

Washington State

Building a Healthy, Active Community

Challenge

Nearly 60 percent of adults in Washington state are overweight or obese.* Improved eating habits and increased physical activity are keys to reversing this trend, but in communities throughout the state, numerous barriers exist to making these healthful changes.

Moses Lake is no exception. Like other communities across the state and the nation, this small, central-Washington city needed additional resources to make physical activity safe and accessible for all its residents.

Response

A series of interventions in Moses Lake, known collectively as Healthy Communities Moses Lake, encourages good nutrition and physical activity behaviors through environmental and policy change. Throughout the community, the project aims to widen sidewalks and create an interconnected system of paths for pedestrians and cyclists, fostering an environment conducive to outdoor physical activity.

Begun in 2002, the Healthy Communities project in the town of Moses Lake includes community gardens, efforts to improve the environment for breastfeeding, and local plans and policies that create places for physical activity.

Healthy Communities also includes a community garden project, which provides project participants with greater access to fresh, nutritious produce as well as physical activity opportunities for participants who work in the garden. In addition, to encourage good nutrition from birth, Healthy Communities aims to inform residents about proper breastfeeding practices as well as create supportive environments for nursing mothers throughout the community.

Results

Both Moses Lake and Grant County, which includes Moses Lake, adopted an overall Healthy Communities action plan. Specifically, the city adopted a master plan to replace a railroad that runs through the downtown area with a path for biking and walking. The county adopted a plan for creating walking and biking trails alongside irrigation canals. New zoning ordinances in both the city and county require wider sidewalks that will increase accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

The city has incorporated the community garden project into its parks and recreation department work plan. The project is building capacity through integration with county nutrition activities and youth wellness team projects in the community as well as the development of a community-based oversight and planning group for the gardens. The garden project has forged links with local school groups and chefs to make the garden both a food



One of the community gardens in Moses Lake. (Photo courtesy of the city of Moses Lake)

source and educational tool for the community. Educating the community is a priority for the Moses Lake Breastfeeding Coalition, whose planned activities include: discussions with local business representatives on breastfeeding policies in the workplace; daycare-provider workshops and continued educational forums; and various community advertising and promotion efforts.

As a result of the positive steps Moses Lake is taking with regard to community nutrition and physical activity, the city of Mount Vernon has adopted a Healthy Communities action plan of its own as part of the city's comprehensive plan.

**CDC BRFSS, 2005*

What Else is Washington Doing to Address Overweight and Obesity?

--Helped form the Access to Healthy Food Coalition, a statewide group that works to improve the availability of healthful foods for all Washington residents.

--Developed ClicKit!, a television reduction kit for early childhood educators.

--Created Active Community Environment kits, which provide the means to make community policy and environmental changes for physical activity.

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