- Minneapolis
- Meeker, McLeod, Sibley Counties
- HEALTH4LIFE: Morrison, Todd, Wadena, Cass Counties
- NORTH COUNTRY: Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnommen, Norman, Polk Counties
- Olmstead County
- Rice County
- Sherburne County
- SOUTHWEST: Nobles, Rock, Murray, Pipestone, Lincoln, Lyon Counties
- St. Paul-Ramsey County



Northwest Stories.

PARTNERSHIP4HEALTH:
Clay, Wilkin, Becker and Otter Tail Counties

NORTH COUNTRY SHIP:
Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnomen, Polk and Norman Counties





When Wellness “Trumps” Temptation

In a workplace surrounded by the temptation of chips, chocolate and candy, wellness may be a big bite to swallow. That is why KLN Enterprises in Perham joined forces with PartnerSHIP4Health.

This relationship created changes in a workplace that employs over 1,300 shift workers, maintenance workers, warehouse workers, line-workers, machine operators, quality control staff and office staff, in six locations. KLN Enterprises oversees various brands of food products including candy, chips, dog food, gourmet nuts and chocolates.

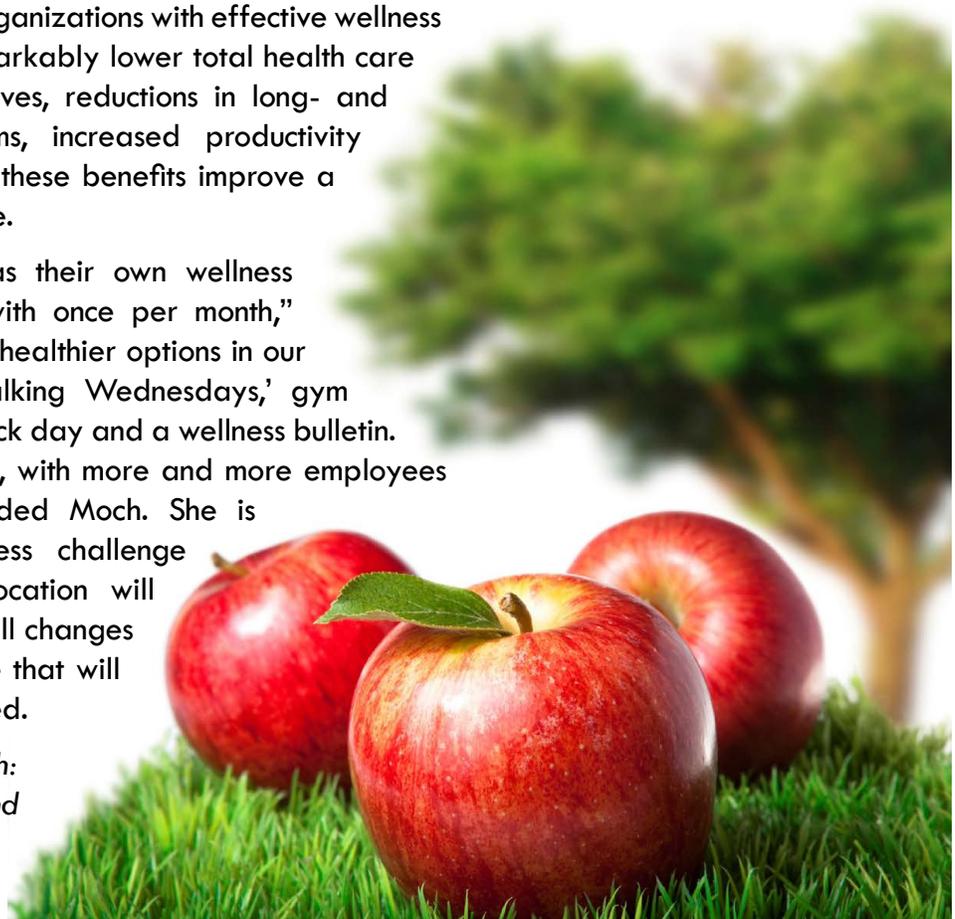
Marni Moch brings them all together. Moch, wellness coordinator at KLN enterprises, was brought on board in April 2012 after the company realized the need for wellness within their branch locations. “Prior to my position and our work with PartnerSHIP4Health, KLN didn’t really have a wellness plan. Health and wellness was not a strong presence in the company,” said Moch.

KLN is one of 14 worksites that joined as a partner with PartnerSHIP4Health to form a worksite wellness coalition. The coalition is guided by consultants from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. “This coalition works together to teach best practices, vision priorities and goals. They also develop wellness policies that will be used in worksites,” said Karen Nitzkowski, worksite wellness coordinator for PartnerSHIP4Health.

Studies have proven that organizations with effective wellness programs can achieve remarkably lower total health care costs, with shorter sick leaves, reductions in long- and short-term disability claims, increased productivity and general health. All of these benefits improve a business owner’s bottom line.

“Each of our locations has their own wellness committee which I meet with once per month,” said Moch. “We now have healthier options in our vending. We started ‘Walking Wednesdays,’ gym reimbursement, healthy snack day and a wellness bulletin. I am also a wellness coach, with more and more employees utilizing my services,” added Moch. She is planning a winter wellness challenge which she hopes each location will participate in. “It is the small changes over a long period of time that will make an impact,” she added.

— PartnerSHIP4Health:
Clay, Wilkin, Becker and
Otter Tail Counties





Business Booming in Baudette

If anyone believes that farmers markets can't make a difference for a community, they can go ask Lynda Annoreno, Baudette's Fresh Start farmers market manager, what she has to say about that.

Baudette lies just off the Canadian border, a location that many might assume to be a challenge for such an endeavor. Instead, since its founding, "Fresh local produce flies off our tables. The market-place has become a destination location," according to Annoreno.

The market gained its footing when they received support from SHIP and has since become a weekly community event providing the public with locally-harvested goods such as honey, grains, fresh eggs and so much more.

Since its opening day in June 2012, more than 30 vendors have joined on, and the number continues to grow. The market quickly outgrew its initial location and is now located on the grassy area adjoining Hometown Hardware Hank with plenty of space to expand.

But the market is more than the sales of good food. According to Annoreno, the market is "a place where physical, mental and social health has been enhanced."

Fresh Start wants to support community health by offering new and creative incentives to help people try different, yet healthy foods. "Recipes with Roots," for example, is a recipe-a-week that incorporates a root vegetable so people try items they wouldn't normally purchase. And for those who had questions regarding their health, dietitian Gabriel Mooney from Lake Wood Health was available to answer.

As a result, every Saturday during the summer of 2012, residents and visitors flocked to fill their bags with delicious homemade jams, breads and other quality items. How much? Says Annoreno, "With the support of SHIP our first year's farmers market generated \$250,000 in sales."

She continues, "With the assistance and support of SHIP our market experienced 'freakish' success in our first year!"

— NORTH COUNTRY: Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnomon, Polk and Norman Counties





The Business Case for Breastfeeding

If you ask Jennifer Klabunde, director of human resources at Ecumen Detroit Lakes Senior Housing, when the idea for a lactation room first entered her mind, she would tell you, “It was a thought I had years ago but we just did not have the time and space for doing it.” So back on the shelf that thought went.

In March 2012, Ecumen joined the worksite wellness collaboration sponsored by Partnership4Health, the area SHIP collaborative, led by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. It was there that Leslie Anderson, certified lactation counselor for Partnership4Health shared the “Business Case for Breastfeeding.” This sparked a renewed interest for Ecumen.

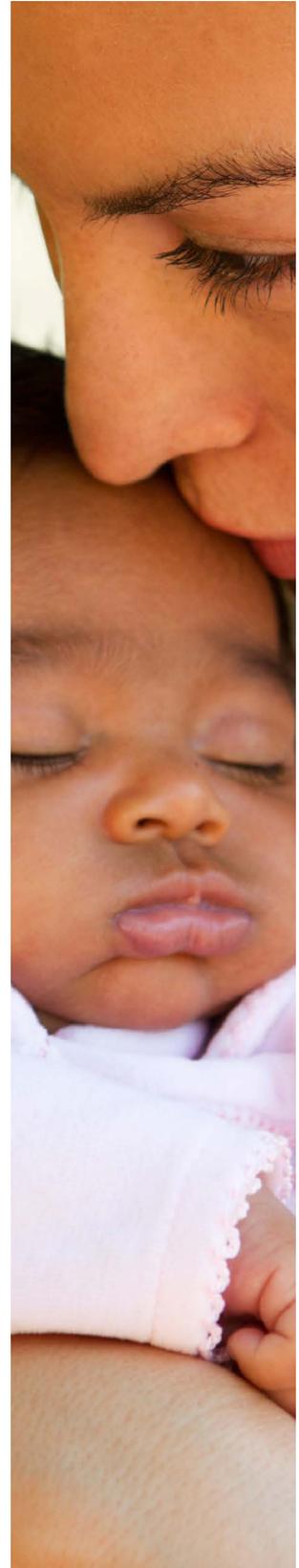
“When someone like Leslie comes along who has all the tools and resources to help, the decision was simple. It would have been foolish for me not to act, since it was my responsibility to advocate for the health of our employees,” says Klabunde. “Partnership4Health had a model policy template for us to follow. They were able to take us through the approval steps and offer the support needed during implementation.”

Ecumen is Minnesota’s largest non-profit provider of senior services. Nearly 98 percent of Ecumen’s workforce is female, many of childbearing age, and Ecumen is always looking for ways to respond directly to the needs of its workforce. Employee and new mother Dawn Pfeifer says, “I wouldn’t have been able to continue to breastfeed without this great space. At other places I worked, I was told that I would have to use the restroom.”

At Ecumen, the lactation room is in a central location, close to the employee break room and entrance. With support from Partnership4Health, the room has been furnished with comfortable seating and a small refrigerator to store expressed milk. The lactation room is now integrated into the onboarding process for new hires, and it has become a critical resource for supporting the health, attitude and productivity of employees at Ecumen.

Adds Pfeifer, “I am glad that Ecumen Detroit Lakes has this beautiful space for me to use.”

— PartnerSHIP4Health: Clay, Wilkin, Becker and Otter Tail Counties





Connecting Students to Food in Beltrami County

Tim Lutz, Kelliher Public schools superintendent, wanted to incorporate a salad bar and garden in the school for years, but as he explains, “It was Josh, our SHIP coordinator, and the SHIP grant that enabled us to make it happen.”

In 2012, Kelliher used help from SHIP to create a school garden, which has provided potatoes, squash, pumpkins and so much more to the students. Much of the produce is used in their new salad bar and hot lunch line, but some of it is also used to educate students on the variety of vegetables. To make sure they were meeting federal and state guidelines, Kelliher hired a local dietitian to help align their menu cycle.

“It is exciting to see students make choices of fruits and vegetables and to eat and enjoy them at school. My hope is that students will take their new eating habits home and educate their parents by asking for and requesting better food choices at grocery stores,” shares Karyn Lutz, the school’s dietitian.

Having a school garden connects students with their food because they plant, care for, and harvest their goods. In doing so, students are said to be making better choices regarding how much they eat and what they throw away. The garden has also encouraged students to try new foods.

“Students are daring to try and finish new, healthier entrees such as whole grain breads, vegetables, and whole grain pastas,” explains Lutz. She adds, “I can sure tell you that I’ve been so very happy with all of the support and opportunities we have received through SHIP. Things are changing around here, and it is exciting!”

— NORTH COUNTRY: Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnomen, Polk and Norman Counties





Bringing in the New Year Smoke Free

Eliminating tobacco use and secondhand smoke was a clear choice for one apartment building in Park Rapids. With the help of Smoke Free Housing and SHIP, residents of the River Heights Apartments can now rest easy knowing their building is smoke-free.



When residents were surveyed on their preference for a smoke-free apartment building, it was obvious that they wanted a healthier and cleaner environment in which to live. Sharon Voyda, manager at River Heights Apartments explained, “It is clear that the majority of residents do not want to be exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes.”

The new smoke-free policy went into effect for their facility on January 1, 2013.

SHIP coordinator, Diane Brophy organized a celebration for the residents in conjunction with the Great American Smokeout. Along with city officials and community agencies, residents shared their excitement for the policy with each other. One resident said, “I’m so glad we are going smoke-free because we live in a building with many people who have asthma, COPD and heart disease, and these are our neighbors.”

Helping celebrate, Marti Lundin, of the American Lung Association of Minnesota, “I applaud River Heights Apartments’ board and management for taking this monumental step to protect the health of residents.”

— NORTH COUNTRY: Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnommen, Polk and Norman Counties



Breckenridge High School Thinks Sustainability

At Breckenridge High School, located just west of Fergus Falls, student council members got their hands dirty in May 2011 in a good way. They planted 33 trees to make a fruit orchard on school grounds to provide fresh apples, plums, cherry plums, apricots and cherries to their fellow students.

School gardens are one way to teach children about agriculture, nutrition, and taking responsibility, all while increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables at the school. An on-site orchard is a creative, innovative way to do just that long into the future.

Now in its third year, their work continues, and in 2014, they expect to add fruit from the orchard to their snack, concession or lunch program. “The student council created a legacy of their own in planting a fruit orchard for the Breckenridge School District,” says Superintendent Rick Bleichner. “It’s one they can come back to in five, 10, or 15 years and say, ‘I was a part of that.’”



Nutrition staff also thought in terms of lasting investments in nutrition. Support from SHIP was used to upgrade kitchen equipment, with the school purchasing a steamer to offer a greater variety of fruits and vegetables prepared in a healthy, kid-friendly way.

By thinking long-term, the Breckenridge High School and the student council have planted the seeds for better nutrition not just for this year’s class, but for many years to come.

— PartnerSHIP4Health: Clay, Wilkin, Becker and Otter Tail Counties



Mission Complete

Committed cities for more walkable and bicycle-friendly street project: that is what the cities of Fergus Falls and Frazee wanted to be when they adopted their “Complete Streets” policies. Complete Streets makes it easier for residents to get physical activity in their daily routines by promoting non-motorized transportation through safer and accessible biking and walking paths.



Hank Ludtke, Frazee mayor, has a passion for physical activity and its benefits. He states, “I rode bike 10 miles a day back and forth to the university while in college. I rode bikes all year round.” Now disabled, he continues to be physically active and in 2012,

Partnership4Health partnered with Ludtke in order to provide additional support and resources to promote active living opportunities in Frazee.

Also joining in on making biking and walking more accessible is Battle Lake City, who incorporated the Complete Streets language into their comprehensive and capital improvement plans. Now the city of Battle Lake has a safe path that can take residents and visitors from Highway 78 to downtown.

“We are all working together to connect the neighborhoods, parks and school. We hope to keep our communities active and promote healthy living,” says Ludtke.

— PartnerSHIP4Health: Clay, Wilkin, Becker and Otter Tail Counties



Their Carrots!



Connecting local growers to students in schools to provide fresh, healthy food was a dream for Marleen Webb, director of the Bemidji Schools Food Service. With support from SHIP, that dream was turned into reality.

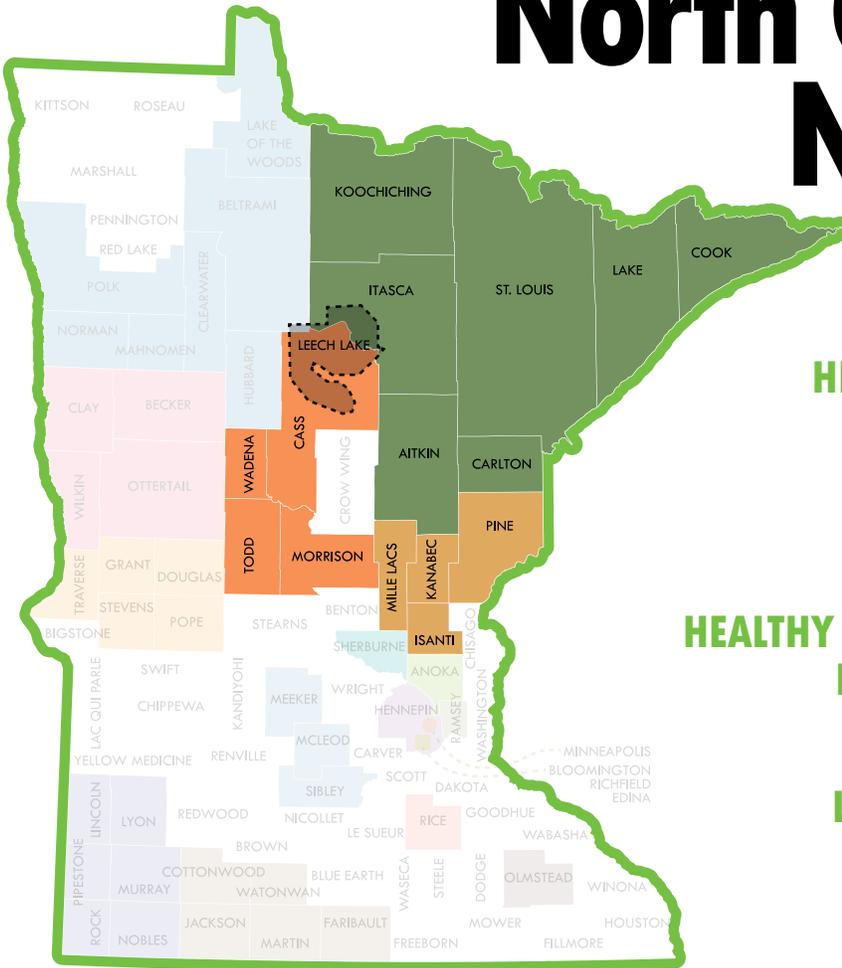
2012 marked the district’s fourth year participating in the Farm to School program. Many school districts are faced with tight budgets, and in order to make the Farm to School program happen, Webb was forced to look outside regular funding sources. Support from SHIP provided the means for the district to build a vegetable garden outside of Solway Elementary School and several raised garden beds at Lincoln Elementary School. In order to give students access to fresh, locally-grown foods on a more regular basis, Webb partnered with Cheryl Krystosek, a local grower, to connect Webb with other local growers willing to sell their naturally-grown produce to the school district.

“The growers have been tremendous to work with,” Webb says. “We’re really enthused about it. It’s a definite change for our kitchens to go back to made-from-scratch cooking rather than dealing with convenience foods.”

Students are enthused to be a part of their food system which encourages them to eat more vegetables and waste less, which is seen by food service staff. As Webb likes to tell, “It can be the dead of winter and students will be telling their friends that those are the carrots they grew in the garden!”

— NORTH COUNTRY: Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Hubbard, Clearwater, Mahnomen, Polk and Norman Counties

North Central & Northeast Stories.



HEALTH4LIFE: Morrison, Todd, Wadena and Cass Counties

Kanabec, Pine, Isanti and Mille Lacs Counties

HEALTHY NORTHLAND: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Aitkin, Itasca and Koochiching Counties

Leech Lake Tribal Community





Collaboration Makes Eating Healthy Easy

Ms. Lil Swenson, 85, of Humphrey Manor in Wadena, has always enjoyed eating vegetables. “I always have tried to serve a balanced meal,” she says. Sometimes that’s not so easy, especially for those who may not be as mobile as they once were. So when public health, Meals on Wheels and local growers teamed up to provide fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables to homebound seniors, Lil was happy to take part.

In 2012, SHIP partnered with Todd and Wadena Public Health to implement the Senior Fruit & Vegetable Program, with the help of the Eagle Bend and Wadena Senior Nutrition Sites and the Staples and Wadena farmers markets.

The program’s goal is to deliver fresh produce from the farmers markets—via Meals on Wheels—to homebound seniors. Increasing consumption of healthy, fresh vegetables is one key to better nutrition and better health. Plus, the program is great for local growers, too. They have a steady standing order every two weeks that they can count on at a guaranteed price per pound.

The program is a hit. Pat, a neighbor of Lil’s at Humphrey Manor, says, “Good program—it gives people a chance at fresh vegetables that they normally wouldn’t have.”

“Other communities have already contacted us to replicate the program,” says Katherine Mackedanz at Todd County Public Health. “This program is a great example of using existing resources to provide a valuable service delivering fresh, local fruits and vegetables to seniors.”

In its first year, 43 seniors participated in the program. In total 1,290 pounds of produce were delivered. In 2013, the program nearly doubled to include 80 seniors across Wadena and Todd Counties, and more than doubled the amount distributed to over 2,700 pounds.

To Lil, having the collaboration between farmers markets and Meals on Wheels makes eating healthy simple. “If you got it, you’ll eat it,” she says.

— *HEALTH4LIFE: Morrison, Todd,
Wadena and Cass Counties*





Advancing Wellness at Advanced Telemetry Systems

“ATS recognizes the importance of having employees feel their best, so they are healthy and productive in both their professional and personal lives,” explained Peter Kuechle, president of Advanced Telemetry Systems (ATS). This is precisely why Kuechle went to Isanti-Mille Lacs local public health with questions regarding implementing a worksite wellness program.

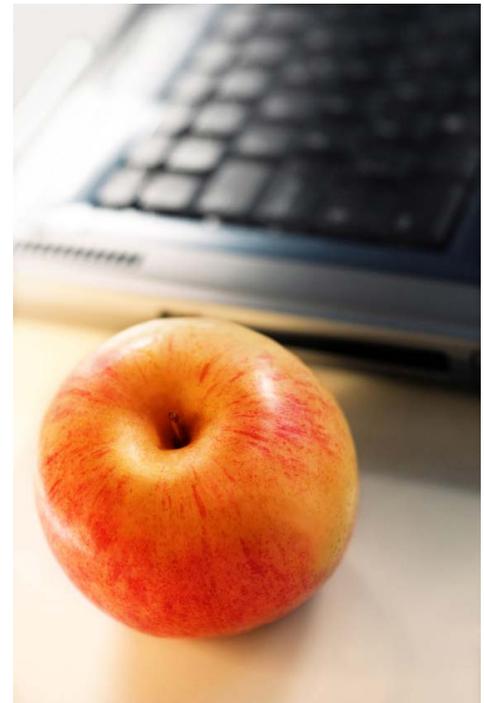
After partnering with SHIP in 2012, they were able to identify a worksite wellness coordinator and create a wellness committee. They also developed a toolkit, assessments and activity guidelines for ATS’s new committee. With all these resources, the difference is seen in the employees: They are now able to enjoy friendly weight loss challenges, healthy lunch options, access to on-site workout room and fruit and veggie trays.

As a result, in 2012, 61 percent of employees have increased their physical activity (with nearly 85 percent participating in committee provided activities), 52 percent have increased their intake of fruits and vegetables, and 52 percent have decreased their intake of high-fat foods. What a change for the better!

As one employee says, “Since the wellness program began here at ATS both my husband and I have become more active, are making healthier food choices and have lost weight. I am thankful that the ATS Wellness program continues to provide us with information and activities that have helped us make a positive change to our lifestyle.”

“We have witnessed some employees make positive sustainable changes to their lifestyle. We appreciate all the time and resources that SHIP has made available to ATS; it truly has made a difference,” adds Kuechle.

— Kanabec, Pine, Isanti and Mille Lacs Counties





Staying Healthy and Making Money

When Linda Bockovich was hired as the head cook for Grand Marais Schools in 2009, the school food service had suffered a loss of \$13,000 the previous school year. After taking advantage of the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) opportunities, Bockovich gained knowledge, training, professionalism and support to incorporate healthier school meals and put a little more money in the district's pocket.

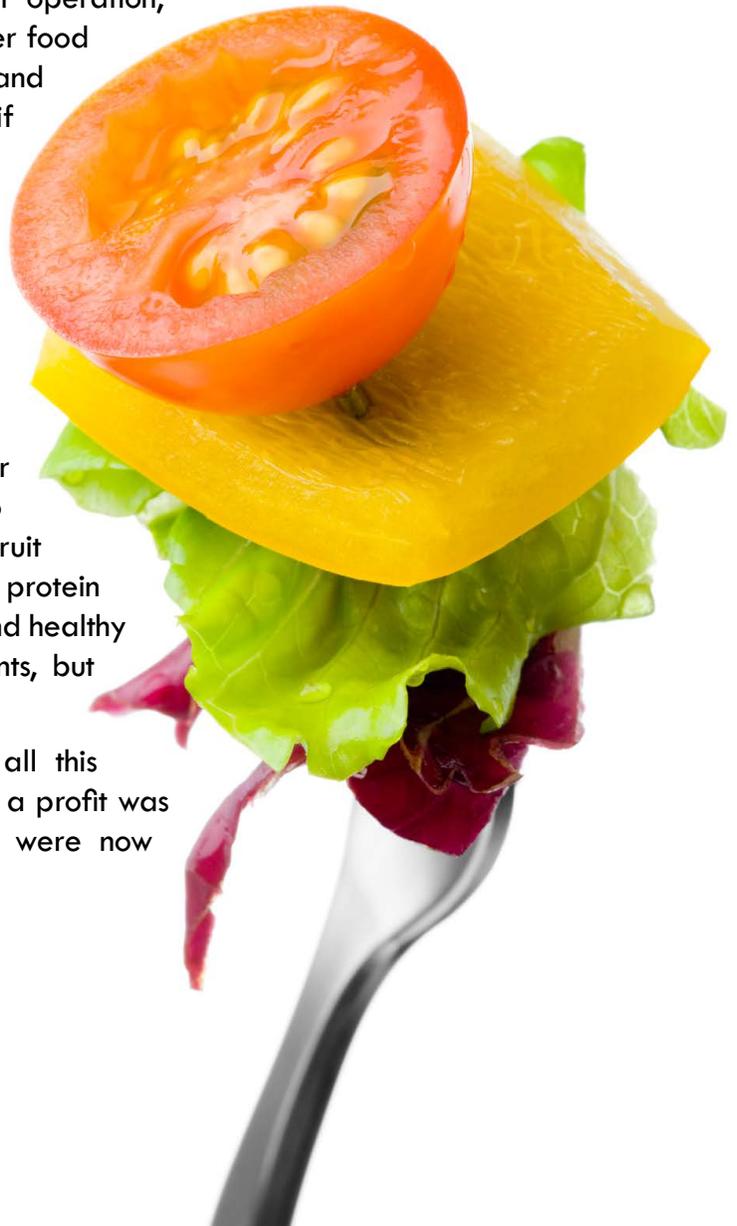
With the help of SHIP, Bockovich was able to attend four nutrition-related school food service trainings, make three site-visits to regional school food services to learn about their methods of operation, participate in a menu and systems review of her food service with a local chef and explore fruit and vegetable options with local distributors. As if that wasn't enough, Linda successfully planned and implemented a salad bar

trial, à la carte menu overhaul, and increased the whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and low-fat proteins offered on the Cook County Schools menu.

With more healthy options, over one-third of all Cook County students chose the salad bar option during the trial period. From 2009 to 2011, whole grain use increased 15 percent, fruit 23 percent, vegetables 19 percent and low-fat protein breakfasts increased 91 percent. These fresh and healthy options were available to not only the students, but staff as well, impacting everyone at the school.

And the cost to Grand Marais Schools for all this healthy eating? Rather than costing them more, a profit was generated because more students and staff were now participating in a school lunch.

— *HEALTHY NORTHLAND: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Aitkin, Itasca and Koochiching Counties*





Helping Raise Healthy Babies

Through the support of SHIP, nurses and other staff from several hospitals across Minnesota received training in order to help support new mothers breastfeed their infants.

The training, held annually since 2010, is a one day continuing education event supported by SHIP for staff from participating hospitals and public health agencies. The trainings emphasize 10 simple steps to successful breastfeeding and specifically include a focus on mothers' and newborns' barriers to breastfeeding.

Nurses at Essentia Health St. Mary's Medical Center Nursing Department/Birthplace couldn't be happier with the training. "Training helped me understand where mothers are coming from. I use it every day. It also helped me with my approach so I can help new moms meet their goals," commented Jane Johnson, RN and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

The training provided participants with realistic tips to help mothers coming from all backgrounds, and talked about how confidence is one of the biggest barriers to breastfeeding.

"The most important lesson is that [mothers] can do this," commented Pam Galle, IBCLC, who organized the trainings "The steps [of breastfeeding] aren't difficult, and they have significant outcomes."

Erin Olin, mother of two, reminisced about the strong expert lactation guidance she received after delivering her firstborn at Essentia Health St. Mary's Medical Center. "Essentia is very much a hospital that promotes breastfeeding."

Thanks to SHIP support, more mothers like Olin, will continue to receive breastfeeding guidance to ensure healthier beginnings for their newborns.

—HEALTHY NORTHLAND: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Aitkin, Itasca and Koochiching Counties





A Culture of Wellness at Bugonaygeshig School

Promoting cultural integration and wellness are top priorities at the Bugonaygeshig School. With the Fresh Fruits program, students are learning traditional words from Ojibwe language and how to have a healthy heart, mind and spirit.

Lavender Hunt, nutrition education manager with Bugonaygeshig, leads weekly lessons about various fruits and the physical activity included in gathering that fruit. Along with food education, students understand how the use of food is passed down through stories from their ancestors and the important role it plays for medicine and healthy bodies.

“As part of our hunting, gathering teachings, we are identifying specific healthy foods, and the physical activity that it requires to harvest these foods. The students receive a holistic approach to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.”

Native Americans experience high rates of obesity and diabetes and to Hunt, incorporating healthy food and more physical activity is an immediate way to start combatting these rates. In the future, Hunt would like to conduct a fine dining experience so students understand why proper etiquette is important and to “taste food and enjoy it with all of your senses.”

— Leech Lake Tribal Community



Breathing Easy

In Wadena, Greenwood Apartments has increasingly seen more families with children playing around the 48 unit complex. Making the inside and surrounding area outside a little cleaner was important to Metes & Bounds Management Company properties and now, those families can breathe a little easier knowing their complex is smoke-free.

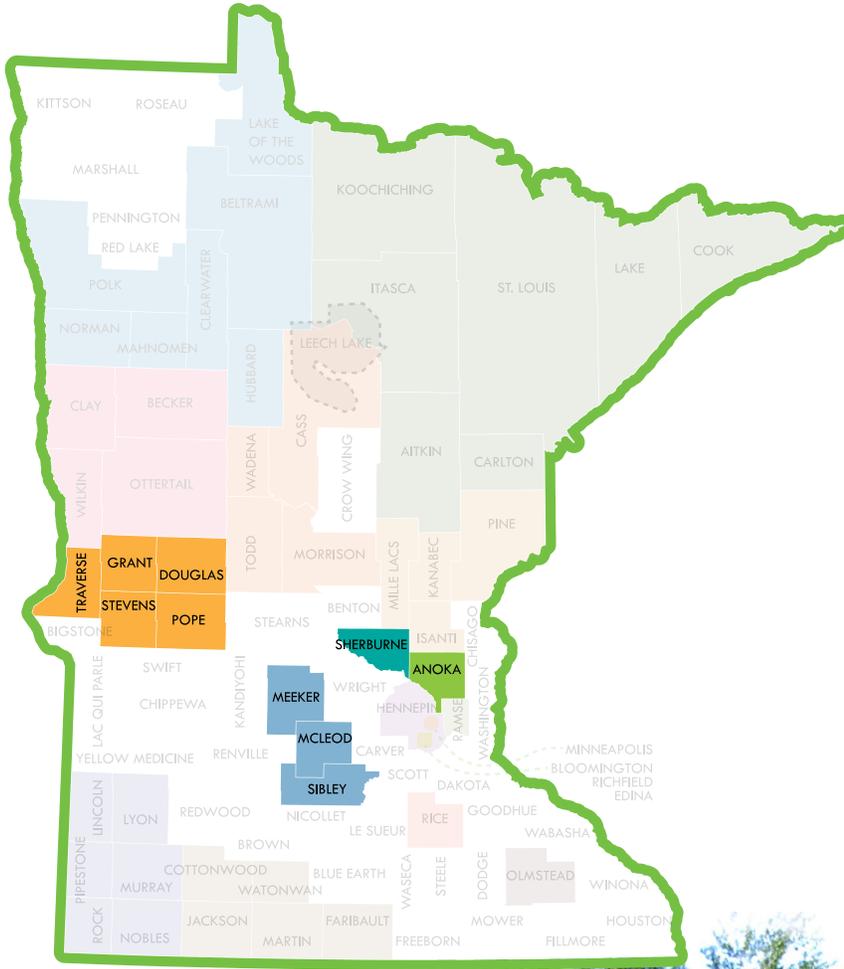
With the help of SHIP, on October 1, 2013, Greenwood Apartments smoke-free policy went into effect. “I am so glad that Greenwood has taken the step of going smoke-free. Wadena County ranks as one of the unhealthiest counties in Minnesota,” shares David Ritchey, building manager of Greenwood Apartments.

In June 2013, Ritchey surveyed his residents to gauge their level of interest in the new policy. His respondents proved that they were headed in the right direction when over 70% reported they wanted to live in a smoke-free environment. For those that the policy influences to stop smoking, there are tobacco cessation materials available. The new policy also prohibits the use of electronic cigarettes and any lighted smoking devices.

Ritchey exclaims, “It is great to have a policy in place that helps move our community a step closer to healthy living!”

— HEALTH4LIFE: Morrison, Todd, Wadena and Cass Counties





Central Stories.

Anoka County

Meeker, McLeod and Sibley Counties

Sherburne County

WEST CENTRAL WELLNESS:
Pope, Douglas, Traverse,
Grant and Stevens Counties





Learning New Words While Creating Wiggle Room at Browns Valley

At first, noses were turned up to the newly introduced vegetable jicama, pronounced he-ka-ma, but it didn't take long for the kids in Browns Valley classrooms to love this wild new snack.

Starting in 2013, Carmen Hills incorporated a healthy snack program at Browns Valley that , includes fresh fruit and vegetables, a salad bar, and an exercise room which is loved by the children. The new snack program introduces kids to new foods they would not normally try and the exercise room allows them to get more physical activity during the day.

"They love the bowling activities and it is fun to watch other students who don't often get a chance to be leaders in our room lead with these activities," explains Mrs. Graff, kindergarten teacher at Browns Valley.

The equipment is also used in the pre-kindergarten SPARK activities, which are activities that children do when they need a break to get the wiggles out before refocusing on the next classroom topic.

Hills explains, "Students enjoy the short activity breaks which are used to not only increase activity levels but students' concentration skills and classroom behavior."

After experiencing the success of the new healthy eating and exercise program, staff at Browns Valley School plan to apply for grants to ensure it stays funded and sustainable in order to keep healthy food choices available to students.

"We hope to see children making better choices for foods, both at snack and meal times and choosing physical activity over sedentary ones. We hope this leads to improved student health over the long term," concludes Hills.

— West Central Wellness: Pope, Douglas, Traverse, Grant and Stevens Counties





Physical Activity is the Best Policy in McLeod County

With support from SHIP, preschools and daycares throughout McLeod County are not only making physical activity a permanent part of their daily routine, they are making it company policy.

Child care providers are looking at their current policies, space, and physical activity practices and developing action plans to put permanent changes into place. While some providers already have put physical activity into their programs, developing a formal policy helps them stay more accountable. SHIP staff also helped create a resource guide highlighting numerous activities, events and public spaces in all nine cities that providers can take advantage of with their kids at limited or no cost. The county is also working with Ridgewater College to encourage I am Moving, I am Learning (IMIL) training, a popular and effective physical activity program, as part of its continuing education offerings for local providers.

At Lori's Childcare and Preschool, owner Lori Holtberg has notified families of her new written policy that limits TV time to a half-hour a day while kids are in her care. The policy also states that children will have at least two hours of physical activity each day, with an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon, focused on large muscle development and cardiovascular health. "We were doing a lot of this before, but putting it into a formal policy makes you more accountable," says Holtberg.

— Meeker, McLeod and Sibley Counties





“I Created Little Health Monsters...!”

So long cookie monster, hello cute health monsters. Becky Hagestuen, owner and primary care provider for Seeds to Grow Licensed Day Care in Andover, is conscientious about development of strong foundations for those in her care. “As a child care provider, I strive to meet the children’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs. This includes providing nutritious foods and ensuring they get plenty of exercise, including all-season outside playtime, and free play—which is important for their imagination and overall development.”

When Hagestuen saw that Anoka County Child Care Licensing, in partnership with Community Health and Environmental Services, offered training in I am Moving, I am Learning and Learning about Nutrition through Activities curriculums, she jumped at the opportunity. “I encourage all child care providers to attend these trainings, they’ve been incredibly helpful on many levels,” commented Becky. Even though she already had a strong nutrition program at her day care, the training taught her more effective ways to incorporate a greater variety of fruits and vegetables into food offered and activities to involve the children in meal preparation. “The recipe book has been great. It opened my creativity and gave me different cooking activities to do with the kids. Recently I bought a pineapple and set it in the middle table and let the kids brainstorm what it was, prompting them with questions such as, ‘What color do you think is on the inside?’”

As a result, the benefits of better nutrition go beyond the walls of Seeds to Grow Day Care. “One of the parents told me, ‘my daughter gets after me when I drink pop now!’” Hagestuen chuckles at this story and concludes, “Yes, I’ve created little health monsters.”

— Anoka County





“I Want to Try a New Vegetable Three Times a Week!”

“I want to try a new vegetable three times a week!” exclaimed one of the youngsters attending the Familias Saludables Divirtiendose (Healthy Families Having Fun) class series.

In the spring of 2012, Sherburne County SHIP wrapped up a three part class, Familias Saludables Divirtiendose (Healthy Families Having Fun) in partnership with the Big Lake Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and English as a Second Language (ESL)/Family Literacy programs.

“My work in the Hispanic and Latino population with individual families taught me that some of the basic obesity education is not necessarily engrained in their culture,” recalled instructor Mary Zelenak, Sherburne County public health nurse. “So we wrote a request to offer obesity education in our SHIP grant.”

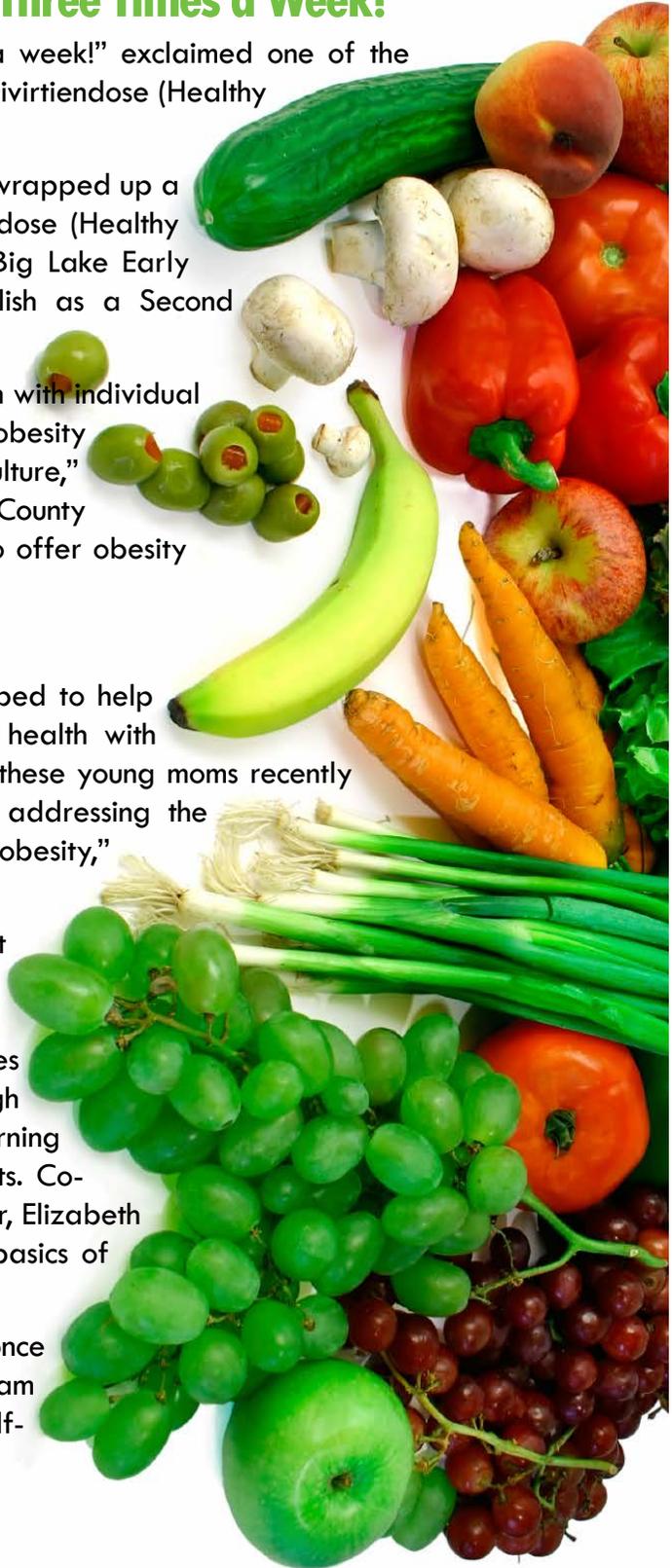
Lucky for Mary, she asked, and she received.

Familias Saludables Divirtiendose was developed to help Hispanic and Latino parents promote family health with nutrition and physical activity. “Since many of these young moms recently moved to the U.S., we worked together on addressing the language and cultural barriers affecting obesity,” relayed Mary.

Nine families attended the class. The booklet “My Bright Future: Physical Activity and Healthy Eating” (available in English and Spanish) guided the classes. Parent and child activities from the Learning About Nutrition through Activities (LANA) and I Am Moving I Am Learning (IMIL) curriculums reinforced the learning points. Co-taught by Mary and a bilingual ECFE facilitator, Elizabeth Waldorf, the class featured three parts: the basics of obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

Families have requested to expand the class to once a month or weekly for nine weeks. The program leaders hoped that it would be completely self-sustaining in the near future.

— Sherburne County





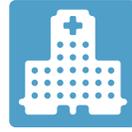
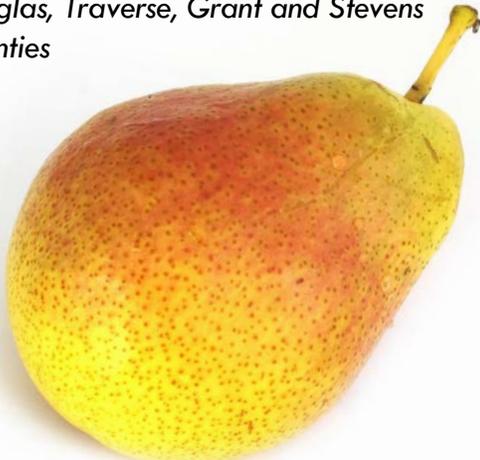
Snack Happy in Alexandria

Pears, peppers, and pineapple are climbing up the list of favorites at St. Mary’s Elementary School in Alexandria. Over the past year, St. Mary’s School staff has learned how to promote a healthy snack and get kids to eat it.

Three days a week, students are provided a snack, instead of them bringing it from home. Fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods are prepared by the school cook and delivered to the classrooms in the morning. The school used the money from the SHIP grant to pay for the snack cart, an opportunity to taste test new foods, and staffing needed to implement the program.

The program has been very well received by the students and the parents. The students are being exposed to healthy eating options and parents no longer need to debate with their children on what to provide for a snack. The new program has had a positive effect already. St. Mary’s teaching staff has seen more nutritional snacks coming in on the days a snack is not provided, proving that students and parents are on board with the new expectations.

— WEST CENTRAL WELLNESS: Pope, Douglas, Traverse, Grant and Stevens Counties



Nine Counties Work Together to Get Kids Off to a Healthy Start



In west-central Minnesota, nine counties have combined to make breastfeeding the norm for area women. Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin Counties and ten hospitals worked together to form the Golden Start Initiative, to educate patients prenatally about the benefits of breastfeeding and promoting timely follow-up and support for new mothers.

Early education from clinics and hospitals for new mothers has proven crucial to successful breastfeeding. With the help of SHIP, Golden Start Initiative provided evidence-based education to over 300 health care providers. About 200 healthcare clinicians have taken part in one of three 3-day trainings provided by Evergreen Perinatal Education, an internationally known lactation education resource. In addition, 14 nurses have been trained to provide educational opportunities in their own workplaces by taking part in a 5-day train-the-trainer course.

According to Kristy Fremstad, RN, at Sanford Health in Fargo, “Since the staff education that has come from being a part of Golden Start, our moms come to us so much more prepared to breastfeed their babies.”

— WEST CENTRAL WELLNESS: Pope, Douglas, Traverse, Grant and Stevens Counties



Tapping Local Experts in Litchfield

Tapping local expertise and working together as a community is what SHIP is all about.

In the Litchfield area, Minnesota Rubber & Plastics launched wellness programs at its Litchfield plant about six years before SHIP came on the scene. “We started because health care premiums were going through the roof,” says human resource manager Marla Wendlandt. These efforts became known in the wider community, so when the local SHIP program was forming, SHIP asked Minnesota Rubber & Plastics representatives to serve on the board.

As a result, SHIP connected Minnesota Rubber & Plastics and seven other worksites, four local hospitals, public schools and public health agencies.

An enthusiastic participant is Meeker Memorial Hospital. Promoting health makes sense, says Lori Rice, coordinator of education and marketing. Initiatives include new food choices on menus that feature low-fat and reduced-salt dishes with moderate calorie counts for patients, staff at meetings and guests at the cafeteria. The wellness committee seeks to develop a smoke-free campus policy. And, along with 220 employees, about 100 volunteers also have been offered low-cost health assessments. “We felt it was important to include our whole community here at the Meeker Memorial Hospital,” Rice says.

— Meeker, McLeod and Sibley Counties



Sibley East Links Kids with Community

The situation in Sibley East Schools was no different than many schools across the country. Kids weren’t eating enough fruits

and vegetables and had little knowledge of food production. With the support of SHIP, students, teachers and food service workers started a Farm to School program to change the scene.

Tim Uhlenkamp, agriculture educator says, “We talked about what would be a good way to get students outside the classroom and learning about food production through a hands-on experience. The principal thought it was a great idea and it happened.”

One acre of land was donated by the city and planted by the Sibley Future Farmers of America chapter. Among the vegetables planted were carrots, cucumbers, green and yellow beans, kohlrabi, potatoes, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes and corn. “There were a lot of kids who never planted a plant before and for them to do that was amazing to many of them. I had city kids sitting on tractors,” says Uhlenkamp.

Superintendent Stephan Jones says, “I’m an optimist, but this blew me away how successful it was. From a school administrator’s standpoint it was the best PR we have done to create a link between the rural community and kids in the schools.”

— Meeker, McLeod and Sibley Counties

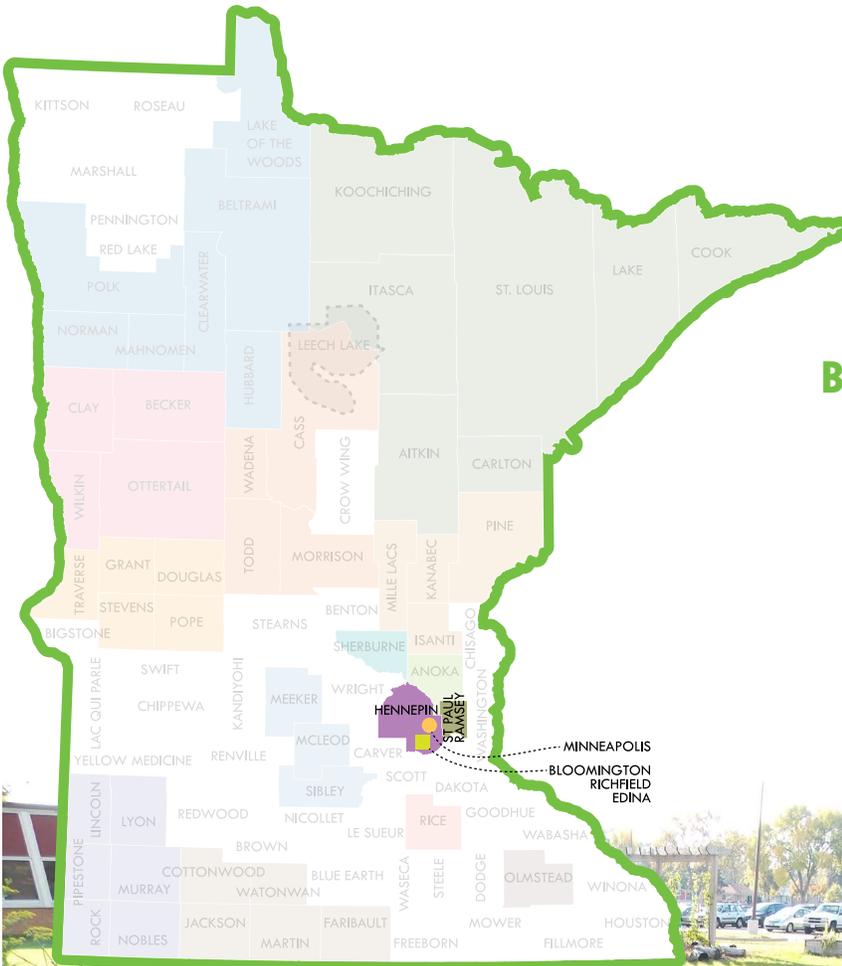
Metro Stories.

Bloomington, Edina, Richfield

Hennepin County

Minneapolis

St. Paul-Ramsey County





The Town that Went Smoke-Free

Can an entire town go smoke-free? On January 1, 2013, a town-like housing development did exactly that, clearing the air for approximately 4,440 individuals. Riverside Plaza is now the largest housing complex in Minnesota to provide a smoke-free environment.

Calling Riverside Plaza a “town” is no exaggeration. It has a K-8 charter school, grocery store, and resource center with social services such as a computer lab and job training. SHIP partnered with Wellshare International and the Association for Nonsmokers Minnesota (ANSR) to help pass the smoke-free building policy.

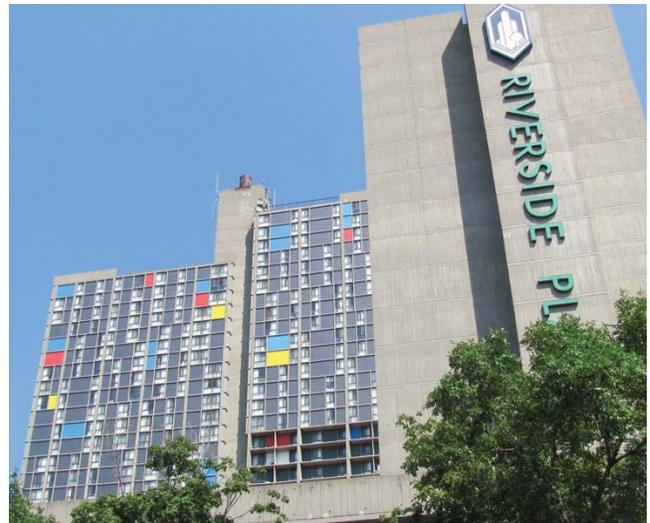
“This policy is going to support and make Riverside Plaza housing complex a better environment to live in,” says Abdi Warsame, executive director of Riverside Plaza Tenant Association and newly elected member of the Minneapolis City Council. “It will help the neediest or those vulnerable within the community – such as small children and the elderly – to breathe air free from tobacco.”

To get things started, Wellshare, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving health, conducted a door-to-door survey of residents, mostly East African immigrants. They also created a video for the property’s in-house cable show explaining the dangers of secondhand smoke and the upcoming policy change. Meetings were held with residents and staff to explain the policy and hear concerns as well. As a result of gathering feedback and further educating the residents, 82 percent supported the new policy change.

Building managers Sherman & Associates are now interested in expanding smoke-free air to their four other properties in Northeast Minneapolis. Wellshare, the Minneapolis Health Department, ANSR and Sherman & Associates are working together to show how SHIP partnerships can create benefits for all.

For the residents at Riverside, says Warsame, “This will go a long way to help in their health.”

— Minneapolis





Celebrating Healthy

Cupcakes and sugary treats make up a lot of birthday celebrations throughout the school year, but in the Brooklyn Center school district their celebrations are not only healthy and delicious, but loved by both parents and students.

In 2012, the food service department collaborated with SHIP to implement the “Healthy Celebrations” program, an affordable, yet healthy alternative to celebrations that are prepared and served by food service staff.

“Healthy Celebrations promotes positive lifestyle choices and supports the classroom lessons students learn about in health instead of contradicting them,” shares Liliana Gomez, senior health promotion specialist with Hennepin County.

To inform and engage parents, the district made order forms easily available, both online and in print, and in English, Spanish and Hmong. So far, fifteen celebrations have utilized the healthy option and during fall parent meetings.

Kate Christensen, district wellness coordinator says, “If there are thirty students in their child’s classroom, their child will more than likely have about thirty cupcakes or pieces of cake just during the school year in their classrooms to celebrate the birthdays.”

Now, parents have the option of choosing an easier and healthier way for their child to celebrate at school.

One excited parent shares, “I didn’t want to send cupcakes or candy with my son, and was thrilled to learn about the new Healthy Celebrations program. The cost was affordable and both my son and I look forward to doing this again next year!”

— Hennepin County





The School Bus that Runs on Sneakers and Snow Boots

The Kingfield neighborhood of Minneapolis was excited when it gained a designated community school in 2009. For many children, this meant attending a school closer to home, just one of the many benefits of a neighborhood school. For one group of active parents, the boundary change meant they could create four “walking school buses” with designated routes and assigned adult volunteers.

“Even a small group of committed parents can make a big difference in organizing a program like this,” says Scott Bordon, a Lyndale Community School parent and volunteer coordinator for the walking school bus. “But the kids are the ones who really do the rallying by encouraging their friends at school to walk with them.”

Besides obvious benefits such as increased exercise, environmental awareness, and pedestrian safety education, the Lyndale walking school bus has some added kid-friendly bonuses. Incentives include “Fun Fridays” with parents playing musical instruments during the walk and handing out stickers that say, “I walked.” But kids mostly join the walking bus because it’s fun.

“We have children dragging their parents out the door because they don’t want to miss the walking bus,” Bordon says. “They love to walk with their friends to school.”

With some routes boasting up to 20-30 kids regardless of weather, Lyndale Community School has begun tying in academics with walking to school. Kids are encouraged to share what they like about walking during writing lessons such as poetry or in art classes.

“We see the benefits of walking showing up throughout the school day,” says Principal Ossie Brooks-James. “Kids have created posters and signs in art classes talking about the health and environmental benefits of walking, and they’ve even carried them along their routes.”

— Minneapolis





Healthier Options

Bloomington and Edina aquatic centers, Richfield pool and the Dwan Golf Course can all attest that providing healthier food options and maintaining financial stability can be possible in this sugary, salty world.

With SHIP support, concession operators were taught how to maximize their bottom line at each facility. According to Joan Bulfer, Bloomington public health nutritionist, “It was appealing to municipal concession managers because most have no training in running financially successful concessions.”

The SHIP-supported trainer also recommended discontinuing selling candy, not only because it is unhealthy, but it is not profitable. Another example was replacing a slushie with yogurt parfait.

SHIP staff has been working with concession operators in the three cities to offer healthier foods. The aim was to start with 40 percent of the menu meeting healthier choice guidelines and to gradually increase that amount.

Everyone seems to notice the change and appreciates the new options. Explains one parent of an Edina hockey player, “Kids need healthy food to grow and perform at their best! Thank you for focusing on getting better food into your concessions!”

A great benefit that concession operators gained from the training was the opportunity to share ideas and identify ways to collaborate with each other in the future.

The important question is, did it make a difference? Yes!

The Edina Aquatic Center increased profits by 12 percent between 2011 and 2012, the Richfield pool increased profits by 20 percent and the Dwan Golf Club decreased food costs by 6 percent! For families and individuals who enjoy these venues, it means traditional concession fare and healthier food CAN coexist. Knowing of the success of these trail-blazing concession operations will certainly make it easier for other venues to make healthier menu changes.

— Bloomington, Edina and Richfield





Empowering and Embracing Community

African Americans experience higher rates of heart disease and diabetes; however, several St. Paul churches are working to change that.

Health promotion specialist, Vanne Hayes surveyed eight churches to identify the areas where they had health concerns and assisted with finding ways to target those concerns.

Seven churches moved forward with instituting healthier changes. The common issues identified were obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. Exercise and nutrition experts were hired on to teach classes within each congregation and some were involved in a church garden.

Hayes shares that at Holy Trinity, “The team found that diabetes was a big concern. With this in mind, the committee developed a wellness policy, purchased two food warmers, purchased up to fifty HealthCheque guides, trained staff and church members how to cook healthy meals and purchased glucose monitoring sets.”

Change was especially seen at their weekly Coffee Sip meetings, where normally there were donuts, coffee and occasionally fruits. Now, instead of serving heavy meals at their gatherings, church attendants have more fruit, more water, and portion-appropriate meals.

According to Hayes, “It’s an empowering way to build on the assets of the community by embracing them in community engagement and sharing information and resources.”

— St Paul-Ramsey County





New Stamp of Approval at Farmers Markets: EBT

“We want to cover everybody—the EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) program is too important to only do halfway,” commented Jack Gerten, market manager of St. Paul’s Farmers Markets.

By accepting EBT, more St. Paul families can have access to fresh, healthy produce. “St Paul Farmers Markets went from accepting EBT at the main downtown location in 2011 to six locations in 2012,” commented Ramsey County Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) coordinator Julie Seiber. The expansion was largely initiated through collaborations between several groups including SHIP, Minnesota Department of Human Services and Blue Cross Blue Shield.

“We were able to reach and notify EBT users of EBT’s expansion into farmers markets through a statewide direct mail campaign in collaboration with the Department of Human Services,” added Julie. The popularity and growth of the program was also the product of an ongoing collaboration between SHIP and Blue Cross Blue Shield.

“EBT also received a lot of support through Blue Cross Blue Shield’s Market Bucks incentive program,” commented Julie. Market Bucks provided up to \$5 per day to SNAP recipients for each dollar they spent using EBT cards at a participating farmers market.

— St Paul-Ramsey County



Moving and Performing in Richfield

It’s nothing out of the ordinary to see a classroom of students gently roll on their stability balls while their teachers gives her lesson at the Richfield Dual Language School (RDLS).



In each of their twenty classrooms, teachers take activity breaks when they are transitioning into another subject, snack time or every twenty minutes. Many classrooms are equipped with stability balls for students and all perform some type of activity that gets them on their feet and moving around.

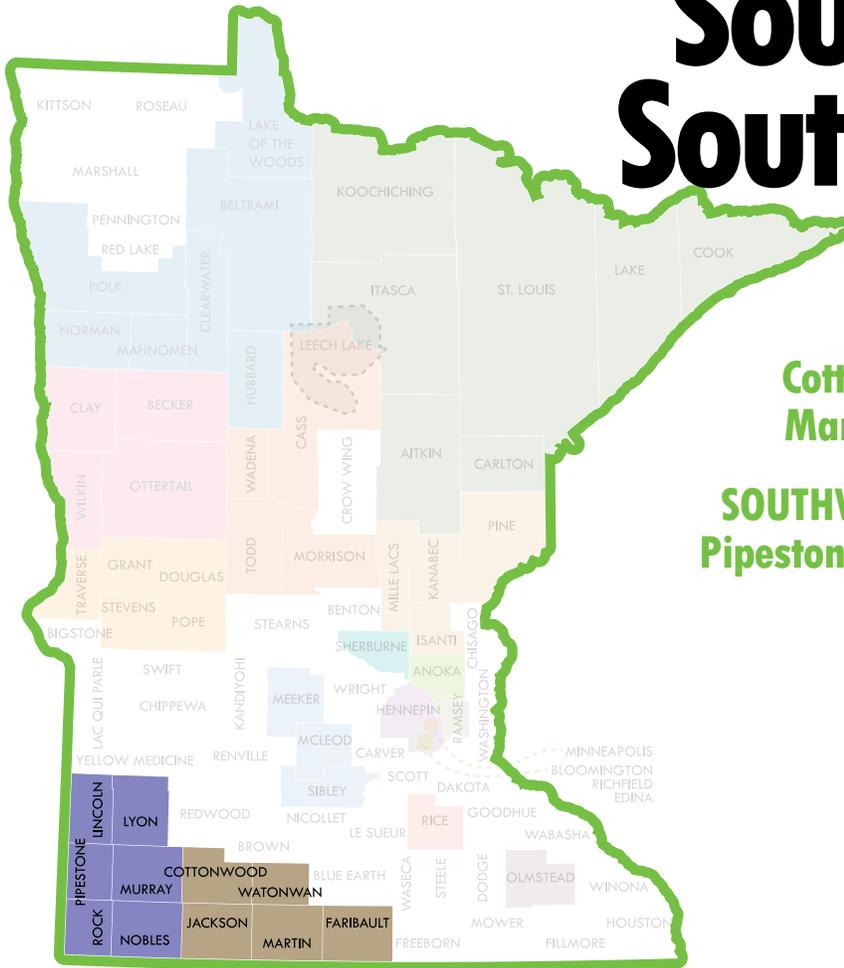
This not only severs to improve health and build healthy habits, it also helps academically. When children and adolescents are active, they are healthier and more disciplined and focused, which in turn has a positive impact on their academic success.

Second grade teacher, Melissa Campana explains, “Their spelling tests were a disaster last year. [Now] their handwriting is so much better than I’ve seen it in the past. I really think that having the balls and being able to make those physical movements is helping them focus and write better.”

“If I want my students to be successful in the classroom and maintain my high expectations, I also need to acknowledge where they are developmentally. They need breaks!” concludes Soriano.

— Bloomington, Edina and Richfield

Southwest & South Central Stories.



Cottonwood, Jackson, Faribault, Martin and Watonwan Counties

SOUTHWEST: Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Rock and Nobles Counties





Downs Food Group No Chicken When it Comes to Wellness

As Chera Sevcik, Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) supervisor exclaims, “Employees LOVE the changes!” Sevcik is referring to the changes that were made in the Downs Food Group’s (DFG) work environment.

The poultry processing plant located in Watonwan County was not a new face to worksite wellness initiatives. For years, a partnership between Watonwan County Public Health, Madelia Community Hospital and Downs Food Group employed Ellen Delatorre, a health educator/interpreter, to provide bilingual health education at the plants each month. This partnership has been an essential first step to meeting the needs of a growing Latino workforce, with Watonwan County holding the highest Latino population, per capita, in the state of Minnesota.

Now, with help from SHIP, DFG has made great strides in improving the health of their employees through a more comprehensive workplace wellness program. The program has instituted a variety of health-conscious changes that improve nutrition, reduce smoke exposure, and increase physical activity. Vending machines within the plant now offer more nutritious options and, along with tobacco-free grounds policies, there is cessation support for employees.

DFG has also partnered with the local Anytime Fitness Center to offer reduced membership rates and run employee exercise programs before and after work.

Work place wellness programs are critical in any working environment, but at DFG it was especially important. Of the DFG employees, 80 percent are Latino and 10 percent are Asian. “We know that minority populations often have higher levels of health disparities, so working with DFG was very important for us in public health because it allows us to reach those we might not otherwise be able to reach.” explains Sevcik.

— Cottonwood, Jackson, Faribault, Martin
and Watonwan Counties





Pipestone Gets Active

How can a community increase biking and walking, and along the way make their towns safer and more enjoyable?

One effective way is through a “Complete Streets” policy. That is exactly what Southwest SHIP is working toward, one city at a time.

“We want to provide a safe way for people to get from one end of town to the other, whether that’s by bike, on foot or even in a wheelchair,” says Jeff Moberg of Southwest SHIP.

The Complete Streets concept is simple: Streets ought to be for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. That doesn’t mean there will be bike paths on freeways, but it can mean there is a way to get from here to there for everyone ages eight to eighty.

It has been a process for Pipestone. Key to success was working with Pipestone Active Living, a strong non-profit dedicated to encouraging walking and biking in this city of 4,317. “This partnership was crucial to this effort. Many hands make light—or at least lighter—work,” says SHIP coordinator Carol Biren.

First, as a demonstration project prior to the complete streets policy being passed, new bike paths were striped around town. They were a hit, drawing local and state-wide attention.

From that experience, community members could see that Complete Streets just made sense. Since then, a new lit crosswalk was installed across a highway connecting the school and the swimming pool and downtown, meaning kids and everyone else will be safer for it.

Next steps for Southwest SHIP? He’s talking with concerned citizens in the cities of Luverne and Worthington.

“The bike trail system is catching on, and more and more people are starting to use them,” said Moberg. All of which means a more active, and safer, community for all.

—SOUTHWEST: Lincoln, Lyon, Murray,
Pipestone, Rock and Nobles Counties





Putting People First at Park Apartments

On April 1, 2013, Park Apartments' smoke-free building policy went into effect, a feat which would not have been possible without Linda Blackstad, HRA director of Park Apartments, paving the way. The residents within the 70 unit complex can now enjoy cleaner air and a safer environment.

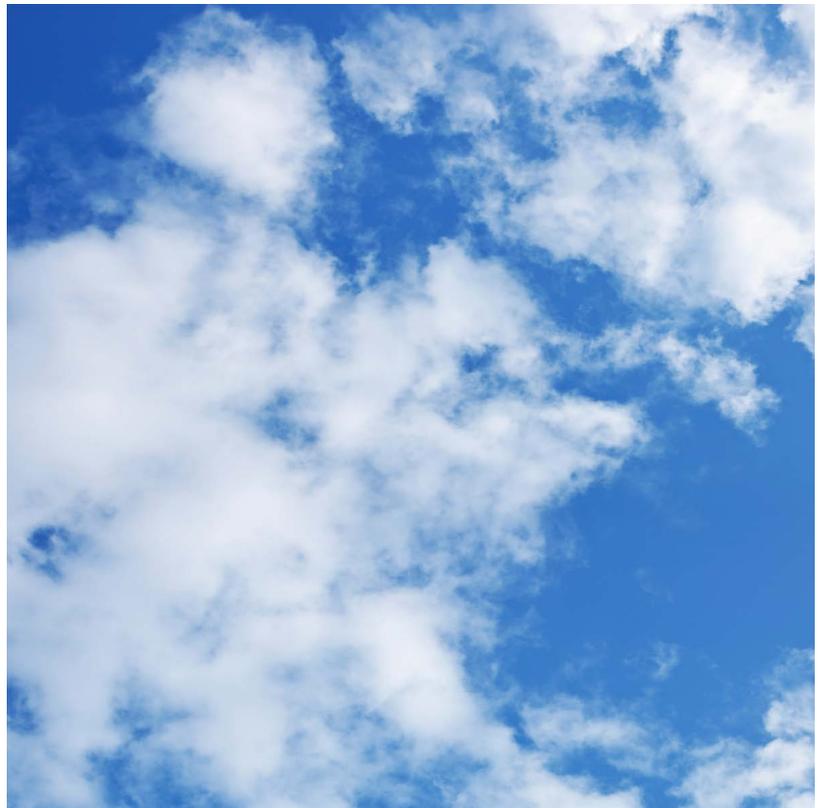
Linda Blackstad and the rest of management really started to think smoke-free when they started having more residents of families with babies and small children. So, in October 2012, she attended a Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) lunch and decided she wanted Park Apartments to go smoke-free as soon as possible. A tenant survey was conducted, which showed the majority of respondents were in favor of living in a smoke-free building and in January 2013, Blackstad held a resident education meeting. The meeting informed attendees on the dangers of secondhand smoke, and smoking cessation resources were handed out.

She continues, "We have had very positive feedback from the general public and several of our tenants."

To put the policy in action, new tenant leases with the smoke-free addendum were signed by each tenant and signage was placed around the complex to remind smokers they must be 25 feet away from the building to use tobacco.

"Our goal is to keep Park Apartments and St. James safe and healthy for all tenants, and becoming smoke-free has helped us reach our goal."

— Cottonwood, Jackson,
Faribault, Martin and
Watonwan Counties





Safe Routes + Walking Tuesdays = Healthy Kids

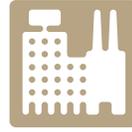
With the help of the Statewide Health Improvement Program, Fairmont’s Safe Routes to School program, “Walking Tuesdays,” has become a staple of Fairmont students’ school day.

Since 2012, Walking Tuesdays has become a regular occurrence at four Fairmont elementary schools. Chaperones from the local Kiwanis Club lead the group on a half-mile walk twice a week. “It was up to the kids but we had about 90 percent participation. And we had a chaperone for each [walking school] bus so kids had someone to walk with,” commented Lia Lambert, SHIP community specialist.

“The chaperones look forward to it and really get involved with the group,” commented Joe Burns, retired Fairmont teacher and Safe Routes to School leader. “Comradeship has developed between these groups...they chat together and laugh. You can’t believe how many times shoes become untied in a half -mile walk,” chuckled Joe.

About 60 students participated in Safe Routes to School at least one of the weeks. Parents expressed relief that they can send their children off to walk or bike to school safely. Teachers are supportive too. According to Jessica Seide, Martin County SHIP affiliate, “The teachers are excited that kids are getting some physical activity in the morning because it helps them to concentrate more in the classroom.”

— Cottonwood, Jackson, Faribault, Martin and Watonwan Counties



Brandt Farms and Greenhouses

Bill Brandt, founder of Brandt Gardens and Greenhouse, has sold produce in farmers markets for 13 years. Now Brandt has expanded his reach and started a new business providing fresh produce to more people: bringing his fresh foods direct to worksites.

He partnered with the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) to help identify interested worksites. An online survey was conducted with large businesses around the Fairmont area. At Jackson County, 80 percent of employees were interested.

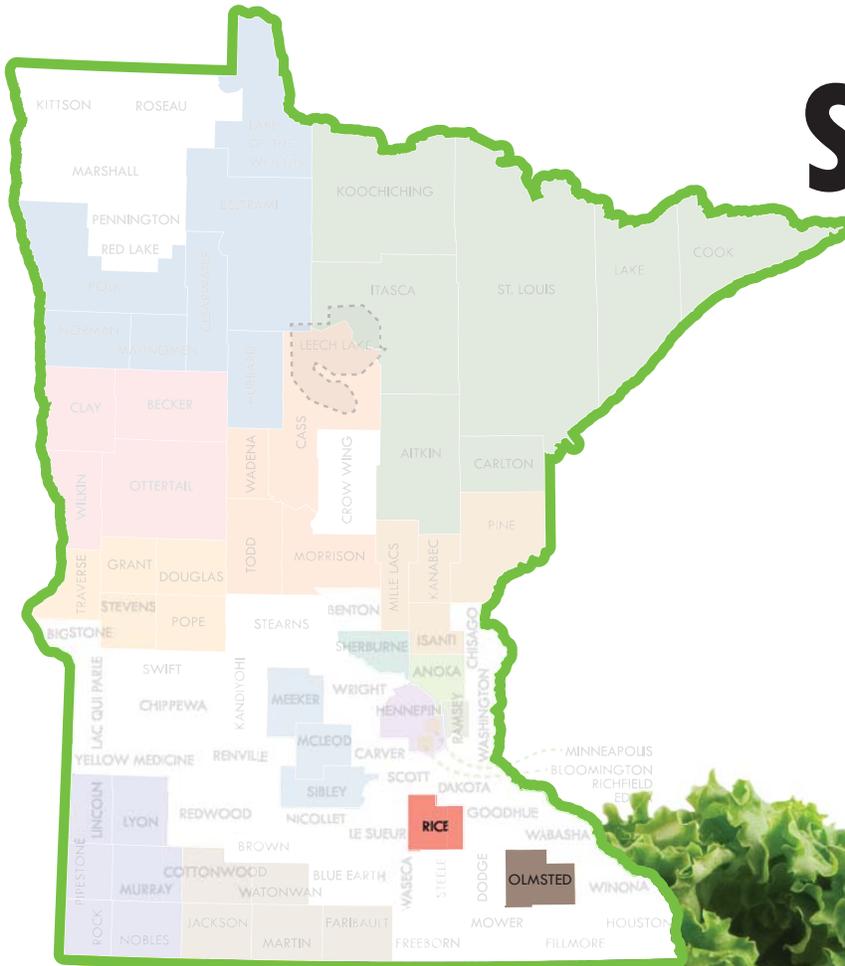
To ensure his veggies stay fresh while outside in the summer heat, Brandt purchased a mobile refrigerator, which is marked with his notable company logo to promote and identify his business.

“The most rewarding thing about supplying fresh produce to the three businesses is hearing customers express their appreciation of being able to buy fresh, quality produce,” shares Brandt.

In the future, Brandt hopes to broaden his market share by accepting EBT cards and continue to work with WIC clients.

Because of Brandt, his out-of-the-box ideas, and SHIP, more people are able to get fresh, healthy, local produce. This makes these company’s employees, the businesses, Brandt, and the whole community the winners.

—Cottonwood, Jackson, Faribault, Martin and Watonwan Counties



Southeast Stories.

Olmsted County

Rice County





A Fresh Take on Learning

For Bruce Klaehn, superintendent of Dover-Eyota Public Schools, the move to include more locally-sourced fresh produce in the lunch program fit perfectly with his vision of how the schools should operate. “[Everything] we do here is educational,” he stated. “There isn’t any time we turn the switch off, and our food and nutrition service isn’t just about getting kids fed. It’s about teaching them to eat nutritionally.”

The first step for the food service program was identifying local resources and learning how to incorporate new foods into daily menu choices. It meant making connections with a local produce supplier for vegetables, a nearby orchard for apples, an Eyota butcher shop for beef, a supplier in the next county for ground turkey. A rancher and one of her bison even came to school one day to get kids excited about the pulled buffalo sandwiches being served.

In some cases, students knew exactly where the food was coming from because relatives or friends were growing or raising it. In other cases, it was eye-opening. A senior remarked, “I didn’t know that Eyota had so many farms. It’s nice to see we’re eating locally and supporting families around the area, and that we’re eating natural stuff. It’s local and it’s fresh.”

Changes in attitudes and expectations are being noticed. A high school student remarked, “One of the big things that’s changed is I like fruit more. I used to not be much of a fruit eater or so much of a vegetable eater. But now I see there are different ways of eating it. It’s easier to make that choice when you make it every day in school.”

Carrie Frank, Food and Nutrition Director for Dover-Eyota schools, says, “I’ve found we shouldn’t underestimate the kids. They know good food. If healthy options are offered, they’re going to [choose] them.”

— Olmsted County





Walking is the New Way to Roll

Like many neighborhood schools in Rochester, Elton Hills Elementary enrolls many students who don't ride the bus. They live too close to be eligible for free transportation. Three years ago, a group of parents considered the situation and decided to set the wheels in motion for a new way of getting to school that didn't involve wheels at all. Kids could walk, following designated routes, with adults supervising for safety. Getting everyone aboard, the organizers invited the Elton Hills community to join the walking school bus.

Principal Paul Ehling explains, "The premise of a walking school bus is that the kids are walking, getting more exercise. And you have less car traffic around the school. It's good for everybody." Parent volunteers sign up for morning or afternoon shifts, and a few high school students help, too, which lets them earn community service credits.

Jane Dahlen, the current walking school bus coordinator, agrees. "For me, I think it's a good example for children that exercise should be part of their daily routine... We're showing you can get exercise by walking to school, walking to work, doing basic routines. By making it a part of an everyday experience, I think it's easier to stick to it."

Dahlen adds, "I walk at least two miles every morning to get the kids to school. It's great exercise, but I also think it's much more than just physical activity. Kids talk more when they're moving, and this is a great way to bond with your kids. It takes a village, a neighborhood, a community to get these kids together."

— Olmsted County





It Takes a Village to Breathe Fresh Air

“It has gone better than expected,” explains Eric Boline, property manager at Villages at Essex Park. The apartment complex celebrated the one-year anniversary since the property went smoke-free in 2012 with the help of the Statewide Health Improvement Program.

There to help celebrate was Kelly Corbin, community health specialist with Olmsted County Public Health and Edward Ehlinger, Minnesota’s Commissioner of Health. Villages decided to go smoke-free after they found that 79 percent of Olmsted residents who live in rentals would prefer to live in a smoke-free building. The policy also fits well with the “Med City” culture—a city dedicated to good health—that now Rochester has one more apartment complex to be excited about.

“We went to the first training in March and we got started right away in July,” Boline shares about attending a SHIP training on how to go smoke-free in apartments. While it is too soon to evaluate the financial changes for Villages, Boline explains that it already smells and feels cleaner around the complex.

Villages is also close to a nearby community garden and underwent large renovations, which include a new swimming pool, fitness center and gathering area for families and friends.

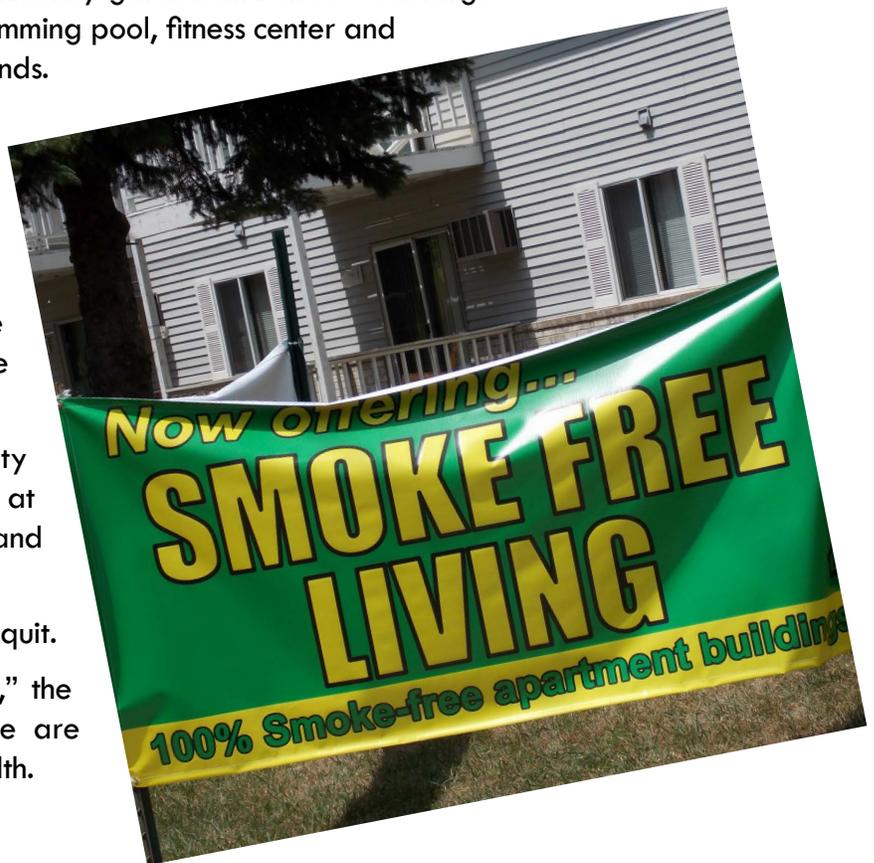
Boline provides some advice for future apartment complexes that plan to go smoke-free. “One of the lessons I learned through this process was to come up with a plan to prepare for any possible scenarios and to make sure the entire staff is on the same page.”

Because of this success, the property management company is looking at other properties around the county and state that can also be smoke-free.

Plus, Boline, once a smoker, has now quit.

All of which means that “Med City,” the residents at Essex Park, and Boline are now about clean air and better health.

— Olmsted County





Achieving Wellness in the Work Place

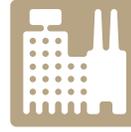
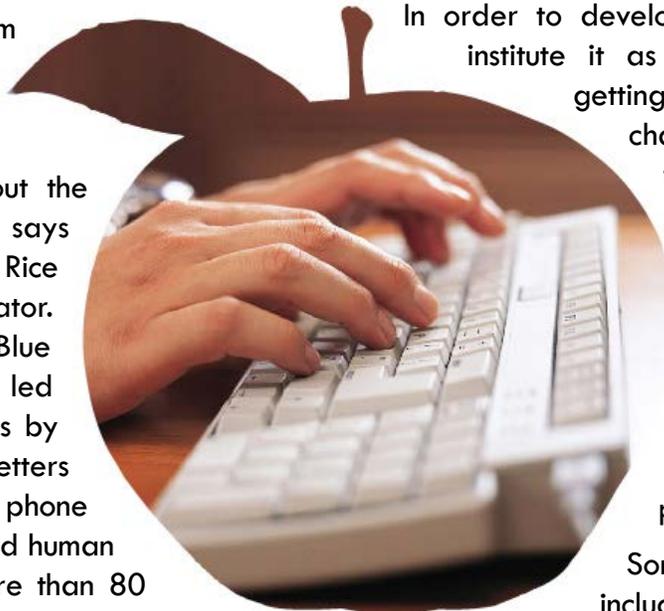
Over 8,000 employees across Rice County are on the move, making better food choices and reducing tobacco use. The secret behind their health kick? Rice County’s Statewide Health Improvement Program worksite project, Healthy Rice County: Achieving Wellness in the Workplace.

The program has thus far helped more than 20 worksites in Faribault, Northfield and surrounding areas to learn about ways to offer healthier foods and encourage employees to increase activity and reduce tobacco use.

“Interest in the program began when Rice County Public Health sent a press release to media outlets about the new SHIP initiative,” says Natalie Ginter, then the Rice County SHIP coordinator. “Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota led the recruitment process by mailing invitation letters and making follow-up phone calls to top leaders and human resources staff of more than 80 Rice County organizations.”

One example which shows this works is State Bank of Faribault, which has seen a rapid culture shift following its wellness initiatives. It offered employees an incentive of reduced health care premiums for taking certain steps to improve their health. Nearly all employees became engaged.

— Rice County



Wellness: Customized to Fit

Dawn Rainey, human resources manager, has been with Custom Alarm for thirty-four years. When she brought a wellness program to management, “I didn’t have to work hard to get a jump start to kick off our program,” she explains.

Custom Alarm was no stranger to wellness and had already gone smoke-free two years prior with the help of SHIP. With further support and planning, Rainey figured she could add more options at work to ensure employees were getting more physical activity and healthier food.

In order to develop worksite wellness and institute it as a sustainable program, getting participation and changing the way people thought about wellness was key.

“One of our best practices that worked really well for us was creating policies that ensured the sustainability of the program,” explains Rainey.

Some of the new strategies include, going tobacco-free, providing cessation materials, offering yoga classes and holding smoothie days.

When looking to add worksite wellness or enhance an existing program, Rainey shares, “The more people championing wellness throughout the company the more buy-in you will receive from decision-makers.”

— Olmsted County



Growing Healthy and Strong Byron Bears

At Byron Elementary School in Olmsted County, healthy eating and a sense of community are rising growing because of their Healthy Snack Carts. Over 500 Byron Bears enjoy a piece of fruit or a low-calorie snack in the mid-morning or afternoon so they can stay focused and learn better.

In 2012, Abe Rodemeyer, principal for Byron Elementary, sent a letter reaching out to parents to introduce the Healthy Snack Program. Parents were encouraged to sign their child up for a daily snack or send a nutritious snack from home.

During the first quarter, student nutrition staff used parent and staff feedback to adjust the variety of snacks so that they were nutritious and appealing to both students and parents.

Byron nutrition staff found great snack cart choices that are hit among students. Each day the cart offers a fruit and a second option that focuses on a dairy or whole grain item that fits the guidelines.

One Byron teacher exclaims, “I think the snack cart is wonderful! The students seem to enjoy the options and it’s nice to have more than one option.”

Since its implementation, a whopping 80 percent of students have opted to receive a healthy snack every day.

— Olmsted County





SHIP

Creating a better state of health.