



spotlight on health

Not Just Talking The Talk—Walking The Walk

(NAPSA)—If you're tired of hearing people talk about the obesity epidemic but not doing anything about it, there's good news.

People around the country are fighting obesity by working alongside Prevention Research Centers (PRCs), academic centers that study chronic diseases and are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The projects in these communities may inspire you to:

- Start a walking trail in your neighborhood.

Residents of Albany, N.Y., found that walking outside was not always easy. A lack of sidewalks, uneven terrain and cold weather kept people inside on their couches.

The community teamed up with the SUNY Albany PRC and a state not-for-profit group to find a new place to walk—public schools. The team promotes walking on trails in summer and in school buildings in winter to achieve year-round walking, and the residents are reaping the health rewards.

- Get healthy lunches in schools.

In Douglas, Ariz., on the U.S.-Mexico border, a community committee concerned about health issues and working with the University of Arizona PRC learned that its school district was considering new nutritional guidelines for school lunches. So they wrote the guidelines themselves.

The committee researched successful efforts elsewhere and submitted guidelines that call for reduced-fat milk, whole wheat bread and plenty of fruits and vegetables. The superintendent was so impressed, the guidelines were



There are many ways for communities to battle obesity. Start a walking trail. Get healthy lunches in schools. Bring in farmer's markets full of fruits and vegetables.

adopted almost word for word. The district's new nutrition coordinator, Beverly Jackson, joined the committee. "It helps to have people support you," Jackson said.

- Bring in farmer's markets full of fruits and vegetables.

The Black Belt of Alabama, a rural region once known best for its rich soil, has become better known for its poverty and lack of resources.

Farm-fresh fruits and vegetables became scarce as small farmers went out of business. Community leaders worked with the PRC at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Alabama Farmers Market Authority to have fresh produce brought in to several small towns.

- Put healthy food right in the grocery stores.

In Keokuk County, Iowa, the obesity rates are higher than the national average. The University

of Iowa's PRC helped mobilize an entire community eager to be rid of that distinction. Restaurant owners are supplying healthy menu options and grocery store owners offer healthy food demonstrations and label foods certified by the American Heart Association.

- Make the outside environment safe for exercise.

In New Orleans, community members are working with the Tulane University PRC to make neighborhoods safe for physical activity by considering changes such as adding streetlights to deter crime, eliminating liquor stores and improving sidewalks. Similarly, community members around Sumter County, S.C., are asking the University of South Carolina PRC to help them convince local decision-makers to support policies for new and safer parks and recreation.

- Support your friends and neighbors.

In many communities, residents help each other in the battle for health. In Chicago, lay health advisors offer an intensive weight-loss program at churches, schools, work sites and health care facilities. In North Carolina, women in a rural community conduct HOPE Circles for other women who learn to manage stress, prevent and control obesity and overcome barriers to change. They also exercise and prepare healthy foods together. Both communities have worked with their state's PRC to learn supportive skills.

To learn more about the PRC Program and how it is working with communities, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/prc>.