

FALL.2005

NEW SAFE ROUTES FOR KIDS
PROJECT

ACTIVE AGING NETWORK
FORMS

CA WALK, BIKE CONFERENCE

STUDENT WELLNESS GUIDE
AVAILABLE

PARTNER UPDATES

WHAT'S NEW:
CENTER WALK KIT

**Gear-up for Walk to School
events in October. Visit
www.cawalktoschool.com**



CENTER LAUNCHES NEW SAFE ROUTES FOR KIDS PROJECT

This summer the California Center for Physical Activity launched a *Safe Routes for Kids* project that trains communities on addressing walkability on behalf of children and youth. The goal of the project is to make it easier and safer for children and youth to walk or bike to school, community centers, libraries, parks and businesses.

The first phase of this project, which was launched in June through a partnership with the Elk Grove Unified School District, emphasized safe routes to school. The Elk Grove school district was facing major cuts to its bus service due to budget constraints. The Center and school district staff viewed this as an opportunity to promote walking and biking and to assess the safety and walkability of routes to Elk Grove schools.

Between 1977 and 1995, there was a 40% decline in active travel—trips made by walking or biking—among children between the ages of 5-15, according to the Federal Highway Administration. Distance is often noted as a barrier to walking or biking to school. However, of all school trips of one mile or less, only one-third are made by walking, according to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education.

For children who live close to school, walking or biking to school presents a good opportunity to increase physical activity. The Center's *Safe Routes for Kids* trainings aim to improve community safety and walkability through education of children and drivers; enforcement of traffic laws, and; engineering of the street environment in an attempt to control traffic and enhance pedestrian safety.

Thirty-nine people participated in the Elk Grove workshop. Pre- and post-training surveys were developed to assess participants' perceived readiness to undertake activities that would promote safe routes to school. Two trainers experienced in conducting safe routes to school programs—Wendi Kallins and David Parisi—were contracted to lead the workshop. Formative data obtained from an on-line survey of public health professionals, physical activity advocates and school district personnel, as well as feedback collected during a meeting with school administrators, were used to inform workshop planning. An external evaluator designed the instruments and analyzed survey results.

Statewide Active Aging Network Forming

This fall, the California Center for Physical Activity will convene the *California Active Aging Network* to serve as a leader for the state addressing healthy aging issues.

The *California Active Aging Network* is an outgrowth of the Center's 28 Active Aging Community Task Forces, which have operated over the past five years in counties throughout the state. The mission of the task forces is to increase the number of Californians over 50 who engaged in strength-training, balance and mobility exercises that are geared toward enhancing functional fitness and reducing the risk of chronic disease and falling in older adults.

Lead staff from county public health departments and Area Agencies on Aging as well as senior strength-training, balance and mobility instructors attended the annual meeting of the Active Aging Community Task Forces this summer. Task force staff shared testimonials, challenges and lessons learned from their local task force efforts over the past five years. They also heard from national and state experts on the latest evidence-based recommendations for communities on physical activity for older adults, community walkability, and California's State Aging Plan.

To learn more about the Active Aging Community Task Forces, or the *California Active Aging Network*, contact Lisa Cirill at lcirill@dhs.ca.gov.

Walk, Bike Conference Set For Ventura this Fall

Walk and Roll California 2005, the second biennial conference in California devoted to walking and biking, will be held September 14-16, 2005 in Ventura. The conference will feature informational sessions, workshops and mobile tours on topics that are applicable to:

- Bicycle and pedestrian coordinators and advocates
- Elected officials
- Health professionals
- Architects and landscape architects
- Transportation engineers and planners

Whether your interest is engineering or planning, public health, research, livable communities, safety, law, transportation reform, or marketing walking or bicycling, *Walk and Roll California 2005* provides an opportunity to share your work, network with colleagues, and meet those who are funding and creating an exciting movement that is changing the way Californians live.

For more workshop details, visit www.walkbikecalifornia.org.

Pilot Project Focuses on Public Health and the Built Environment

The California Center for Physical Activity and the State and Local Injury Control section of the California Department of Health Services are gearing up for another year of working with counties throughout the state to encourage local public health departments to participate in land use and transportation decisions.

A primary objective of the *Local Public Health and the Built Environment* pilot project is to increase local public health department staff knowledge of the built environment's impact on community health.

The built environment is often described as every human-formed, developed or structured area we encounter in our communities. The obesity and diabetes epidemics have been fueled by 50 years of auto-oriented design that has left California with substandard bikeways and sidewalks and with neighborhoods disconnected from parks, schools, retail and transit. The end result is that even if people wanted to, it is often unsafe and impractical for residents to walk or bike in their communities.

The *Local Public Health and the Built Environment* pilot project awarded eight mini-grants of about \$5,000 to counties that displayed initial efforts and enthusiasm in changing infrastructure. Tina Zenzola of Safe and Healthy Communities Consulting provided trainings to grantees and participated in teleconferences that addressed the health impacts of community design.

Grantees focused their projects on coordinating trainings for local stakeholders on the built environment's link to public health; developing and adopting a strategic plan; and conducting walk audits.

For more information, contact Jeffery Rosenhall at jrosenha@dhs.ca.gov.

August Issue of Pediatrics Includes First-Year Results of VERB Campaign

Year-one results of the CDC's VERB campaign have been published in the August issue of Pediatrics. Evaluation results show that after one year of the campaign, 74% of children surveyed were aware of the VERB campaign and levels of reported sessions of free-time physical activity increased for subgroups of children 9 to 13 years of age. The VERB campaign is a multi-ethnic campaign that combines paid advertisements with school and community promotions and Internet activities to encourage children 9 to 13 years of age to be physically active every day. For the full article visit <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/116/2/e277>.

Student Wellness Guide Available

California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity & Nutrition) and the California School Boards Association have updated, expanded and re-titled a policy resource guide on student health and nutrition in order to help school districts develop "student wellness" policies to promote academic achievement and meet the requirements of the Federal Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children Reauthorization Act.

Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide includes updated statistics, assists in the development of physical activity policies and discusses school-based commercial activities related to food and beverages. The guide is available for \$20 plus tax and shipping. To order, call Pat Mortensen at (800) 266-3382 or visit www.csba.org/ps/hf.htm.



DECLINE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAYS KEY ROLE IN WEIGHT GAIN AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Girls who were inactive during adolescence gained an average of 10 to 15 pounds more than active girls, according to results of a 10-year observational study of obesity. Total calorie intake increased only slightly and was not associated with the weight gains. These new results show that a previously reported steep decline in physical activity among adolescent girls is directly associated with increased fatness and an increase of body mass index (BMI), a measure of body weight adjusted for height.

The results of the Health and Growth Study, funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, were published in an online edition of the "Lancet" on July, 13, 2005, and in the July 23, 2005, print edition.

Study investigators previously found that girls' leisure-time physical activity declined between the ages of 9 and 19 by an average of 7.5 brisk, 30-minute walks per week among all girls in the study.

At ages nine and ten, there were only small differences in BMI—about 4 to 5 pounds—between girls who were evaluated as "active" (doing the equivalent of 5 or more brisk 30-minute walks per week) and those who were "inactive" (doing the equivalent of 2.5 or less brisk 30-minute walks per week). However, in the subsequent nine years of follow-up, the differences widened, so that inactive girls had three times greater gains in BMI and were approximately 10 to 15 pounds heavier in the tenth year of the study.

"These results show that many girls are at a literal standstill when it comes to exercise and physical activity in their pre-teen and teen years. As parents, educators, and health care providers, we can do a lot to encourage girls to continue physical activity throughout their adolescence, a step that has been shown to help them maintain a healthy weight," said NHLBI Director Elizabeth G. Nabel, M.D.

"While 2.5 or more brisk walks per week is considered a modest level of activity, increasing exercise by that small amount could potentially prevent weight gain and serve as a goal for public health programs and schools," said Eva Obarzanek, Ph.D. NHLBI research nutritionist. "Just preventing the decline in physical activity that currently occurs among adolescent girls may be enough to prevent obesity."

The NHLBI has recently launched We Can! – Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition – a childhood obesity prevention program designed to encourage parents and children to adopt healthy eating habits, increase physical activity, and reduce leisure "screen time." More than 35 communities across the country are integrating We Can! lessons into health programming for parents and kids. For more information, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

