



## Your Community

OUR NATION'S HEALTH IS IN POOR SHAPE. Strong, healthy communities are dependent on strong public health systems across America, and that begins with YOUR community. National Public Health Week (NPHW) 2010 continues our campaign to create the healthiest nation in one generation, with a special focus on public health's critical role in making America healthier, one community at a time.

Communities are not just residents who live together in the same neighborhood. Communities are groups of people who work together for a common good. Some communities plant gardens to create food security and recreational opportunities, while others work to ensure their homes are lead-free. Some communities work to ensure members have access to health care services that focus on both treatment and prevention, and others advocate for safe roads and recycling programs.

Everyone in your community, including agencies, community organization partners, emergency services personnel and the general public, has a role to play in improving public health. Using community health improvement planning tools and public health system assessments, work with others to determine what is – or is not – being done well in your community and how things can be improved.

Strong, healthy communities also depend on the health of our families. Public health affects all of our families, across all generations. This includes family planning, prenatal care, childcare classes, access to healthy and nutritious foods, and even at-home care.

### Did You Know?

- Children are more likely to bike or walk to school, which increases their activity levels, in communities that have newly built or improved sidewalks, traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and bicycle paths.<sup>1</sup>
- Simply sending an e-mail can lower smoking rates. College students who receive peer encouragement via e-mail are significantly more likely to stop smoking and smoke less often than those who don't.<sup>2</sup>
- Taking just a moment to receive (or give) a vaccination can be a life-saver. People in retirement communities are 27% less likely to be hospitalized and nearly half as likely to die from flu- or pneumonia-related complications if they receive yearly flu vaccinations.<sup>3</sup>



## Take Action: National Public Health Week Activities

### Start small...

- ✓ Take advantage of your area's walking paths and playgrounds.
- ✓ Post the *A Healthier America* video to your Facebook page, your blog or Twitter account and share your personal health story with your friends.
- ✓ Post a personal "Health Champions" commitment by answering the question: How will you make a difference in your neighborhood or community to move toward creating a healthier America?
- ✓ Write a letter to the editor of your local paper that stresses the importance of public health during NPHW and beyond.

### Think big...

- ✓ Ensure that proper hazardous waste precautions are taken in your community.
- ✓ Fundraise for a free clinic in your community.
- ✓ Work with your local gym to provide reduced-cost or free workout time for lower-income families and individuals.
- ✓ Educate legislators about the value of adding bike lanes around your community as a way to lessen the number of bike-vehicle accidents.
- ✓ Advocate for your state, local, territorial, or tribal health department to participate in the national accreditation program.
- ✓ Use community health improvement tools such as Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) or the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP) to prioritize public health issues and identify resources to address them.
- ✓ Invite local policymakers and other experts to a community roundtable to discuss the role of public health in our nation's health reform discussions.
- ✓ Add your own activities, too!

<sup>1</sup> Boarnet et al. Evaluation of the California Safe Routes to School legislation: urban form changes and children's active transportation to school. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. February 2005; 28 (2 Suppl 2):134-40.

<sup>2</sup> Klatt et al. The Role of Peer E-mail Support As Part of a College Smoking-Cessation Website. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. December 2008; 35(6 Suppl):S471-8.

<sup>3</sup> Nichol et al. Effectiveness of influenza vaccine in the community-dwelling elderly. *New England Journal of Medicine*, October 2007; 357(14):1373-81.