Engaging San Diego Youth to Assess Neighborhoods and Advocate for Policy and Environmental Change
San Diego County, California

- Demographics
  - 3.2 million population
  - 6th largest county in U.S.
  - White – 49%
  - Latino – 31%
  - Asian/PI – 10%
  - African American – 5%
  - Median income – $72,963
  - Median age – 35 years

- Geographic size
  - 4,200 square miles
  - 18 cities within county
  - 59 miles of beaches
  - Isolated from other CA cities
  - Borders Mexico
The Epidemic

Percent BMI not in Healthy Fitness Zone among San Diego County Children and Adolescents by Gender, 2008-09

- Male
  - Grade 5: 36.9%
  - Grade 7: 34.9%
  - Grade 9: 32.0%

- Female
  - Grade 5: 19.5%
  - Grade 7: 23.4%
  - Grade 9: 29.3%
The Epidemic

Percent BMI not in Healthy Fitness Zone among San Diego County Children and Adolescents by Race/Ethnicity, 2008-09

- White
  - Grade 5: 19.7%
  - Grade 7: 20.9%
  - Grade 9: 22.5%
- African American
  - Grade 5: 30.0%
  - Grade 7: 31.7%
  - Grade 9: 36.5%
- Latino
  - Grade 7: 35.8%
  - Grade 9: 38.0%
- American Indian
  - Grade 7: 40.1%
  - Grade 9: 41.5%

California Department of Education Physical Fitness Report
Call To Action

First published in 2006
Revised in 2010
Childhood Obesity Initiative

Launched in February 2006

Mission

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative is a public/private partnership whose mission is to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in San Diego County by creating healthy environments for all children and families through advocacy, education, policy development, and environmental change.
COI Goals

- Increase culturally appropriate **access to healthful foods**.
- Increase opportunities for **safe physical activity**.
- Increase opportunities to enhance **economic, social, service, and built environments**.
- Promote operational excellence of the **public/private partnership**.
COI Purpose

- Create, support, and mobilize partnerships across multiple sectors or “domains”
  - Government
  - Healthcare
  - Schools
  - Early Childhood
  - Community
  - Media
  - Business

- Provide leadership and vision
- Coordinate county-wide efforts to prevent and reduce childhood obesity
Benefits of Youth Engagement

• Better understanding of the impacts of environment on health
• Involvement in positive community change
• Skill building and empowerment
• Having opinions and perspectives heard and valued
• Increase community capacity
• Develop future leaders
Background

- Two pilot projects developed through the COI Government Domain
- Two recruited cities, La Mesa and Chula Vista
- Based on Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention (CX³)*
- Partners included:
  - County of San Diego HHSA
  - Healthy Eating Active Communities
  - California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition)
  - CanFit
  - WalkSanDiego

*Developed by the California Dept. of Health Services’ Network for a Healthy California
Process

- Weekly education trainings
- Neighborhood assessments to identify strengths and gaps:
  - Number and types of fresh produce in local markets/liquor stores
  - Number of fast food restaurants
  - Types of advertisements and marketing
  - School environments—walkability, safety, appearance
  - Parks—walkability, facilities, features, safety
- Analysis of neighborhood surveys
- Identify advocacy issue
- Advocacy training
- Development of community action plan for policy, systems and environmental change
Chula Vista

- Youth teamed with promotoras, partnered with San Diego State University
- Neighborhood assessments identified a local park in need of safety and infrastructure improvements
- Advocacy included meeting with city officials (parks, police, public works, recreation, redevelopment, landscape architecture)
- Testified to city council
- Recommended crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)
Chula Vista

Results:

• Removal of overgrown bushes
• Removal of dilapidated fence
• Made once-hidden areas visible and less inviting to criminal activity
• Improved landscaping and lighting
• Children’s play area
• New restrooms
• Drinking fountain
• More picnic tables and trash cans
• Enhanced pedestrian pathways
Chula Vista

Before
Chula Vista

After
La Mesa

• Youth teamed with intergenerational mentors
• School assessment identified walkability issues
• Students created photo essay and computer visioning
• Advocacy included presentations to:
  • Youth Advisory Commission
  • School Board
  • City planning and traffic engineers
  • City council
  • Grossmont Healthcare board of directors
  • Legislators at state capitol
  • Letter of support and photo essay for safe routes to school grant
La Mesa

Results:

• City of La Mesa was awarded a $550,000 Safe Routes to School grant to add sidewalks to Helix High School
• Scheduled improvements to enhance pedestrian access
• City council passed a sidewalk master plan
• City undergrounding all utilities around Helix High
• Leveraged additional SRTS funding $1.5 million in total ’07-’08
La Mesa

Before
La Mesa

After
Recognition

Chula Vista:
• Public Health Champion Award from the County of San Diego
• Golden Footprint Award from WalkSanDiego

La Mesa:
• Gold Medal Recipient from California Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Spotlight Award - Parks and Recreation (September 2008)
Youth Engagement & Action for Health (YEAH!)

- Leveraging success of pilot projects
- Developed by COI Community Domain
- Creation of training manual
- Half-day training sessions for adult leaders of youth groups
- Planned support and technical assistance for YEAH! projects
Youth Engagement & Action for Health (YEAH!)

Training Manual
• Why and how to change your neighborhood
• Gathering resources, planning, evaluation
• Recruitment and retention strategies
• How to conduct assessment(s), map results, and plan advocacy activities
• Neighborhood assessment tools/surveys
• Sample advocacy materials
• Additional resources
Youth Engagement & Action for Health (YEAH!)

Lemon Grove

• Students conducted assessment
• Identified public safety and walkability issues
• Advocacy efforts—in process—include letters to city manager requesting sidewalk improvements
• Homelessness identified as a problem
• Possible meeting between students and homeless advocates
Youth Engagement & Action for Health (YEAH!)
Youth Engagement & Action for Health (YEAH!)

Future direction
• Additional trainings
• Webinars
• Peer-to-peer network
• Webpage
• Additional technical assistance and support to YEAH! youth groups
• San Diego State University received funding from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Active Living Research program for evaluation
Contact Information

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