



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department to Award \$1.2 M in Community Wellness Grants

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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health will award a total of \$1.2 M beginning in July 2012 to prevent chronic disease and promote wellness in communities around the state.

The grants are designed to target alcohol and drug use, nutrition and physical activity, and tobacco control – and to expand the Healthy Retailers initiative. Healthy Retailers helps owners and managers of independently owned grocery stores, convenience stores and gas stations create an environment that encourages healthier food and beverage choices, and discourages tobacco and alcohol use.

Communities can be awarded up to \$130,000 each for a one-year project period. The request for proposals was issued on Jan. 3, and communities can apply until Feb. 15.

“With this funding, we want to help communities make ‘the healthy choice the easy choice’ for Vermonters of all ages,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “Making that goal a reality takes collaboration and creativity on the part of all of us.”

One example of a community wellness project already underway is Lamoille County’s effort to create an eight-town wellness plan. Under the leadership of the Lamoille Valley Fit & Healthy Council and Lamoille Prevention Campaign, the plan is designed to promote physical activity, review ways to build more safe routes to school, improve school nutrition, develop a farm-to-school program, empower parents to help prevent underage drinking, and reduce binge drinking through a partnership with Johnson State College.

The proposed plan will go through extensive review with public hearings, the planning commission, the selectboard, and village trustees.

With community wellness funding from the Health Department, Newport has helped to create a “fresh start” community garden in the center of a block just off Main Street. The garden is surrounded by homes on a plot of land that had been a muddy parking lot.

“One of our gardeners said she lost 15 pounds and saved money on her food bills because she became involved in tending the garden,” said Jennifer Black of the Newport Community Education Center. “We still have a long way to go to build a healthier community, but the garden was a good starting point. We had great success and it was visible for everyone in town to see.”

Funding for the new community wellness grants comes from three sources: Vermont’s Coordinated Healthy Activity, Motivation & Prevention Programs (CHAMPPS) grants, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Health Infrastructure funding, and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment block grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information about the grant program, visit the Health Department’s website at healthvermont.gov/local/grants/index.aspx.

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