

## **DECISION MAKERS TEAM UP FOR CHANGE IN THEIR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH**

*Cleveland County, North Carolina adopts a comprehensive list of beneficial changes*

### **Public Health Problem**

- A supportive environment in a community is necessary to help its residents adopt and maintain healthy eating, physical activity and non-smoking habits for prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Public officials are key decision makers for adoption of local policies and environmental conditions that improve the health of community residents.
- Cleveland County, North Carolina stakeholders have a wealth of experience working through coalitions and advisory groups but rates of obesity and other chronic diseases remain high.

### **Program**

- With funding from an Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) grant, Cleveland County, North Carolina developed a Community Health Action Response Team that includes non-traditional partners with broad community experience.
- The team was trained on the use of an effective community change model at the ACHIEVE Action Institute where the three ACHIEVE coaches observed “the light bulbs go on” as team members realized the power of community change for improved health.
- National partners – YMCA of the USA and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors – provide readily-available technical support and distribute competitive funding originating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### **Impact**

- For the first time, this community has a sustainable, working group of decision makers acting to reduce the major risk factors for chronic disease.
- Action steps planned by the community team support reductions in risk factors for many chronic diseases, not just a single condition and are aligned with most objectives in the state nutrition and physical activity plan.
- ACHIEVE funding is providing seed money to jump-start action in the ‘real world’ of public policy and is an acknowledgement of the value of the local team members to their community.
- This community team takes advantage of an existing North Carolina social marketing campaign - reaping the benefits of a statewide strategy while conserving resources for achievement of specific local policy and environmental changes.
- Regular technical assistance from the national partners is providing crucial support to keep the change process moving forward in this community.

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