March 2014 Newsletter

As spring begins, kids should be throwing off their winter coats and playing outdoors. However, not all kids have the same access to safe, convenient places to be physically active.

Did you know that people who have parks or recreational facilities nearby exercise 38 percent more than those who do not? Lower-income communities, especially Latino or African-American neighborhoods, often have fewer places to play and be active.

**Active Places** is one of the six policy-change strategies Voices for Healthy Kids believes will have the greatest impact on reversing the childhood obesity epidemic.

Voices for Healthy Kids is working to help families get active by unlocking the doors to school fields and playgrounds and making the streets safer for kids to walk, bike and be active in underserved communities.

Learn more about **Voices for Healthy Kids: Active Places** and visit our team of experts at **The Safe Routes to School National Partnership** for more resources on increasing access to safe, convenient places to be physically active.

**Visions of Voices**

“National Walking Day is right around the corner: April 2, 2014. Regular physical activity is important for our overall health and fitness—plus, it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic disease. Pick activities you like and do each for at least 10 minutes at a time. The American Heart Association recommends that children and adolescents get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Adults should aim for at least **30 minutes** at least **5 days a week**.”

-Sally Wong, Associate Science & Medicine Advisor, Voices for Healthy Kids

**News from the Field**

Introducing the New Voices for Healthy Kids Website!
Voices for Healthy Kids is pleased to announce the launch of our new website, VoicesforHealthyKids.org!

Visit the site to learn more about the initiative and to find information on our six priority areas, including the latest news and resources from the movement to reduce childhood obesity.

**Voices for Healthy Kids Statement on Recent Announcements by the First Lady**

Voices for Healthy Kids volunteer, and Professor of Nutrition at the University of Vermont, Dr. Rachel Johnson issued the following comments in February on an announcement made by First Lady Michelle Obama to eliminate junk food marketing in schools. The proposal would prohibit marketing for foods and beverages that do not meet recent nutrition standards from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Those standards apply to snacks and drinks sold in school vending machines, stores, snack carts and a la carte lines. The public can comment on the new marketing proposal until April 27, 2014.

"No parent wants a food fight. When children come home from school with a coupon for pizza or doughnuts as a reward, it's hard to say 'no'. Sometimes we give in, but it doesn't seem fair that while parents are trying teach their kids how to eat healthy, children sometimes get a different message at school. The First Lady is giving an opportunity for parents to speak up and be a voice for healthy kids. Each of us should take this opportunity to share our own experiences with food marketing in schools and help establish a new norm for healthy eating environments. Schools can help parents make the healthy choice the easy choice."

Read the [official White House announcement](#) to learn more.

**Statement: A New Normal? Obesity Rates Dropping in Young Children**

Voices for Healthy Kids released a statement on the recent report showing declines in childhood obesity from the CDC, published in the February 26th issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"Today we learned that obesity among 2 to 5 year olds has significantly declined over the past few years following the national movement to help families and children eat healthier and be more physically active. While declines were not seen in older age groups, we are encouraged that youth obesity rates are holding steady. Families, schools, health advocates, and many companies are working to drive this change and support our children as they shift our cultural norms towards healthier living. We urgently need the new normal for healthy eating and active living in every state and community across our nation."

**Raise Your Voice**

*If They Can't Sell It, They Shouldn't Market It.* Food and beverage companies spend $150 million each year marketing junk food to children in schools.
Find out how you can support the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s proposal to ban the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks in our nation's schools at PreventObesity.net.

**Childhood Obesity News Flash**

**You Won’t Believe the Must-Have Item Sold at this Convenience Store**  
*The Huffington Post, Nancy Brown, March 3*  
There’s a product at Mark's Food Market in Greenville, N.C., that sells out every few days. So what is it? Fruit and vegetables.

**Creating Healthier Out-of-School Environments for Kids Across the Country**  
*The White House Blog, AJ Pearlman, February 26*  
The National Recreation and Park Association and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America committed to work to create healthy environments for their out-of-school time programs over the next five years.

**Obesity Rates in Youngest Children has Dropped**  
*The Cincinnati Herald, Dwight Tillery, March 13*  
A recent report from the American Journal of Medicine has revealed that the obesity rates among toddlers and preschool-aged children have decreased.

**Obesity Linked To Lower Grades Among Teen Girls**  
*NPR, Linda Poon, March 11*  
Now researchers at the Universities of Dundee, Strathclyde, Georgia and Bristol say that not only does obesity affect a child’s overall health, but it may also lead to poorer school performance among teenage girls.

**Don’t miss...**

**Voices for Healthy Kids at Active Living Research & EPI/NPAM 2014**

Voices for Healthy Kids staff were on the move this month spreading the message on our efforts to reduce childhood obesity. In San Diego, **Carter Headrick**, Director of State & Local Obesity Policy, presented on the impact of state laws on community use of school property, while **Sally Wong, PhD**, Associate Science and Medicine Advisor, led a roundtable discussion on integrating researchers into the work of Voices for Healthy Kids during the 2014 Active Living Research conference.

On March 17th-21st, the Voices for Healthy Kids team participated in the American Heart Association’s **2014 Epidemiology and Prevention, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism Scientific Sessions**. During the weeklong conference, Voices for Healthy Kids Executive Director Jill Birnbaum and Sally Wong, presented on the initiative, evaluation and the involvement of research in their efforts. Highlights from the conference can be found on the AHA newsroom.

**See You There: AAHPERD in April**

Are you attending the **2014 AAHPERD National Convention & Exposition** in St. Louis? So are we! On April 1st-5th, Voices for Healthy Kids will exhibit at the annual conference aimed at health education, physical education, recreation and active lifestyles. Stop by our booth to learn more about our work on increasing physical activity and how you can join the movement to reduce childhood obesity!
Put on Your Tennis Shoes: National Walking Day is April 2

National Walking Day is the American Heart Association’s nationwide call-to-action for Americans to become more physically active. Join thousands of companies, schools, organizations and individuals across the nation as they wear their sneakers to work or school on Wednesday, April 2, and take the first steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Find out how you can participate!

Did you know?

In 1969, 48 percent of K-8th grade students usually walked or bicycled to school. By 2009, only 13 percent of K-8th grade students usually walked or bicycled to school.


Voices for Healthy Kids, a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and American Heart Association (AHA) works to help all young people eat healthier foods and be more active. Nearly 1 in 3 kids and teens are overweight or obese. We seek to reverse the nation's childhood obesity epidemic by 2015. Learn more about the epidemic and how you can help turn it around at Voicesforhealthykids.org