

## **SHIP Active Living Intervention**

**Progress report: July 2010 – January 2011**

*Prepared for CJRR as part of their SHIP evaluation*

Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood and Renville (CJRR) counties are working with communities in their service area on the SHIP Active Living Initiative. This initiative focuses on implementing policies and practices to create active communities by increasing opportunities for non-motorized transportation (walking and biking) and access to community recreation facilities. The project is part of a larger effort by CJRR, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of progress from July 2010 through December 2010. It was prepared by Wilder Research. CJRR SHIP compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research.

### **Reach**

Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood, and Renville Counties have a population of approximately 53,084 combined. CJRR SHIP is working on active living initiatives within the cities of Redwood Falls, Jackson, Windom, and Lakefield. The population of Redwood Falls is 5,459, the population of Jackson is 3,501, the population of Windom is 4,136, and the population of Lakefield is 1,623. In total, these cities have a population of 14,719, which is 28 percent of the total population of the four counties.

### **Activities**

From July through December 2010, SHIP staff worked within each city to complete a comprehensive evaluation of support for the implementation of active living policies and practices. SHIP staff are currently working with each city on implementing their individualized action plans. Various community stakeholders have also been engaged through this initiative, including school principals and superintendents, city police departments, city employees, local newspapers and radio stations, trails groups, area hospitals, MN DOT, boy scouts, and the League of Women Voters. They have provided strong support for the intervention, and have assisted with information and promotion of activities.

Within the city of Redwood Falls, several community activities have been completed as part of the Active Living Initiative. These include: Bike lane painting on Meadow Lane

- Reviewing comprehensive plans for the City of Redwood Falls and Redwood County along with the Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Working with Redwood Area School students to document barriers and supports of physical activity in the community
- Collaborating with Redwood Area Hospital to promote the benefits of walking and biking at the Bike Rodeo that was held in Redwood Falls
- Working with Elementary and Middle School principals to organize school assemblies for police officer and Active Living Coalition member Dana Woodford to talk about bike and pedestrian safety prior to the Walk and Bike to School Day
- Holding a Walk and Bike to School Day
- Holding a Safe Routes/School Travel Plan Workshop to help schools identify priorities and next steps to support safe and accessible walking and biking opportunities in school zones, as well as actions for schools to incorporate Safe Routes to School into their school travel plans

CJRR SHIP staff have also completed a Walkability/Bikeability Assessment, a Safe Routes to School Assessment (National SRTS Parent Survey and student tally), and a Walk and Bike to School Day Assessment within Redwood Falls. Each of these assessments has assisted the community in identifying priorities.

Within the City of Jackson, various community activities have also been completed. They include:

- Discussing the ADA Assessment of curbs and crosswalks for Jackson with MNDOT
- Reviewing comprehensive plans for the City of Jackson and Jackson County along with the Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Working with the U of MN Extension – USDA Community Vitality on digital mapping for active living opportunities and routes in Jackson
- Painting street crosswalks in a key school zone on North Highway
- Collaborating with the Jackson Police Department on a bicycle safety training day at Riverside Elementary, and incorporating bicycle safety into the school curriculum
- Working with Jackson County Central Schools and Windom Area Schools on photo voice projects in order to document barriers and supports of physical activity in the community

- Holding a Safe Routes/School Travel Plan Workshop to help schools identify priorities and next steps to support safe and accessible walking and biking opportunities in school zones, as well as actions for schools to incorporate Safe Routes to School into their school travel plans

CJRR SHIP staff have completed a Walkability/Bikeability Assessment, a Safe Routes to School Assessment (National SRTS Parent Survey and student tally), a League of American Bicyclists-Bicycle Friendly Communities Assessment and Application, and the Safe Routes to School Travel Planning session.

### **Policy, systems, and environments**

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice and to ensure sustainability beyond the end of any one particular program or funding stream. In the case of the Active Living Intervention, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments to create opportunities for non-motorized transportation and access to community recreation facilities.

Efforts to create active living policies are well underway, and action plans for both cities have already been completed. Comprehensive plans for the City of Redwood Falls and Redwood County have been reviewed, and an Active Living Engagement Kick-off with the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield has identified areas where the City of Jackson can move forward. Other existing community documents have been reviewed within each of the cities: the City of Jackson has examined County and Regional Trail Plans in order to develop a master plan for future Jackson County and regional trails, and the City of Redwood Falls has reviewed their DNR – Legacy Grant for use of funding. All of these activities support SHIP Active Living efforts.

### **Impact**

According to the 2010 Southwest/South Central Adult Health Survey, all four counties have a slightly higher percentage of adults who consider themselves to be overweight (46.5% in CJRR counties versus 44.1% for all of Minnesota). Twenty-two percent of adults in the four counties did not engage in any form of physical activity outside of their job in the last 30 days. National surveys show more than one in four American adults get no activity at all in an average day, and nearly two-thirds of adolescents do not meet the Surgeon General's recommendations for daily physical activity. One-third of American children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Residents of lower-income communities have less access to places where they can be physically active, such as sports facilities, parks, green spaces, bike paths and lanes, walking trails and pools. Communities that build bicycling and walking trails, support exercise programs, and provide public areas for exercise, such as parks and sidewalks, can boost the physical

activity of its citizens. This data shows a need to pursue this intervention and continue work presently being considered in this area.

The impact of the Active Living Initiative is already apparent, as there is increased support for creating active communities among stakeholders, which is a key short-term outcome. In the long run, these efforts will provide increased access to physical activity opportunities among residents of Redwood Falls, Jackson, Windom, and Lakefield, as well as throughout the four counties. This will ultimately result in a decreased incidence of obesity and associated chronic disease among CJRR residents.



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