

**METROWEST
COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE
FOUNDATION**

A Community Response to Obesity: Franklin

The Hockomock Area YMCA recently received a \$120,000 two-year grant to implement a community-wide approach for addressing obesity in the town of Franklin. The grant by the Foundation adds Franklin as one of eleven communities participating in the Department of Public Health's Mass in Motion program. This unique partnership allows the Hockomock Y and the Town of Franklin to be a part of a statewide community of providers working together to reduce obesity in Massachusetts. As a Mass in Motion community, Hockomock will also receive technical assistance and training on the latest tools and strategies to prevent obesity and overweight and, ultimately, reduce chronic disease.

The Hockomock Y project includes a strategic focus on the following areas: school-based physical education and nutrition; outdoor recreation; and business and resident pedestrian transportation and wellness activities. The Y was in an ideal position to take a leadership role on childhood obesity prevention when it organized a local coalition as part of a Centers for Disease Control/Y USA Healthy Futures initiative. The Hockomock Y leveraged their existing partnerships and collaborations with town officials and local business to create a town-wide plan to combat obesity. "People were willing to be involved and had an interest in youth, wellness and obesity. We were fortunate to move things forward and have schools open to our efforts," says Lauren Marciszyn, project director for the Hockomock Y initiative.

The Healthy Futures Task Force and the Town of Franklin used an assessment tool, the Community Healthy Living Index, which provided a series of detailed questions examining the community's full range of environmental impact areas, including schools, afterschool child care programs, neighborhoods and work sites. The assessment looked at healthy eating, healthy living, walkability, community engagement, physical activity, and school meals and nutrition. In total, comprehensive assessments were performed at 11 school and community sites. The outcome was the development of a strategic plan, which aims to address the inactivity and obesity epidemic for children aged 6-10 by increasing physical activity and improving nutritional habits at home and in the community through three strategies (see below).

Ramani Sripada, the Foundation's program officer for child obesity programming said, "The Hockomock Y/Town of Franklin project holds great promise as a model of public/private partnership that can mobilize community resources to create environmental, policy and systemic change to address issues of child obesity and chronic disease."

For more information on Hockomock YMCA's Childhood Obesity programs contact Bartt Pinchuck, Director of Operations, at (774) 235-2756.

Strategy #1: Focus on school-based collaborations that increase access to physical activity and improvement of nutritional standards:

- Enhancing health and physical education offerings
- Improving food service standards and offerings
- Improving student, staff, and parent engagement and awareness of healthy lifestyle principles

Strategy #2: Increase access to outdoor recreational options in the town of Franklin through:

- Actively promoting the Southern New England Truck line project
- Actively supporting the Franklin Historical Trail project

Strategy #3: Increase the participation of the Franklin business and residential community in active living principles through the following:

- Improving the availability of walkable pedestrian transportation infrastructure through policy enactments, programs and public awareness
- Increasing the availability of lifelong recreational opportunities for children
- Engaging the business community in the development of adopting core wellness concepts for their employees and in their built environments