



What Steps Can We Take?

Over the past two years, the Steps staff has been hard at work trying to make Fayette County a healthier place to live, work, & play. This newsletter highlights the steps that our local schools have taken this school year to create healthier students, staff, and communities. Of course, schools cannot bear this responsibility alone. Throughout the same time period, many community partners have asked how can they make a difference with limited budgets, times constraints, and few employees. The answer is simple, take small steps. If we each take a few, eventually we will walk a mile toward a healthier community.

Kelly Loomis, MS, RD, LDN
Project Coordinator

Upcoming Events:

May 27:

Albert Gallatin Regatta
5k – Run and Walk, Point
Marion, PA.

June 2:

Healthy Kids Expo:
Uniontown Mall

June 3:

National Trails Day

June 4:

Downtown Uniontown
Farmer's Market,
Storey Square
5:30 p.m. to 7:30 pm.

June 16:

Family Fun Fest
Fayette County
Fairgrounds
10AM-3PM.

June –July VERB Summer
Scorecard.

July 22:

Ferncliff Hike Ohiopyle
State Park

August 9-12:

Camp Huff N Puff,
Jumonville Conference
and Camp Center.

These are a few Steps you can take to make Fayette County a healthier place:

- Encourage restaurants to display caloric content at point of purchase, label healthy food items, or be smoke-free.
- Eliminate the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth.
- Establish grocery stores with produce and other fresh healthy items in all low income neighborhoods.
- Adopt model worksite properties that include access to healthy food and physical activity and breastfeeding accommodations.
- Adopt standards for the provision of healthy food at all meetings and events.
- Provide incentives to employees who walk, bike, or use public transportation to commute to and from work.
- Ensure that workplace and school vending machine foods are healthy and affordable.
- Utilize planning and zoning processes to promote appropriate design and land uses that support access to healthy foods and encourage walking and bicycling in all neighborhoods.
- Encourage local government leaders to establish smoke-free environments for children including parks and playgrounds
- Ensure that children receive quality physical education that meets minimum standards for duration and frequency.
- Share information about low-cost health insurance programs like the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) with employees, students, clients, patients or even friends.
- Be a role model; as leaders in the community, set the example. Eat right, get fit, and be tobacco free.

Steps is Moving!

Steps to a HealthierPA-Fayette will be moving their offices in June! The new office will be located at 168 South Mt. Vernon Avenue in Uniontown.

Steps to a HealthierPA-Fayette County is a joint effort of the Fayette County Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center (AHEC).

School Wellness Policies: A Year in Review

Benjamin E. Neil, MBA, School Health Coordinator

Although two pages in this newsletter is not enough space to give our area schools the kudos they deserve, this article will hopefully highlight, to some degree, the journey that has been school wellness over the past school year. In an attempt to show creative, and outstanding ideas and follow through I will highlight not only some county wide Steps initiatives that were fortunate enough to have support and participation from our area schools, but this article will also highlight individual efforts per district to bring healthful living and physical activity into the lives of students, their families, teachers, and the surrounding community.

When the Local Wellness Policy mandate was set forth during the last school year and meetings began with local school administrators and groups of required students, community members, school officials, teachers, principals, health care professionals, etc. there was a lot “buzz” concerning yet another “unfunded mandate” set forth for the schools to try and control something that was seemingly uncontrollable. As the meetings continued to create very mild controversy (“what do you mean french fries and soda will be taken away from us?”), Steps to a Healthier Fayette County was fortunate enough to be invited to the meetings, lend a hand and bring to light a multitude of positive information concerning school wellness and the benefits of healthy lifestyles for children who would be better behaved, more emotionally stable and most importantly be taught about how the decisions they make about their health could easily effect the rest of their lives.

Although the path toward school wellness has just begun each school district’s board of directors, administrators, teachers, students and communities have embraced the concept of school health and have made, what seemed a year ago to be impossible, look almost easy. In addition to some county wide efforts that you have seen in these newsletter pages in the past (i.e. The Million Step Challenge) schools have participated in trainings facilitated by Steps on Asthma in Schools, Diabetes in Schools, and The Fayette Fitness Challenge. Steps provided a network of partners that would help to implement what was set forth in their wellness policies for free and creating new and exciting opportunities not only for our districts and Steps but for other community organizations, parent groups and professional organizations. The following paragraphs will depict some, but certainly not all, of the efforts put forth by individual school districts to prove that Steps has helped to cultivate a change in thinking when it comes to the education and health of our Fayette County youth. Here’s the list in alphabetical order:



Albert Gallatin School District

Albert Gallatin School District has one of the most active health and wellness committees in the county. Their meetings have resulted in walking programs for most all of the elementary schools in their district with adaptations even being made in the A.L. Wilson school where stairs were a safety concern. With the utilization of the Leslie Sansone’s Kids Walk video, children walk a mile a day next to their desks working towards reaching their goal of 180 miles in 180 days. In addition, several parent education/outreach programs have been performed and as a result Smithfield Elementary sponsored an after school yoga program for teachers, students and community members. AG recently held their 2nd Annual AG School Health fair with a little over 350 people in attendance. Their middle and Sr. High schools have adopted physical activity clubs and have great participation from the students. Like the rest of the county districts AG has abolished the sale of soda during the school day and has greatly improved the quality of the school food service program by entering into a contract with fellow Steps partner Nutrition Inc. Veronica Murray, a kindergarten teacher with the district adds, “The knowledge and support extended to the district by Steps to a Healthier Fayette has enabled our Health and Wellness committee to create a district policy that adheres to all aspects of the law and has helped to train and educate our staff extensively in order that all staff and students become “leaders” and advocates for nutrition and activity.”

Brownsville Area School District

Besides their participation in the Steps to a Healthier Fayette Million Step Challenge in September, Brownsville Area has participated in Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) Great PA Apple Crunch, Go for the Greens and Turn off the TV week. They have taken extra Steps to educate Title 1 parents through two workshops in the last year. The first dealing with nutrition and the second with physical activity were the most successful Title 1 workshops to date with 36 people attending the first and close to 60 attending the second. Cardale Elementary schools, through a grant from the Fayette Enterprise Community (FEC) at Fay Penn recently held a health fair for their students and purchased Dance Dance Revolution video games for all of the homerooms located in the school. Recess Racks with extra recess equipment were also purchased in order to make an en-

vironmental change that not only has an immediately positive effect on the students now but one that is sustainable and will help students be healthier for years to come. In addition, staff at all the schools are applying for grant funding to assist in a proposed track and field day and built environment changes for the high school/middle school that would include a Dance Dance Revolution system and a climbing wall. With the utilization of a partnership through Adagio Health Inc.'s Power Up Program each elementary school also receives monthly, theme based nutrition education.

Connellsville School District

Connellsville Area School District started the year off with a fall Family Fitness Night at one of their home football games that included prizes and a mini-health fair under the bleachers to educate citizens on school health efforts and local referral sources for better living. PANA events were a staple throughout this last year with highlights being Go for the Greens, Turn off the TV Week and the Great PA Apple Crunch. Also in the fall, Becky McGluckey, former principal at Zachariah Connell Elementary and her guidance counselor Torrie Winseck proposed an idea for an after school yoga program. Steps called in Highlands Hospital and the 6 week long program was attended with averages of over thirty students and teachers at each session. The partnership was delightful and the outcomes far exceeded anyone's expectations. The Connellsville Health Fair will be planned again for next year as well as some possible fundraising efforts involving physical activity.

Frazier School District

According to Don Martin, High School Principal at Frazier, "It is an exciting time in the district." Frazier has a plan in place to have their newly converted "wellness center" up and running by the beginning of next school year with the possibility of purchasing additional fitness equipment depending on their budget. In addition, middle school students have been given an increase in physical education time that goes well with the healthy options offered each day in the cafeteria. "Suzanne Boni, our cafeteria director, has done a magnificent job in providing a healthy menu to our students each day", Martin said. Intramurals are now a regular occurrence at the high school and activity periods offer students the option of participating in even more physical activity such as the walking club or bowling.

Laurel Highlands

Laurel Highlands School District partnered with Steps in the fall to offer KidShape, a family based weight management program, at Clark Elementary School. Other elementary schools in the district have started walking programs and morning physical activity time utilizing the classic "Chicken Fat" song over the PA system. As school health liaison, Jack Beuhner has convinced the coaching staff at LH to offer after school conditioning not only to the district's athletes but to anyone who would like to participate. The district has an active team in the first annual Fayette Fitness Challenge and was host to weekly after school exercise program for teachers and community members throughout the district. Several elementary schools utilize the "Take 10" physical activity curriculum while the high school utilizes Polar Heart Rate monitors in their PE classes that were acquired through a partnership with Steps to A Healthier Fayette County

Uniontown Area School District

Lisa Kerr, school health liaison and 9th grade health teacher, has helped to secure the future of health and wellness within the Uniontown district. Lisa has organized not only the district wide wellness committee but has also helped to establish a committee for the high school which among other things has helped to assist in a complete revision of the PE curriculum for upcoming school year. The curriculum will include elective classes centered on life long physical activities as well as an entire class on cardiovascular health. Ben Franklin School hosts a walking program for its 7th and 8th grade and LaFayette School hosted a health fair in the fall. Adagio Health and the Power Up Program educates a portion of the districts elementary students and Nutrition Inc provides delicious and health options for their main menu and a la carte items. Uniontown also hosted an after school aerobics program in partnership with Steps and the Uniontown Area YMCA and educated parent organizations on the implementation of the local wellness policies.



Fayette County Area Vocational Technical School

When Ed Jeffreys, Director of the Fayette County Vo-Tech approached Steps with a concern regarding physical activity at his facility, Steps had just the answer. Through a unique partnership, Steps provided the Fayette Vo-Tech with a Dance Dance Revolution video game system. "The system is great. Since it's implementation there have been fewer discipline problems during our lunch period, mental acuity and memorization among the students has increased and the fact that the kids who are in less active shops are getting extra exercise is a great benefit to the school," Jeffreys said. The system is used during lunch periods as well as activity periods throughout the week and has proven to be a very unique partnership in a mostly not traditional education setting.

Steps would like to take this opportunity to thank all the schools in the county for their efforts dedicated towards school wellness. It has been a great experience throughout this past school year to count loads of successes on an endeavor that less than 365 days ago felt impossible. Thanks again Fayette County and keep up the great work.

VERB: It's What You Do

This summer, the Fayette County Healthy Lifestyles Taskforce, in conjunction with Steps to a Healthier Fayette County has a game plan to keep youth moving and away from the TV. The VERB Summer Scorecard Program aims to create and promote physical activity throughout the summer for youth ages 9 to 13. VERB targets "tweens" to stay active between school sessions.

To be eligible for rewards, kids must obtain a scorecard and track the number of hours they spend on physical activities. The taskforce is promoting opportunities for kids to be active at events throughout the summer, such as Ohiopyle Hikes, the Human Service Council Family Fun Fest, the Uniontown Library Summer Program and the Fayette County Fair. The scorecard also promotes the use of the hundreds of locations for outdoor recreation that are throughout the county. Local businesses are also supporting the program by offering incentives or discounts. These businesses include:

- Laurel Caverns Geological Park
- Green Garden Miniature Golf
- Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resort
- Uniontown YMCA

According to Betty Zackal, Taskforce Chairperson, "The VERB scorecard calendar will benefit our community by increasing awareness to the residents of our county to address physical activity over the summer months to keep students active, to involve families and to make use of our county's natural resources and businesses that incorporate "action" --fun and play." More hours of activity means more chances to win raffle prizes through the scorecard program; but, the emphasis is on persuading kids to keep fit. The final event will be the VERB Finale celebration at the Fayette County Fair., on July 28.

For more information or to participate in this initiative contact the Steps Program at 724-439-1484 or info@stepstohealthierfayettecounty.org.

Scorecards will be distributed at events throughout the county and can be downloaded from the Steps website under the School News Section:
www.stepstohealthierfayettecounty.org.

Young Lungs at Play: Tobacco Free Zones in Local Parks & Playgrounds

Steps to a HealthierPA—Fayette County announces a new initiative, *Young Lungs at Play*, developed to make parks and playgrounds in Fayette tobacco free, that kicked off during Public Health Week in April.

Municipalities in Fayette were asked to develop a local law, ordinance, policy or resolution that stated the parks and playgrounds or specific areas within the park or playground be designated as tobacco-free and post signage indicating the tobacco-free zone(s).

Currently two municipalities in the county have adopted the policy including Perry Township and Everson Borough. With regards to the initiative, Perry Township Supervisor A.J. Boni said "My decision to approve this is not to be politically correct. It's for the kids. This is township-owned property. It will be a good step forward, a good role model."

For more information or to participate in this initiative contact the Steps Program at 724-439-1484 or info@stepstohealthierfayettecounty.org.

Eat Right Award of Excellence

This month, twelve area restaurants are being awarded the "Eat Right Award of Excellence" from Steps to a Healthier Fayette County. Through an application process, the restaurants were selected to receive the award because they offer healthy selections to customers that can help the residents of Fayette County meet current dietary recommendations. The restaurants were selected because they offered lower-fat entrees, dark leafy greens, whole grain selections or other healthful choices. All of the choices were reviewed and approved by Registered Dietitians. Some of these restaurants will also be working with Steps to add even more healthful choices to their menus. Of course, not all menu items meet these criteria, but the choice is up to the customers.

The program was also supported by the Laurel Highlands Restaurant Association. They will receive an honorary award of excellence for supporting the program. Restaurants receiving the award include:

- Chez Gerard
- Garfield's
- Panera Bread
- Wing Street Pizza Hut
- Ponderosa Steakhouse
- Bob Evans
- Eat n Park
- Hong Kong Buffet Restaurant
- Nancy's Fancy Tea Room
- Eddie's Tavern
- Caileigh's
- Highway Pizza Shop

For more information or to participate in this initiative contact the Steps Program at 724-439-1484 or info@stepstohealthierfayettecounty.org.