

Mapping the Movement for Healthy Food and Activity Environments in the United States

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOTS

This document was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and prepared by Prevention Institute

Principal authors:

Linnea Ashley, MPH

Manal J. Aboelata, MPH

Juliet Sims, RD

Sarah Adler-McDonald

© January 2008

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and well-being by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has focused on injury and violence prevention, traffic safety, health disparities, nutrition and physical activity, and youth development. This, and other Prevention Institute documents, are available at no cost on our website.

221 Oak Street
Oakland, CA 94607
510.444.7738
fax 510.663.1280

www.preventioninstitute.org

Prevention
Institute
Putting prevention
at the center of community well-being

Acknowledgements

Prevention Institute would like to thank each of the following individuals who gave generously of their time to provide us with the information, photos, and supporting materials that went into each organizational snapshot.

Chris Bedford
President
Center for Economic Security

Joe Schroeder
Urban Organizer
Community Farm Alliance

Rob Sadowsky
Executive Director
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

Jen James
Associate Director
The Food Project of Boston

Jennifer Lopez
Healthy Living Outreach Facilitator
Get Moving Kern

Kathryn Lawler
Consultant
Lifelong Communities Initiative

Marnie Genre & Max Elliot
New Orleans Food and Farm Network

Sally Flocks
President, CEO, and Founder
Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety

Berry Friesen
Executive Director.
Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center

Ramon Ramirez
Executive Director
Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste
(Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United)

Tim Adams
Executive Director
Teton Valley Trails and Pathways

We would like to recognize Makani-Themba Nixon, Praxis Project and Kolu Zigbi, Noyes Foundation for their thoughtful reflections and guidance during the start-up phase. We would also like to thank key informants from Ypsilanti Health Coalition, One Less Car, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and Piedmont Environmental Council, who gave generously of their time to describe their policy advocacy and community organizing efforts.

Carol Chao, Janani Srikantharajah, Sam Davidson, and Jesse Appelman were the Prevention Institute staff responsible for many hours of interviewing, data collection, and data analysis. Without their efforts neither the *Map of the Movement* nor the *Organizational Snapshots* would have come to fruition. Thank you.

Table of Contents

Overview	1
1. Community Farm Alliance.	3
2. Get Moving Kern.	6
3. Chicagoland Bicycle Federation	9
4. Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center	11
5. <i>Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste</i> (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United)	13
6. Lifelong Communities Initiative.	15
7. The Food Project of Boston	17
8. Teton Valley Trails and Pathways	19
9. Center for Economic Security	21
10. Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety	23
11. New Orleans Food and Farm Network.	25

This is one in a series of 11 organizational snapshots that represent examples of compelling policy advocacy, programmatic, and environmental change efforts designed to positively impact people’s lives and livelihoods. In these snapshots we hope that the reader will recognize interest and capacity among committed advocacy groups to apply their strategies, passion, and energy to improving opportunities for healthy eating and active living in their communities. The profiles were written and produced by Prevention Institute. Funding and guidance were provided by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Foreword

The organizational snapshots captured in the following pages present innovative efforts of 11 organizations advocating for improvements, predominantly in low-income neighborhoods and with African American and Latino residents. Each of the 11 community groups take on tough policy and environmental change issues like increasing access to healthy food, addressing safety concerns, and cultivating opportunities for walking and bicycling. In both rural settings and urban neighborhoods throughout the country, these snapshots paint a picture of pervasive challenges to healthy eating and active living and explore creative solutions to improve health and quality of life.

These 11 snapshots are part of a broader effort entitled, *Mapping the Movement for Healthy Eating and Activity Environments in the United States: A Snapshot of the Field* funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In December 2006, Prevention Institute embarked on a national search for coalitions and organizations advocating for change in communities of color and in low-income neighborhoods. Our scan of the field involved interviews with numerous key informants which resulted in semi-structured interviews with representatives of 312 organizations. The scan

included groups working on nutrition and physical activity advocacy and related issues like food security, sustainable agriculture, and the built environment, as well as groups advocating to limit unhealthy exposures (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, and environmental toxins) and to expand human rights (e.g., labor and housing rights groups).

Of the more than 300 groups interviewed, the 11 organizations profiled in this document represent examples of compelling policy advocacy, programmatic, and environmental change efforts designed to positively impact people's lives and livelihoods. In these snapshots we hope that the reader will recognize interest and capacity among committed advocacy groups to apply their strategies, passion, and energy to improving opportunities for healthy eating and active living in their communities.

Our hope is that these organizational snapshots can be used to offer advocates, policy makers, funders, and community residents with examples of how the inertia of active, engaged organizations and residents can transform communities—make them healthier—through changes to policies, environments, and social norms.

OVERVIEW

Mapping the Movement for Healthy Food and Activity Environments in the United States: Organizational Snapshots

The organizational snapshots include a description of the organizational setting, overview of their policy advocacy and environmental change efforts, discussion of significant challenges to the work, and “quick facts” about each organization.

The “quick facts” box in the upper right-hand corner of the first page of each snapshot draws data from the Mapping Database and provides the organization’s location, policy jurisdiction (local, state or federal), policy orientation (engaged in policy, poised to do more policy work, education orientation); approach (environmental/ institutional or services/programs); strong equity focus; issue areas; policy domains; and website address.

- 1. Community Farm Alliance:** With a membership base of over 2,000, CFA spearheads policies to support family farming in rural Kentucky and creates access to healthy fresh fruits and vegetables among urban, West Louisville’s primarily African American residents through a blend of programs and policies.
- 2. Get Moving Kern and Greenfield Walking Group:** A parent-led walking group serves as the resident task force to the *Get Moving Kern* coalition and is reversing barriers to healthy eating and safe walking in their rural, predominantly Latino community of Kern County, California.
- 3. Chicagoland Bicycle Federation:** In Chicago and the surrounding region, this membership-driven organization works on Complete Streets policies, local bikeways, safe routes to school, and public events to rally for streets that will accommodate bicyclists safely on their way to school and across the city.
- 4. Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center:** This statewide advocacy center works at the nexus of nutrition, hunger, and poverty as it coordinates a network of nutrition activists and professionals to advocate for statewide legislation to improve school nutrition, increase participation in the Food Stamp Program, and increase the minimum wage.
- 5. Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United):** In the rural town of Woodburn, Oregon with a more than 50% Latino population, the farmworkers union has developed a strong organizing and advocacy history on labor and housing issues. Now, through its 5,700+ members, the farmworkers, spouses, and children are also addressing healthy food access and physical activity to help local residents eat better and move more.
- 6. Lifelong Communities Initiative:** This program of the Atlanta Regional Commission pays special attention to the needs of seniors as it works to improve community design and support city-wide ordinances to support better walking and transportation alternatives and healthy housing for seniors.
- 7. The Food Project of Boston:** Cultivating fruits and vegetables in an urban garden and on a suburban farm leased from the city at minimal cost, youth work with *The Food Project* and participate in community-supported agriculture that brings healthy produce to low-income residents throughout Boston.

8. ***Teton Valley Trails and Pathways:*** Looking to find a balance between responsible development, land conservation, and a physical activity friendly environment, advocates and residents of this rural, sparsely populated city work together to advance local and regional policies that will guide development for years to come.
9. ***Center for Economic Security:*** Working intensively in the low-income city of Muskegon, Michigan, this relatively new organization is galvanizing support for a local, sustainable food system and hopes to get a statewide initiative on the 2010 ballot that will declare healthy, sustainable food as a right for every Michigan resident.
10. ***Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety:*** With a primary goal of increasing pedestrian safety throughout the Atlanta region, this organization has won policy victories and manages an innovative web-based system that allows residents to report barriers to safe walking directly to the appropriate city or county agency.
11. ***New Orleans Food and Farm Network:*** Hurricane Katrina was a recent memory when food scarcity became a frightening reality for many residents who already lacked easy access to healthy foods before the disaster. A food mapping effort started out as a short-term response to residents' need to get access to soup kitchens, grocery stores, or food pantries and now has become a tool for understanding—and filling—gaps in access to healthy foods and community gardens.

CENTER FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

Healthy local food as a right not a privilege

Food is the doorway to building an ecologically and economically sustainable economy—one that solves most problems, from pollution to disease to hunger, according to Chris Bedford, President of the *Center for Economic Security* (CES). “We’re part of a larger network of farmers’ markets associations and progressive people who care about food and the environment...What we’re doing in Michigan is creating local coalitions to build healthy, local food systems because the federal and state governments have shown no interest in addressing real food security and its related problems. So we have to figure out how to save ourselves. We’re about coming together to build a sustainable economy.”

“How?” is the key question. Bedford believes that both informed commerce and policy change are crucial. Founded in 2005, the organization has not registered any major policy victories just yet. Bedford is



CES IS PUSHING A 2010 INITIATIVE THAT WILL CLASSIFY HEALTHY LOCAL FOODS AS PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION Montague, MI

POLICY JURISDICTION

■ Local □ State □ Federal

POLICY ORIENTATION

■ Policy □ Poised □ Education

APPROACH

■ Environmental/Institutional □ Services/Programs

EQUITY FOCUS Strong

ISSUE AREAS . . . Nutrition

POLICY DOMAINS

■ Economic Development
■ Food Access/Anti-Hunger

WEBSITE www.center4economicsecurity.org

confident that change can be made. Before starting CES, he worked in Woodbury, Iowa, where he contributed to the passage of the first tax credit in the nation that provides rebates to farmers who convert their farms from conventional to organic farming. The policy also mandates county food service departments to purchase locally grown foods when possible (see: policy profile at www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/policies/woodburyIA.php).

CES does much of its work in Muskegon, a low-income city of 80,000 with the highest diabetes rate in the state and 10 superfund sites in the county of the same name. Even with this extreme adversity, CES actively and consistently engages roughly 500 people in the Center’s work. Bedford is approached regularly



SWEETWATER LOCAL FOODS MARKET SELLS ONLY LOCAL AND ORGANICALLY GROWN PRODUCE

by people who recognize the need to change what and how they eat on an individual and systematic level.

Working entirely with volunteers, CES helped to found and operates the Sweetwater Local Foods Market, the first farmers' market in the state to sell produce that is only local and organically grown. CES organized a citizens' committee to support the creation of a Muskegon County Food Policy Council. The Center is also pushing for a 2010 ballot initiative, "Healthy local food for a healthy Michigan," which will declare that all Michigan citizens have the right to local food raised in an ecologically healthy and sustainable manner. If passed, the initiative would establish ecologically intelligent local food systems as a state priority, curtail non-source point run-off into the Great Lakes, establish healthier food requirements for school lunches, and more controversially, classify healthy local food as preventive medicine. Bedford points out that Michigan spent \$3.7 billion on diabetes in 2004, over 90% of which could have been saved if people changed their eating habits, he says. "Medicaid could fund food instead of insulin, since an altered diet could prevent the need for insulin in the first place."

Along with the big push for the ballot initiative, the Center is seizing an unexpected opportunity to change perceptions about health and healthcare in the automobile industry. The United Autoworkers Union is taking over almost half a million people's health care, and CES plans to create a pilot program involving

union members that will address health needs through nutrition and lifestyle changes. Bedford is hoping this program will show the union that money can be saved by providing access to healthy, locally grown food rather than treating disease.

CES has completed a new film, *The Organic Opportunity*, to help economic development institutions, Chambers of Commerce, and local government see food as an economic development opportunity. Bedford sees the potential for local food systems. He is inspired by the little-known history of post Cold War Russian agriculture. Russians went from needing food assistance from neighboring European nations to having one of the world's most extensive urban garden systems. Those gardens make up less than 6% of the total farm land but supply 96% of the country's fresh vegetables. Comparing US and Russian agricultural systems may seem like a stretch, but Bedford sees a key commonality between the two countries: "We share a need to reclaim food on a local level to solve problems, like local food access and food security."

As with many non-profits, funding and organizational sustainability are concerns, but CES considers the biggest challenge to be a lack of leadership on a national scale. "No one of either party is saying, 'Hey, locally grown healthy food is important to our national economic security. People have to dream changes before they can achieve them. We need national leaders who encourage local action and use the bully pulpit to encourage the possibility of locally grown food and a productive local economy. For how secure is a nation—even a super power—that can't feed itself or stay healthy?'"