

Improving Health – A Better, Healthier Sullivan County

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Sullivan County

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County (CCE Sullivan) has engaged school and community partners to increase opportunities for residents to eat well and be physically active.

Sullivan County is a rural community located approximately 75 miles northwest of New York City in the Catskill Mountains. A tourist destination, Sullivan County has a rich history and natural beauty. However, in recent years Sullivan County has struggled financially, with residents losing their jobs and community resources amid a decline of the hotel industry.

Planting Seeds of Wellness

Physical activity is critical for good health. Walking and biking for transportation (e.g., to and from school) is not only great for daily physical activity, it is a cost-effective way to travel. Creating safe and meaningful opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily life can begin to reverse generational trends in poor health. This year, with the support of CCE Sullivan and Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) funding, a number of communities across Sullivan County have implemented changes to support physical activity. Here are just a few:

- Thompson and Monticello: A new Grow the Gateway committee, comprising county, state, and federal government and community-based organizations is supporting Complete Streets—a movement to ensure that roads had proper sidewalks, bike lanes and racks, and crosswalks. As a first step, the committee created a plan and design guidelines that support a range of safe transportation options.



Bethel trail enhancements

- Bethel: A trail with benches and a fitness station was installed to encourage community members of all ages and abilities to be more active.
- Mamakating: An indoor walking program was implemented at Emma Chase Elementary School by the town and Monticello School District. During the winter, the school is open after school to community members who want to engage in physical activity. During warmer weather, walkers use a community trail for physical activity.

School—the Hub for Health and Academics

Youth spend most of their day at school, so policies that support healthy eating and physical activity are an important component of efforts to promote the health and well-being of children. Good nutrition and physical activity improve academic performance, attendance rates, behavior, and life-long health and well-being. This year, schools across Sullivan County have implemented a number of strategies closely aligned with the school wellness policy, including offering yoga in classrooms and building school gardens. The county has installed salad bars in cafeterias and is replacing unhealthy food with healthier options.

Wellness at Work

Increasingly, employers are recognizing the importance of a healthy workplace environment. CHSC has helped implement more worksite wellness programs across Sullivan County. These programs are providing educational information in common areas including those in which food is served. Worksites are also teaming up with community partners to provide services such as food tastings, healthy vending machines, walks, yoga, and more. In 2018, nine worksites in Sullivan County were recognized by New York State Department of Health and the New York Obesity Prevention Center of Excellence for their progress in improving the health of the workplace environment.

Looking Ahead

CCE of Sullivan County, in collaboration with its community partners, looks forward to continuing to advance healthy places in the county. For many years, Sullivan County has ranked among the least-healthy counties in New York. With CHSC's continued support, CCE of Sullivan County hopes to change that.



to learn more...

email: Wanda Cruz at
WVC22@cornell.edu



**Creating Healthy Schools
and Communities**

The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.