Registration for the Building Capacity for Healthy Communities conference is now open

This month we wanted to let you know about an upcoming opportunity. The Building Capacity for Healthy Communities conference will take place at the Tiger Hotel in Columbia, Missouri on Thursday and Friday, April 8 and 9, 2010.

The conference is an opportunity for community representatives to engage with others who are working to make their communities healthy places to live, work, and play. The goal of the conference is to improve skills and knowledge about policy and environment changes that impact access to healthy food and physical activity at the local level. Participants will hear from and interact with national, state and local speakers through general sessions, workshops, panel presentations and networking opportunities that address grassroots advocacy, communication strategies, community food systems, the built environment, and community initiatives.

Some of the presenters include Christy Hoehner of the Washington University School of Medicine and Sabrina Baldwin of Beyond Housing; Judy Meredith, founder of the Public Policy Institute; Phil Valko of Trailnet; Mary Hendrickson and Bill McKelvey with the University of Missouri Extension; and Mark Dessauer from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Healthy Kids Healthy Communities.

In addition, this conference will be the site of a Peer-to-Peer Exchange for Healthy and Active Communities grantees. The 90-minute afternoon session on Friday, April 9 will be dedicated to grantees and community coalitions throughout Missouri.

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Photo credit: www.thetigerhotel.com

Story by: Casi Lock
This session will enable participants to discuss what they learned at the conference, share how they plan to use the ideas and information in their own work, and describe any connections they have made that will advance the work of community coalitions throughout Missouri.

Although grantees will still need to submit a conference registration form, the $50 registration fee will be waived as a way to encourage grantees to attend the conference and participate in the Peer-to-Peer Exchange. In addition, there is a limited amount of funding for grantees’ lodging; it is available on a first come first serve basis. Please contact Margie Meyer (meyermm@missouri.edu or 573-884-8711) to inquire about lodging. Please visit the website http://extension.missouri.edu/healthylife/conference.htm for the conference agenda, program, and registration form.

Co-sponsors of the Building Capacity for Healthy Communities Conference include: University of Missouri Extension Healthy Lifestyle Initiative, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition, Missouri Foundation for Health, and the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City.
MU Extension Implementation Team
Technical Assistance Serves Grantees in Multiple Ways

Three grantees who have accessed MU Extension Implementation Team technical assistance will be presenting at the Building Capacity for Healthy Communities conference. Phil Valko, Active Living Program Manager for Trailnet in St. Louis, is the project manager for their Healthy, Active & Vibrant Communities project. At the conference, Phil will address the impacts of policy and environmental change at the community level and will discuss some of the strategies they have used in the three communities that Trailnet is partnered with. Bruce Wade is Coordinator of the Fit Phelps Community Partnership in Phelps County. He will discuss successes with community gardens, worksite wellness promotions, and walking events for all ages. Pat Maltbia, with the New Madrid County Health Department, is Project Director for the Healthy and Active Bootheel Communities. Pat will discuss the project’s current efforts, which build on the success of a community fitness center, walking trails, and work with local area churches and schools.

While each of their projects have taken unique approaches, they have also benefitted from resources provided by the Implementation Team. Phil Valko has been working with community leaders and stakeholders to develop a holistic approach that supports healthy and active lifestyles. This approach includes policy, education, programming, community planning, social marketing, and physical infrastructure projects. The overall project goal is to create community environments that encourage people to be healthy and active. The Implementation Team has been working on a very similar approach with thirteen communities across Missouri through the Healthy Lifestyle Initiative (HLI). Since their approaches have been the same, they have been able to share ideas and resources. One of the initial resources was a community assessment survey that the Implementation Team used in the HLI communities to assess attitudes and needs with regard to living healthy and active lifestyles. The survey helped assess the desires and viewpoints of the community members in order to help the project deliver messages that would resonate with those they hoped to target.

Fit Phelps has sought assistance from the Implementation Team on a variety of topics. For the work that Fit Phelps does in schools, Bruce obtained MU Extension physical activity cards to give teachers ideas about the kinds of physical activity they can incorporate in brief periods into the school day. Teachers received training on activity-based learning to better understand the value of incorporating physical activity into the students’ academic time.

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Fit Phelps also obtained a food demonstration kit to use in various venues. Using this kit, Fit Phelps partnered with the Young Parents Program to give young parents hands-on training about food safety, preparing healthy snacks, preparing and cooking dry beans, and preparing and steaming vegetables.

In 2009, the Implementation Team conducted a site visit with the New Madrid County Health Department’s Healthy and Active Bootheel Communities project. The team provided technical assistance on the physical activity components of their project. To encourage physical activity in the community, they suggested enhancing walking trails by adding distance markers and physical activity stations. Steve Ball, MU Extension Associate Professor in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology, was there to demonstrate safe use of exercise equipment at the community fitness center. To encourage physical activity in schools, the team suggested incorporating MU Extension physical activity cards that teachers can use throughout the day to encourage their students to participate in brief periods of physical activity during and between classes. The team also suggested that the school become an “Active and Healthy School” with a zoned playground where children can engage in supervised physical education as well as recess periods.

Other MFH Capacity Building Teams

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MFH Healthy & Active Communities—Implementation Team

Purpose:
The MU Extension Implementation Team provides grantees with assistance in implementing project activities. They are available by phone and email and for meetings in your community to provide program implementation support. Types of assistance might include: program specific assistance on topics such as worksite wellness, farm to school, and starting and sustaining community gardens; recruiting participants for community initiatives; fostering organizational buy-in and support; effectively engaging policy makers; and strategies to build community-partnerships to ensure program sustainability.

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