



Winter 2011

Volume 2, Issue 3

Annual Appeal - We Need Your Support

Gratitude

The North Country Healthy Heart Network would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for the wonderful care and services *you* provide to our community. We know it takes great resolve to create and sustain healthy environments in our homes, workplaces and communities. Each of you play a key role whether it is providing guidance and knowledge in healthcare, state, local or organizational governance, advocacy, garden and trail development, and/or supporting efforts through encouragement, volunteerism and personal donations.



Facilitating Change - Heart Network staff train Complete Streets advocates in Malone

Heart Network Role

The Heart Network shares your commitment to develop healthier North Country communities and residents. Our upmost concern is addressing the health disparities reflected in our rural populace. The Heart Network's dedicated staff members are catalysts for change whether through: Creating Health Places; the North Country Tobacco Cessation Center; or, Rural Action Now! Each program strives to make positive, sustainable changes that are articulated in policy, integrated in daily practice, and featured in the built environment. Obviously, we cannot do this on our own; it requires commitment, cooperation and partnership with others. It also requires resources; resources which we are at risk of losing.

Your Support is Needed

As you reflect on the value our organization has to you, your agency and community, we hope you will be moved to make a donation to the Heart Network. Your investment is a crucial element in ensuring our viability today and in the future. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience or donate online at: www.heartnetwork.org

We thank you for your anticipated support; your act of generosity will make a difference in keeping our communities healthy and strong.

With kind regards,

Margot Gold

Executive Director, North Country Healthy Heart Network



Leading by example - Heart Network staff and Essex County Complete Streets Coalition members build a new community-based trail in Elizabethtown



The Heart Network offices are located at 126 Kiwassa Road in Saranac Lake.

Upcoming events

January 11th. *Tobacco Use and Heart Disease.* CME credit opportunity. Register at nysmokefree.com/ConfCalls

March 19th - Dig In! Food & Garden Conference. More info at gethealthyslc.org

Heart Network Board of Directors

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SPOTLIGHT



Policy and Public Health



Community members discuss policies to promote active living at an open house in Elizabethton.

Policies are the blueprint for sustainable change. Policy is any definitive, written agreement on how an organization, governing body or community will address problems or achieve shared goals. Policies can impact all members of a population and are increasingly used as a tool for positive community change. Policies can be developed and adopted at different levels of government, by schools, employers, and even households to encourage physical activity, healthy eating, and restricting tobacco use.

Policy change leads to social norm change. When a policy is developed and regularly implemented, it becomes common practice. Eventually it becomes public opinion and widely accepted as “normal” behavior. For example, remember when people smoked in restaurants? Or when children were not required to wear seat belts?

The choices we make are determined by the choices we have. While we are responsible for our behaviors, the social and physical environment in which we live will either support or impede personal efforts to improve our health. Policies that promote and support health in the places where we live, learn, work, play, and pray are critical to our success.

We can take action to develop policies that promote health. Concerned citizens, public health advocates and community leaders in the North Country have a number of proven policy and environmental change strategies at their disposal to help people become more physically active, eat healthier, and stop smoking and other tobacco use. Successfully implementing these changes in our communities could provide tremendous benefit both in improving the health of residents and reducing health care costs associated with chronic disease.

Local policy changes often have the most direct impact on a community. Local government, school, and worksite policies guide decision-making and lead to changes that make healthy choices easier for everyone. These can include local laws, ordinances, land use codes, or comprehensive plans adopted by local governments. Wellness policies adopted by schools and worksites can support physical activity and healthy eating, and restrict tobacco use.

Federal and state policy is important too. Federal and state laws, regulations, and budgets affect us all. Advocates must continuously monitor how decisions made by policymakers in Washington and Albany will impact our local efforts to improve community health. For example, the next update of the federal transportation bill will determine whether or not “Safe Routes to School” funding will be available to local communities – money that helps create safer routes for children to walk and bike to school.

Policies need champions. Anyone can get involved in policy change; all it takes are people ready and willing to advocate for policies that best address an issue of concern. Policy change is most successful when advocates and policymakers work together to clearly identify the problem, develop policy solutions and monitor implementation.

The remainder of this newsletter provides examples of policies that are either in place, in development or worthy of consideration for local government, business, school or family adoption.

Stay tuned for our next newsletter, which will be devoted to state and federal policies and their impact on public health in rural communities.

“Policies can be developed and adopted at different levels of government, by schools, employers, and even households to encourage physical activity, healthy eating, and restricting tobacco use.”



These health care organizations implemented tobacco free grounds policies in 2007. Since 2010 all hospitals in our region are tobacco free inside and outside.

NORTH COUNTRY TOBACCO CESSATION CENTER

Tobacco Use Prevention Policies

The Problem: Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. Tobacco smoke not only harms the smoker but also nonsmokers exposed to the carcinogens and toxic chemicals in second and third hand smoke. NYS medical costs associated with tobacco caused diseases is extremely high, \$8.17 billion/year. These costs are shared by smokers and nonsmokers alike. **Did you know, in 2009 NY households paid \$889 in taxes to cover smoking-caused medical expenditures?**

Policy development, implementation and enforcement are a significant tool to protect the health of all members of the community and to reduce medical costs and related taxes.

State Policies: New York State is recognized nationally as a leader in enacting legislation to protect its citizens from secondhand smoke exposure. Best known among these are:

- *NYS's Comprehensive Clean Indoor Air Act, enacted in March 2003, prohibits smoking in all workplaces, including restaurants and bars.*
- *NYS excise tax increases on tobacco, \$4.35/cigarette pack - as of July 2010.*

A 10% increase in cigarette price causes a 3% to 5% decrease in sales.
Surgeon General Report 2000



Community: There is no statewide ban on smoking outdoors; however, over 300 communities in NYS (17 in the North Country) have developed **tobacco use policies or ordinances protecting children and adults from secondhand smoke in public parks, beaches and playgrounds.** These policies not only protect children from tobacco smoke but eliminate their temptation to pick up and eat toxic cigarette butts. Tobacco free grounds policies also reduce litter and related clean-up costs and protect wildlife and waterways.

Combining the benefits of municipal and worksite policies, Essex County has restricted tobacco use on County properties.

Worksites: Businesses can take measures to improve the health of their employees. By doing so, they increase productivity, reduce health care costs and increase the bottom line. Policies can be adopted to protect staff from second hand smoke exposure and support employee efforts to stop smoking. To support tobacco cessation, employee health benefits can include coverage of FDA **medications to stop smoking and smoking cessation counseling.** Since smokers often require numerous quit attempts before they are successful, health benefits should cover more than one quit attempt per year.

Health Care: Effective tobacco treatment does exist and most smokers want to stop. Organizations can adopt a **standard of care** to treat tobacco use and/or include it as a **quality measure.** Inclusion of prompts in the paper or electronic health record to remind providers to deliver and document tobacco treatment is essential for success. Monitoring provider treatment of tobacco use with a report back on his/her progress is effective in increasing care. **Did you know that Hudson Headwaters Health Network has embraced tobacco treatment as a quality measure and is monitoring provider treatment through electronic health records?**

Home Rule: To protect their children, adults and pets from secondhand smoke, many families have adopted **rules that do not allow smoking in their home or vehicle.** Parents also extend their influence by choosing a daycare provider that does not use tobacco nor allows smoking in the home or property. *If you would like a no smoking sticker for your home or car – call us.* Some parents concerned about the causal relationship between on-screen smoking and youth tobacco use have established **rules against watching PG or PG13 movies that include smoking.**

TAKE ACTION!

Communities: Does your community have a policy restricting tobacco use in public spaces? If not, do you want to do something about it? If so, contact: Adirondack Tobacco Free Network, (518) 565-4993.

Home Rule: More information on the tobacco free movie initiative is available from our area's Reality Check program: <http://www.wewontbebought.com/>.

NUTRITION

Policies to Promote Healthy Eating

The Problem: 6 of the top 10 causes of death in the US are linked to a poor diet. Eating healthy is not just about making healthy choices. It is also about having access to nutritious, affordable foods. Policies in the community, at worksites, schools, daycares and in the home can help us eat more healthy foods.

Community: Eating more fresh fruits and vegetables can help prevent many chronic diseases and is important to maintaining a healthy weight. Many North Country residents find it difficult to purchase vegetables and fruits. However, there are ways to improve access to vegetables and fruits at the community level through policies. **Land Use Codes or Zoning Regulations** can allow for and encourage use of public lands for community gardening. Local **park use permits** can allow and even incentivize use of public parks for farmers markets and market managers can ensure that SNAP benefits can be used at the market.



Saturday Farmers Market in Saranac Lake



Worksite: Many of us spend a significant portion of our day at work. The work environment and culture supported through worksite policies can be a strong catalyst for healthy eating. There is strong evidence that improving worksite food options in **vending machines and cafeterias** can improve the diets of employees. These changes can be initiated and sustained through healthy food procurement policies and healthy vending contracts. Offering healthy choices at meetings and other events can make it easier for people to eat healthy foods. This can be done with **Healthy Meeting Guidelines**. **Benefits** offered by employers are another way to promote health. The Heart Network covers 2/3 of the cost of a CSA farm share for employees to ensure they have access to farm fresh vegetables for 21 weeks at a reduced cost.

School and Daycare: Each school district has a **School Wellness Policy** that outlines how healthy eating is encouraged during the school day. School Wellness Policies can also include guidelines for celebrations, vending machines, cafeteria foods, and concessions. Daycares and preschools can also have policies that address nutrition standards for young children. Many daycare providers are now including nutrition policies as part of their **rules & regs or contracts** with parents. The policies include things like how often fruits and vegetables are served or when sweets can be served.



Taste testing healthy foods for the school lunch menu

RESOURCES:

For Communities:

www.nplanonline.org

Find model ordinances and fact sheets.

For Worksites:

<http://bit.ly/vvT4yj>

See information on how to create guidelines for healthy meetings.

Home Rule: Research shows that families who eat meals together and families that do not allow eating meals in front of the television **eat more fruits and vegetables**. Most families have some type of food policy in the home although they are most likely not written policies. Examples of some home rules include what types of snacks children are allowed; how often the grocery shopping is done & what foods are purchased; limits on the amount of less healthy snacks in the house; or how meals are prepared. All of these rules influence our daily food decisions which in turn affects our overall health.

Try 1 new recipe each month!

www.jsyfruitveggies.org/

<http://www.myrecipes.com/vegetable-recipes/>

<http://simplyrecipes.com/recipes/vegetable/>

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Policies to Promote Physical Activity

The Problem: Lack of physical activity is one of the most important risk factors for many chronic diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and some cancers. More than half of Americans live with one or more of these diseases. Lack of physical activity, along with poor nutrition, is a major contributor to the growing epidemic of obesity in the United States.

Community: Across the country communities are using local policy change to create environments that encourage residents of all ages and abilities to be physically active. Local government and highway departments can adopt *Complete Streets policies*, which provide clear direction for routinely making local roads safer and more accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and drivers. *Land use codes and plans* can be used to ensure that new development is bike and pedestrian-friendly.



Main Street Lake Placid



Employees walking during a lunch break

Worksite: Our workplaces are increasingly automated and many jobs require workers to spend much of their day behind their desk. Lack of time and easy access to places to be active during the workday can be major barriers to physical activity. Worksite policies can support more active lifestyles for all employees. For example, employers can provide *benefit packages* that include gym memberships or *lower insurance premiums/rebates* for workers who document regular physical activity. Employers can provide “*flex time*” to allow physical activity before or during the workday so employees can walk during lunch break or bike to work. The Heart Network has a policy that allows employees to convert 2 hours of sick time per month to “*physical activity time.*”

School and Daycare: Children and young adults spend much of their day at school or daycare. Policies can help ensure that age appropriate physical activity is offered each day. *Daycare Policies* can address the types of play equipment available, how often kids play outside or how often teacher-led physical activity is provided. Each school district has a *School Wellness Policy* which can encourage physical activity *curriculum* in health education classes, opportunities for incorporating physical activity into other school activities, or physical activity breaks during or between classes. Schools can also adopt policies that ensure every student has access to *PE classes and recess* during the school day, as well as access to *extracurricular activities* that include physical activity.



After school activities at Moriah Central School



Biking at home

Home Rule: Researchers widely agree that children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Joining your child in active play allows you to reach your recommended 30 minutes per day of physical activity. Families can follow informal (unwritten) policies in the home that help everyone *stay active*. Examples of some home “policies” can include limiting screen time and purchasing toys that encourage children to engage in active play (hula hoops, jump ropes, bicycles and tricycles, or snow sleds).

RESOURCES:

For Communities:

www.nplanonline.org Find model ordinances and fact sheets.

www.completestreets.org Find more information about complete streets.



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North Country HEALTHY HEART NETWORK, INC.



Heart Network Staff

Facilitating Community Change to Prevent Heart Disease Since 2000

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The Takeaway

- This issue is devoted to **Policies and how they can improve public health**. Inside you'll find information on the types of policies which can be used in your community, in your work place, and even in your own home to reduce tobacco use, promote healthy eating, and increase physical activity.
- **Annual Appeal**. On the first page, you'll find a request for financial support. We need **your** help so that **we** can continue working together to improve the health of our communities and residents. Any amount is greatly appreciated and donations are tax deductible. An envelope is provided for your convenience or you can donate online at: www.heartnetwork.org

If you have any questions/comments please feel free to contact us at (518)891-5855

www.heartnetwork.org

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