

Commute Options for Central Oregon Selected to Participate in Program to Promote Physical Activity, Health

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Funding from the Northwest Health Foundation Supports Coalitions in Seven Counties in Oregon and Southwest Washington Working to Combat Obesity

Seven community coalitions including Commute Options for Central Oregon have received funding through a new program to address the epidemic of obesity in Oregon and southwest Washington. Created through contributions from Kaiser Permanente Northwest, CareOregon, PacificSource Charitable Foundation, and the Northwest Health Foundation, Alliance for the Promotion of Physical Activity and Nutrition (APPAN) will support projects to promote physical activity and healthy eating locally. Modeled after successful community-led efforts to reduce smoking, the program supports a variety of interventions in multiple settings such as neighborhoods, schools, and worksites. This first round of grants was announced as rates of overweight and obesity in Oregon and nationwide continue to rise.

“We know that simply telling people to eat less and exercise more is not enough,” said Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, state epidemiologist for Oregon and an advisor to the new program. “Decades of tobacco prevention efforts have taught us that focusing on an individual’s behavior ignores the fact that we all make choices within broader social, environmental, and public policy contexts.”

Seven community coalitions have received funding for projects underway in six Oregon counties and in Cowlitz County, Washington. Funding amounts range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Working with such partners as neighborhood associations, school districts, faith groups, farmer’s markets, recreation and transportation agencies, county commissions and private businesses, coalition grantees will take on an array of projects that meet their community’s specific needs and opportunities to promote physical activity and healthy eating, including establishing farmer’s markets, promoting the connectivity and usage of recreational trails, and advocating for health-promoting land use, zoning, and school nutrition policies.

“The problem of overweight and obesity in our region is a complex public health challenge that must be met at every level of society,” said Thomas Aschenbrener, president of NWHF. “With the Alliance for the Promotion of Physical Activity and Nutrition program, a group of health care leaders has put its support behind community partners working together to make walking and bicycling safer, to get more nutritious food into schools, and, ultimately, to advocate for policies that make it easier for everyone to make healthy choices every day.”

An Oregon Health Policy Commission report released earlier this month cited data that the percentage of obese adults in Oregon more than doubled from 1990 to 2004. Three in four eighth graders and four in five 11th graders in Oregon don't eat the recommended five or more servings of fruit and vegetables every day. Overweight youth are more likely to struggle with their weight as adults, and suffer disproportionately from obesity-related chronic disease.

Founded in 1997, the Northwest Health Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation committed to advancing, supporting, and promoting the health of the people of Oregon and southwest Washington. Embracing its role as the community's partner for better health, the Foundation achieves its mission primarily through grantmaking and support for advocacy efforts that influence public policy. NWHF also administers donor-advised funds for agencies and individual philanthropists throughout the Pacific Northwest. See www.nwhf.org.

Alliance for the Promotion of Physical Activity and Nutrition Projects:

1) Commute Options for Central Oregon (Deschutes County, OR)

HACO (Healthy Active Central Oregon) Initiative " Bear Creek Elementary School Neighborhood will improve walking and biking opportunities in a Bend neighborhood while attempting to influence the broader land use planning process in the city and Deschutes County to promote environments that support regular physical activity.

2) Benton County Health Department (Benton County, OR)

Benton County Healthy Weight and Lifestyle Coalition will promote access to healthy food choices in schools, workplaces, and the community as a whole by strengthening strategic partnerships and supporting

such efforts as a Farm-to-Cafeteria pilot program in two school districts, a new garden market at local businesses, and research to improve linkages between farmers and the food system.

3) Community Health Partnership (Lents neighborhood, southeast Portland)

Active Living and Healthy Eating: The Lents Community and Beyond will improve physical activity and nutritional environments in the Lents neighborhood of southeast Portland by supporting a farmerâ€™s market and improved connectivity to a recreational trail, and by promoting transportation and urban renewal initiatives. The coalition will also advocate for health-promoting land use and zoning policies at the state and regional level.

4) Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth (Lane County, OR)

Advocacy for Policy Change: A Healthier Physical Activity and Nutrition Environment in Lane County will hire paid staff to support its volunteer network and drive its advocacy agenda, which aims to prevent childhood obesity and related diseases in Lane County.

5) Multnomah County Health Department (North Portland)

Healthy Eating Active Living Coalition will implement a physical activity and nutrition promotion program at Clarendon Elementary School in north Portland.

6) Pathways 2020 (Cowlitz County, WA)

Cowlitz on the Move Healthy Lifestyles Coalition will mobilize action to support the completion of a county-wide trails plan, construction of a community gymnasium, and promotion and monitoring of improved school nutrition and physical activity policies.

7) Wasco Sherman Public Health Department (Wasco & Sherman counties, OR)

Wasco Sherman Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition will incorporate Health Impact Assessments into city and county planning and development decisions, support rural school districts to implement new school wellness policies, establish a community garden, and promote the use of existing walking and biking trails.