

## **ENCOURAGING HEALTHY CHOICES WHERE PEOPLE LIVE, WORK AND PLAY**

*ACHIEVE project boosts resources for healthy community change in small Maine communities*

### **Public Health Problem**

- In rural Mount Desert Island, Maine, community residents identified high priorities for community health improvement that include making communities more walking- and biking-friendly and enhancing access to healthy food, especially for low-income and aging residents.
- Community coalitions can facilitate changes in the local environment and local policies that increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy food choices, an effective way to improve health and reduce chronic disease.

### **Program**

- The Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change initiative, or ACHIEVE, applies a community model using health departments & YMCAs as trusted conveners and community ‘coaches.’ The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and YMCA of the USA provide ACHIEVE grants and technical assistance with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- In Mt. Desert Island, Maine, ‘coaches’ from Healthy Acadia, an existing non-profit and the Mt. Desert Island YMCA facilitated formation of a Community Health Action Response Team that includes members from these organizations as well as Friends of Acadia, local government and the larger community.
- A mini-grant program gives small grants to six community groups with the capacity to implement sustainable policy or environmental change for better community health.
- With support from Machias Savings Bank and College of the Atlantic, ACHIEVE organized a walking/biking meeting and a walk through the community with noted authority on health and community planning Mark Fenton, who reached decision-makers with compelling health, economic, and environmental reasons for planning and policy to promote walking and biking.

### **Impact**

- Mt. Desert Island ACHIEVE is leveraging funds and in-kind services for community change.
- A policy event inspired local decision-makers to seek ways to make community change happen, by offering relevant information on policy and planning. The meeting “was crucial in bringing all interests together as we proceed with this effort,” according to Matt Horton, meeting sponsor.
- Small amounts of funding are already enabling significant environmental changes to enhance access to physical activity and healthy food, including a technology-enhanced active recreation program for adults and children with developmental disabilities, a school ‘salad garden’ and salad bar project, a community garden and compost project for residents near a one-room schoolhouse and a raised-bed garden and greenhouse that will produce food for low-income seniors.

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