



## HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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## NEWS

### **AGENCIES COLLABORATING TO COMBAT CHILDHOOD OBESITY** *September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month*

**HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO** – September 2010 is the first-ever Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and agencies in Hamilton County are working together to create healthier environments in which children can thrive.

For the first time in history, the United States is raising a generation of children who may live sicker and shorter lives than their parents. Reversing this trend will depend on more than individual healthy decisions, and not everyone in America has the same opportunities to make healthy choices. Environments and policies must support healthy lifestyle options including eating fruits and vegetables and getting regular physical activity.

Hamilton County Public Health is coordinating an effort to reduce the incidence of preventable chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular illnesses by fostering and initiating environmental and policy changes. This collaborative project – branded as We THRIVE!<sup>sm</sup> – is building the foundation for healthy communities by implementing policy, systems and environmental changes to support individual choice. YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, Nutrition Council, The Center for Closing the Health Gap, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, school districts, communities and residents are working to make sustainable changes.

"True collaboration is taking place right now between government entities, private agencies, health care partners, school districts and citizens," Tim Ingram, Health Commissioner said. "Along with our partners, we are activating policy changes to positively impact physical activity and healthy eating for residents across Hamilton County."

In the past four decades, obesity rates in the United States have soared among all age groups. This rise in obesity rates has affected our youth in alarming fashion. Childhood obesity has increased more than fourfold among those ages 6 to 11. Over 23 million children and teenagers in the United States ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic. And this epidemic puts nearly one third of America's children at early risk for Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and even stroke – conditions usually associated with adulthood.

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We THRIVE! is focused on preventing chronic diseases and obesity by improving the health of residents through increased physical activity and healthy eating. Opportunities for making healthy choices are being created by:

- Providing access to healthy food options through school-based competitive foods policy change, community garden development and fresh markets.
- Developing shared-use agreements for physical activity sites, such as in schools, YMCA and faith-based community locations.
- Creating policies to support 30 minutes of daily physical activity in after-school programs.
- Creating pocket parks and enhancing existing parks in communities to increase safe physical activity spaces.
- Increasing access to fresh food by expanding acceptance of WIC and SNAP vouchers at area farmers' markets.
- Expanding healthy food purchasing power for after school program sites.
- Increasing Safe Routes to School programs to encourage more walking and bicycling.

“By creating communities where the healthy choice is the easy choice, children and their families can expand healthy eating practices and increase physical activity allowing our children to live long healthy lives,” Ingram said.

The We THRIVE! initiative promotes physical activity and healthy eating, reduced tobacco use and exposure, and builds community capacity for systems, environmental, and policy change aimed to reduce the burden of disease related to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular illness. To join the movement, visit [WatchUsThrive.org](http://WatchUsThrive.org).

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