



Tri-County Health Department

Thriving Communities 2006 Action Plan

In the last City Lights we reported that Kaiser Permanente had fully funded Tri-County Health Department's 2006 Thriving Communities Action Plan. Thriving Communities' goal is to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other chronic diseases by implementing programs, policies and environmental changes to promote healthy eating and active living throughout historic Commerce City. Kaiser hopes to fund the program for 3-5 years. The 2006 grant is \$250,000. Future funding levels will be determined annually, based on the comprehensiveness of the program.

A Steering Committee and a large group of community stakeholders worked with Tri-County to identify strategies for the 2006 Action Plan. To give you a flavor for the Plan, a few key strategies are highlighted below. Tri-County invites all historic Commerce City residents and organization to become involved in Thriving Communities so that as the Program evolves, it reflects the interests and needs of the whole community. If you haven't been contacted, but would like to participate in either a specific project or the overall program, contact Robyn Spittle (303 846-6291) or Carol MacLennan (303) 846-6225) at Tri-County Health Department.

Nutrition and Cooking Classes - Operation Frontline, Community Health Services and CSU's Cooperative Extension Service will bring chefs, dieticians, and other educators to Commerce City to teach several courses on nutrition education and cooking skills throughout the year. Depending on the program, courses will last 4-8 weeks, and will target many age groups, including 8-12 years olds, teens, and low income adults. Classes will be offered at Adams 14 School District middle and high schools, Tri-County Health Department, and local non-profits such as Bridges of Silence. Some classes will be taught in Spanish as well as English.

Expanding on its "Eat Smart, Be Smart" program that was piloted at the Commerce City Recreation Center in 2005, Partnerships for Healthy Communities is offering two literacy and nutrition classes this year. One class for teen Moms has already begun for teen Moms at Lester Arnold High School. Another class will likely be offered through Head Start.

Bridges of Silence Greenhouse - Grant funds will contribute to the purchase of a new greenhouse that is being installed this spring at Bridges of Silence. Among other services, the non-profit offers a gardening program for Commerce City youth. Last year 25 City youth learned about healthy eating and how to run a small business through gardening and selling garden produce at a Farmer's Market. They also learned about community service by giving fresh vegetables from the garden to the Hands of Hope Food Bank. The addition of a greenhouse will extend the growing season at the Helping Hands Youth Community Garden, hopefully enabling the young gardeners to conduct multiple Farmers' Markets. It will also provide a year-round "classroom" for Bridges of Silence's ongoing programs, as well as for a new nutrition and gardening program to be integrated into Rose Hill Elementary's 5th grade curriculum this year.

Kaiser Permanente Theater Program Kaiser recently recruited thirty creative and committed Adams City High School students for the “Teens Take it On” Program. During a series of workshops facilitated by Kaiser Permanente actor-educators, the selected students will first learn about healthy eating and active living – Learn It! Then they will incorporate healthier habits into their own lives – Live It! And finally, they will create a theatre piece or advocacy campaign and serve as peer mentors for healthy living among middle school students and students in their own school – Share It! (With luck, you might even see the performance at some community events!). The Theater Program will also conduct a healthy eating/active living program at Lester Arnold High School. Kaiser will also offer its “Amazing Food Detective” to Adams 14 School District grade schools. This program, for K-3rd grade children, is interactive play that helps young children understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise.

Commerce City Parks and Recreation Programs - Thriving Communities is partnering with the Parks and Rec Department on two projects this year. The first is to expand the successful “Silver Sneakers” Program, in which seniors with qualifying health insurance participate in recreation, physical fitness and social activities at the Rec Center for free. About 350 residents are currently enrolled in the program, but a recent survey found that over a thousand more City residents are eligible but have not yet signed up. Special promotions will be targeted to these residents to join the fun and gain the health benefits of Silver Sneakers.

The second project is the production of a “Healthy Eating, Active Living” Calendar, which will contain high quality, memorable photos of Commerce City, a schedule of events and healthy behavior tips. The Parks and Rec Department will prepare the calendar for 2007, and will provide a complimentary copy to each Commerce City household.

African-American Institute Wonderful Outdoor World – WOW is the Institute’s environmental education program that introduces inner city youth to a legacy of public lands through the experience of camping. Commerce City youth have been participating in WOW since 1998, learning about nature and getting physical activity while camping in the mountains. Thriving Communities funds will allow ten additional Commerce City youth to attend this year’s summer camp outs.

Physical Activity Equipment for Health Fairs – Residents who attend Commerce City’s Health Fairs this year will notice a change. Immunizations, health screenings, bicycle helmets and health and safety tips will still be offered, but residents should also come dressed for fun and games. In response to requests from residents who have attended past Health Fairs, Community Health Services is going to use grant funds to purchase sports and recreation equipment that youth and families can enjoy together at the Fairs. Who knows? There might even be challenges with prizes!

Walkability Assessments – Walking is an easy way for adults to get part or all of the half hour of physical activity a day that is recommended to maintain health. Over the next three years, Thriving Communities partners will work with residents to conduct walkability assessments in all 9 neighborhoods in historic Commerce City. These short surveys will help identify features of neighborhoods that either encourage or discourage walking. Assessment results will be shared with neighbors and the City. Tri-County will promote and support mini-grants for improvements that residents can accomplish on their own, and will encourage residents to work through the City’s Capital Improvement Program or Neighborhood Planning processes to address issues of a more long-term nature. Last fall the first walkability assessment was conducted in the Hanson neighborhood. Derby, Monaco and Central are slated for assessments in 2006.

Safe Routes to School Program – Children need even more physical activity than adults – about an hour a day – to maintain health. Walking or bicycling to and from school could provide a portion of this exercise, so in conjunction with the neighborhood audits, Thriving Communities partners will evaluate safe routes to each Commerce City school. These results will also be shared with residents, schools and the City, with the goal of making improvements that will increase the number of children who regularly get to school on foot or by bicycle. The City and Adams 14 School District recently applied for a grant through the new Federal Safe Routes to School Program to improve safety around Central Elementary School. Based on safe routes assessments, there may be opportunities to apply for additional grants under this program. Educational and promotional programs will also be undertaken to encourage more children to walk or bike to school.

Walkability Workshop – In partnership with the City, Thriving Communities is bringing national walkability expert Dan Burden to town in April. He will conduct a 2 ½ -day work session with staff, policy makers and the community to discuss ways to make Commerce City's existing and new neighborhoods more walkable. Using "road diets" and other planning techniques, Mr. Burden has helped hundreds of cities redesign their streets to the mutual benefit of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. More often than not, his recommendations have also stimulated economic revitalization.

Derby Redevelopment Study – Thriving Communities activities such as the walkability and safe routes to school audits and the Dan Burden workshop are complimenting the Derby Redevelopment Study that began last fall. Tri-County staff are working with City staff and the Derby consulting team both to conduct community outreach and to share information gained from residents and businesses in the Derby area about their vision for a healthy, thriving Derby. Through Thriving Communities, Kaiser Permanente is funding another project in Derby this spring called Photovoice. Photovoice is a process that enables people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns through photographs, and to enhance their communication with policy makers through this technique.

Community Outreach Specialist – The population of historic Commerce City is more than 50% Hispanic, and many of these residents speak Spanish as their first language. The goal of Thriving Communities is to promote healthy eating and active living among all City resident. Therefore, the grant is funding Community Enterprise, a Commerce City non-profit, to hire a part-time employee to reach out specifically to the City's Spanish-speaking residents. The Outreach Specialist will promote residents' neighborhood and civic involvement, and active participation in the Thriving Communities program.

End- of-Year Celebration – As you can see, the Thriving Communities coalition did an amazing amount of work during the program's planning phase, and created an exciting Action Plan for 2006. Later this year, there will be a celebration to recognize the effort and accomplishments of everyone involved in the program, and to reinforce the group's enthusiasm for 2007.