



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA of Greater Cleveland

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRESS REPORT

The Y's Healthy Communities Initiative is all about making the healthy choice, the easy choice, especially for our inner-city and first ring suburban neighbors who are at the highest risk for lifestyle-related chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

While the initiative's services are open to anyone, the Healthy Communities Initiative primarily targets African-American and Hispanic/Latino Clevelanders due to their disproportionately high incidence rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

In Cuyahoga County, where you live can affect how long you live by as many as 24.5 years according to a study conducted by Dr. Anthony Iton for the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. Dr. Iton serves as Senior Vice President for Healthy Communities at The California Endowment, following 12 years of service as the Public Health Director

for Alameda County, California. His primary interest is the health of disadvantaged populations and the contributions of race, class, wealth, education, geography, and employment to health status.

A resident in Lyndhurst can expect to live to 88.5 years of age while a resident of the Hough neighborhood in Cleveland located just seven miles away has a life expectancy of just 64 years. The mortality rate from heart disease for white residents in Cuyahoga County is 289 persons per 100,000 residents, while the rate among African-American residents stands at 331 per 100,000. Likewise, stroke rate is 57 per 100,000 for white Cuyahoga County residents, and 66 per 100,000 among African-American residents.

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WHERE WE LIVE IMPACTS OUR HEALTH

Many forces combine to produce such extreme health disparity outcomes. For example, most of us have the leisure of not having to think about where we can find high quality fresh produce close to home, but for many Cleveland and first ring suburban residents, their neighborhoods may lack full-service grocery stores. For those lucky enough to live in a community where a full-service grocery store exists, access to healthy food is not assured as 25% of Cuyahoga County residents do not own cars.

Coupled with recent cut backs in local Community Circulator bus routes, getting to a grocery store is a hardship for many persons. Likewise, all communities are not equally accommodating of healthy, active lifestyles. Many neighborhoods and communities are bisected by wide streets carrying high traffic volumes. Excessive vehicular speeds compound problems for pedestrians, runners and bicyclists.

As a result, living the healthy lifestyle which has been shown to reduce the risk for overweight and obesity and chronic diseases associated with overweight and obesity becomes a challenge in communities such as these.

Clevelanders in Motion, the primary program initiative under the Y's Healthy Communities banner, works on a daily basis with grassroots and institutional partners to advance opportunities for increased access to healthy and affordable foods and safe and attractive roads and sidewalks on which to walk, run or bicycle.

The program accomplishes its work both through collaborative partnerships which produce conferences and seminars aimed at local planners and engineers, as well as at a neighborhood level where it plans projects and programs which help to create convenient healthy living opportunities.

Over the past year, Clevelanders in Motion has made presentations on the interplay between the environment within which we live and our health outcomes at the American Planning Association-Cleveland Chapter's Planning & Zoning Workshop; Bioneers 2010; and the Greater Cleveland Trails and Greenways Conference.

Key partners with whom the program works include the Cleveland City Planning Commission; the Sustainable Transportation Action Team (STAT) 2019, an outgrowth of



the 2009 Sustainability Summit; The Ohio State Extension Service; and several neighborhood-based organizations, including Slavic Village Development Corporation and the Ward One Community Health Initiative.

IT'S ABOUT EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

The Healthy Communities Initiative is also about education and personal empowerment. Through a four-year partnership with the Cleveland Division of Recreation, Clevelanders in Motion has been offering free, detailed health and fitness screenings under its Body Age Screening program.

To date, over 500 individuals have completed their initial body age screening, with approximately 20% of them coming back for a 6-month follow-up screening. For these individuals, information is truly proving to be powerful, with the majority of persons undergoing their 6-month re-screenings showing modest but steady health improvements.

Among these 110 re-screened individuals, they moved from a pre-screening age of 51.29 and body age of 57.42 years to a post-screening age of 51.78 years and body age of 53.54 years. While weight loss averaged just four pounds achieved, their key health measures revealed

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that even modest weight loss can improve health outcomes. Mean blood pressures dropped slightly from 126/80 to just under 124/79 on post-screens, with total cholesterol levels dropping four points, and blood glucose levels falling by more than 7 points. Likewise, improved flexibility, lowered body fat and overall improved fitness levels were other noted outcomes, in addition to self-reported improvements in stress and depression.

Funded with support from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, these screenings are offered on a by-appointment basis, free of charge, at the following Cleveland Recreation Center locations: Earle B. Turner, Fairfax, John F. Kennedy, Lonnie Burten, Michael Zone and Stella Walsh.

In addition, the Downtown and West Park YMCA locations have been added for the convenience of program

participants. Over the past year, Body Age Screenings have also been conducted in partnership with the Glenville New Life Church.

For further information or to schedule a confidential Body Age Screening, contact Alan at (216) 263-6296.

OTHER HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM OFFERINGS

In 2010, the Y offered weekly walking clubs in the following 12 Cleveland neighborhoods: Bellaire-Puritas, Clark-Metro, Detroit Shoreway, Downtown, Fairfax, Forest Hills, Kinsman, North Collinwood, Ohio City, Stockyards, St.Clair-Superior and Tremont. Led by a Y Walk Leader, these small groups of neighborhood residents met weekly from mid-May through mid-October, logging about 4,500 miles collectively.

