

Moving Forward

Congratulations! Having reviewed the ACSM American Fitness Index™ data report and this AFI *Community Action Guide* you have taken important steps in starting to address community-level issues to help improve the health of your community.

As you launch your efforts, have the ACSM American Fitness Index™ Guiding Principles for Healthy Communities at the forefront:

- ◆ Overall health improvements in U.S. cities must focus on the prevention of behavior-linked diseases by effectively addressing the underlying risk and community factors.
- ◆ The rise in chronic diseases attributable to physical inactivity and unhealthy diets are a “clear and present danger” to our health and healthcare systems, our cities, our nation, and our future.
- ◆ All cities in the U.S., irrespective of size or current health status, can make powerful advances in improving the health of their people through simple, affordable, effective steps.
- ◆ There is a need for even more synergy and collaboration to assist U.S. cities in actively making the moves toward better health.

As you lay groundwork for your efforts, also take some immediate action by following the AFI’s four action steps for promoting good health and physical activity. And as you involve others in your efforts, share these action steps with them.

1. Be a role model for good health and physical activity.

- Make a commitment to participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity and 10 minutes of stretching and light muscle training five days a week.
- Model healthy behavior to children by incorporating activity into the weekday schedule and by limiting TV, computer, and video game time.
- Recruit family, neighbors, coworkers, church members, or other social group members to join a walking club. Buy a pedometer and start counting your steps, and set targets to eventually accumulate 10,000 steps a day.

2. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to educate the public and bring awareness to the physical inactivity epidemic in your community. A sample letter to the editor is included at the end of this document. The media can be the most efficient way to communicate with the largest audience possible in the least amount of time. You can use the media to:

- Educate the public about what really causes or contributes to the physical inactivity epidemic in our nation.
- Frame the physical inactivity epidemic as a social concern that affects everyone.
- Promote services and resources that encourage physical activity within your community.

3. Volunteer your time for the cause by joining a local coalition in your community dedicated to encouraging physical activity. Check out www.americanfitnessindex.com for local resources.

4. Educate community leaders and bring awareness to the physical inactivity epidemic in your community.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor of newspapers have the best chance of being published when they are brief, focused, and to the point. Here are some other tips for your letter:

- Make sure that you include your full name, address, day and evening phone numbers, and your e-mail address at the top of the letter. Most newspapers will contact the letter writer to confirm authenticity.
- Write short sentences and limit your letter to no more than two or three paragraphs.

Dear Editor:

Physical inactivity and obesity are at epidemic proportions in the United States, resulting in an increase in the prevalence of a multitude of chronic diseases, poor quality of life and premature deaths. The health care expenditures associated with physical inactivity and obesity continues to rise each year with increasingly catastrophic costs to society.

The key fundamentals for improving physical activity behaviors include increasing awareness and motivation at the personal level; providing a built environment and resources that encourage physical activity; and setting policies to better enable individuals and communities to engage in physical activity as part of a healthier lifestyle.

According to a data report from the ACSM American Fitness Index™ program, [insert name of city] ranked [insert ranking of city] out of 50 metropolitan areas in community indicators for preventive health behaviors, levels of chronic disease conditions, access to health care, and community supports and policies for physical activity. Challenges our city needs to address include: [insert priority challenges from AFI data report for the city].

As a resident of [insert name of city], I am advocating and encouraging our community leadership and citizens to positively focus future efforts on improving our city's challenges related to healthy, active living in our community.

Name

Street Address City, State

Phone number(s)