

How to Make a Healthy Change in Your Community Today

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Host] Obesity is one of the two leading preventable causes of death. Not only is it bad for our health, it's bad for the US economy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working with communities across the country to change that and make it easier for residents to live healthier lives.

Today we have Rebecca Payne from the CDC who is the Program Director for Communities Putting Prevention to Work, along with Taylor Clark and Lynn Cosgrove who both know first-hand how this unique initiative has helped create positive changes that benefit both residents and businesses, as well as providing inspiration for other communities to make healthy living a priority. Good morning and thank you for being here today.

[Rebecca Payne] Good morning. Thanks for having us.

[Host] Becky, tell us about Communities Putting Prevention to Work.

[Rebecca Payne] Well, as you alluded to, this is a very serious and costly problem for the country, racking up 147 billion dollars per year in medical costs associated with obesity. So two years ago, we launched Communities Putting Prevention to Work. We've funded 50 communities across the country, including urban, suburban, rural, and tribal areas. And the idea behind it is to make healthy living easier now, but also for many generations to come.

[Host] And you mentioned that obesity has become a serious problem in the US. Tell us a little about that.

[Rebecca Payne] We know, as you have spoken about, one in three adults and one in six children are obese. And our children are bearing the brunt of this epidemic. Obese and overweight children are more likely to have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and also Type-2 diabetes.

[Host] And what do you think makes this national initiative different than others addressing the obesity issue?

[Rebecca Payne] What has made this unique is that we are really focused on the environment in which people live and the ways that we can all support healthy choices of individuals where they work, live, and play.

[Host] And who in the community can support these kinds of initiatives?

[Rebecca Payne] Everyday people, parents, teachers, students, business owners, other community leaders are most in touch with what is happening on the ground, in their community. They see people every day struggling to make healthier choices as individuals, and what we're very proud of is that, across the country, lots of communities have realized that the community,

as a whole, has a responsibility and tremendous opportunity to make healthier choices much easier for those individuals.

[Host] Thank you, Becky. Now we'll hear from Taylor Clark in Alabama. Taylor is the Public Market Coordinator of Main Street Birmingham's Urban Food Project. Taylor, tell us about your work in Jefferson County.

[Taylor Clark] Here in Jefferson County, about 70 percent of our residents are either obese or overweight. And 88,000 of these individuals are living in neighborhoods where it's difficult to find fresh, healthy food. So what Main Street is doing as part of our Urban Food Project is working with local farmers, businesses, and health professionals to bring fresh, healthy, locally-, Alabama-grown produce to farmers markets, farm stands, and corner stores.

[Host] So, how are folks in Jefferson County reacting to this?

[Taylor Clark] What they're finding is that they can buy healthier options at a reasonable price. And, by buying directly from the farmer, there are multiple benefits, both economically and physically. So, we're really utilizing healthy food as a catalyst for economic development, while supporting the development of food-related businesses and supporting the health of our community. So it's very exciting and it's been tremendously well-received.

[Host] Thank you, Taylor. Great to hear. With us, we also have Lynn Cosgrove who is a Human Resources Specialist at R.E. Darling, an aerospace manufacturer in Tucson, Arizona. Lynn, tell us about your workplace wellness initiative.

[Lynn Cosgrove] Well, here in Tucson, Arizona at R.E. Darling, our insurance claims were nearing a million dollars for our 95 employees. And as a self-insured employer, we were actually at risk of not being able to offer health insurance to our employees anymore. So, we wanted to implement a wellness program to improve the health of our employees, but also the bottom line of our company. And so we instituted a wellness program that offers incentives to employees to participate, but also the convenience of on-site wellness coach who meets with them monthly, on-site fitness and education classes, and things as simple as a measured walking path that employees can walk in the mornings and at lunch, and better choices in our vending machines. And we have had some great success; in the two years since we've implemented our program, we have actually reduced our claims by nearly 70 percent, and as a group, we've lost 440 pounds since the program began.

[Host] So, you're saving the company money. How do the employees feel?

[Lynn Cosgrove] Ninety percent of our employees participate in our wellness program and they love it! It's a win-win for us. Our employees are more productive, they're healthier, they have more energy throughout the day, but they have more energy when they go home, and they can really enjoy their life fully outside of work.

[Host] Wow, that's great to hear Lynn. So real quick, Becky, where can people go if they want to find our more information about CPPW?

[Rebecca Payne] You can go to MakingHealthEasier.org. And in that website you can see what your peers across the country might be doing to connect to some solutions. You can also join the conversation in your hometown, or start it if it isn't there.

[Host] Well thank you Becky, Taylor, and Lynn for being here today.

[Multiple Voices] Thank you.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.