

Growing a Healthier Community - Wrangell Alaska ACHIEVE

Public Health Issue

- Sixty-five percent of Alaska adults are overweight or obese. Southeast Alaska Natives, a quarter of the population of Wrangell, a small community on Alaska's Inside Passage, have an even higher rate of obesity and overweight.
- Physical activity and healthy diet, including getting recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables, are important for helping people achieve and maintain a healthy weight but many Wrangell adults eat less than 2 servings of vegetables a day and about half eat less than 2 servings of fruit per day according to a community survey.
- All but a fraction of the food sold in Wrangell grocery stores and restaurants is from places outside of Wrangell and most is from outside the state of Alaska.

Program

- Wrangell, Alaska is funded by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors as an ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change) community with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- A community health action response team was organized and trained at an Action Institute, setting goals to increase the availability of locally grown produce (to benefit health & the local economy) and to increase physical activity of local residents and to take advantage of opportunities to reduce tobacco exposure.

Impact

- ACHIEVE funding helped the community organize to leverage a \$100,000 grant to build a greenhouse for local vegetable production – aiding the local economy, supporting good health and helping to overcome challenging climate issues for local food production.
- An additional \$70,000 USDA grant will fund grow lights and a renewable energy source, powering the greenhouse to supply produce for a newly established, local farmer's market.
- A 'Communities Take Root' initiative facilitated in part by ACHIEVE garnered a fruit orchard for Wrangell estimated at \$1200 to \$2400 in value.
- Local food harvesting guides, through 'Hike & Harvest,' are trained by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium and are actively promoting collection of native berries, greens and shoots to increase local fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Workplaces are providing free membership to the borough owned Parks and Recreational facility for employees – recent usage figures show an increase of over 6000 visits to the gym since the start of this practice. Local employers are also participating in a certification program on workplace wellness.
- A one day 'smoke-out' campaign led the local bars to go smoke free for an evening. The bowling alley and American Legion bingo games to become entirely smoke-free in the last year– a step toward comprehensive clean air initiatives.

Contacts

Kris Reed
Wrangell Medical Center
907-874-7196
kreed@wmcmail.org

Mari Selle-Rea
Wrangell Medical Center
907-874-7166
mselle@wmcmail.org