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Healthier Together – St. Croix County Receives Transform Wisconsin Grant

Will Implement Proven Strategies to Promote Active Communities in St. Croix County

(St. Croix County, WI) – Healthier Together – St. Croix County today announced it is receiving a Transform Wisconsin Impact Grant to promote active communities in St. Croix County. The \$160,000 grant will be invested over the next two-and-a-half years in collaborative, multifaceted strategies to help increase physical activity in our communities as we work toward long-term, sustainable change.

It's a great opportunity to expand the already popular after school K-6 youth programs offered in many of the school districts last year – better known as the *Get Fit Challenge for Hudson Youth*; *Let's Get Physical! Move More, Power Up to 60!* (New Richmond); *Somerset Get Up and Go!* and the *B_Challenge* (Baldwin-Woodville/St. Croix Central) and increase community member access to and use of school gym space and grounds for physical activity.

“What better way to help children, adolescents and adults in St. Croix County realize their goal of healthy weight and increased physical activity,” says Cory McIntyre, Director of Student Services, Hudson School District and Healthier Together steering committee member. “Implementation of Healthier Together plan goals positively affects students and their families in our district. This grant will impact the county in a significant way.”

Bill Roll, Director of Programs for the Somerset School District couldn't agree more, “We're excited about the opportunities the Transform Wisconsin grant provides and appreciative of the support provided by Healthier Together.” “We're looking forward to a continued partnership.”

A mother of a 5th grader participating in one of the after school programs writes, “We're not an overweight family but health isn't just about your weight. My son absolutely loves the pedometer! I listen to him many times a day tell me how many steps he's taken and what his goal is. He's starting to challenge me! Thanks for a great program.”

Research shows that making recreation facilities more accessible to the public significantly increases a person's ability to be physically active. Physical activity is critical to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle, as well as curbing chronic diseases. Nearly half of people in Wisconsin don't get the recommended amount of physical activity.

“We need to improve health where it starts – where we live, work, learn and play,” said Wendy Kramer, Public Health Officer and Co-facilitator of Healthier Together. “Together, we will improve our communities so that making the choice to live a physically active, healthy lifestyle is easier for everyone.”

The Transform Wisconsin funding affords *Healthier Together* the opportunity to advance its work to promote physical activity. Already an established county-wide, community health improvement initiative founded in 2008, Healthier Together has the capacity to move priorities into action. With dynamic, multi-sector coalition partners, engaged communities, and county-wide collaboration, Healthier Together can help transform St. Croix County.

Healthier Together will continue bringing together new and existing partners to make meaningful, long-term improvements to the health and wellness of communities, county-wide. The funds will have a multiplying effect on the reach of Healthier Together into all corners of the county. The goal is to increase participation in the joint use agreements we have with five school districts and explore additional opportunities, including agreements with area parks, fitness centers, private wellness centers, and more. Access to no-cost or low-cost places for physical activity and recreation is important to prevent obesity.

“Imagine your town — lots of safe places to play and exercise. What does that look like to you? What role can you play as part of the solution? It’s the perfect time to partner together, make common-sense changes and select promising approaches that ensure healthy choices are within reach for all St. Croix families,” says Karen Hansen, Community Relations Manager, Hudson Hospital & Clinics and Co-facilitator, Healthier Together. “We have lots of hard work to do over the next 26 months, and hope you will join us!”

Healthier Together – St. Croix County is one of 30 communities/coalitions around the state awarded Transform Wisconsin grants in an effort to create healthier places to live, work, learn, and play. \$6.6 million will be invested over the next 26 months with the goal of creating healthier communities and reducing preventable chronic diseases. Transform Wisconsin is built on the idea that smoke-free air, fresh fruit and vegetables, and safe places to play should be available to everybody. Eight communities, including St. Croix County, are receiving Transform Wisconsin grant funding to promote physical activity.

The Transform Wisconsin project will directly reach about half the state’s population -- over 2.6 million residents. All across the state, communities will be building on local efforts to improve health by empowering individuals to make healthier choices and preventing chronic disease.

For more information on Transform Wisconsin grants and to sign up to volunteer with Healthier Together – St. Croix County, please visit www.transformwi.com.

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