

La Crescent Active Living Update

January 19th 2009

DOT Landscape Grant: We had a successful public meeting on January 7th to look at landscape design options and gain public feedback. The turn out and level of participation led the DOT representative to promise us \$9,300 for vegetative landscape materials. The 1/15 Houston County News article details the planning options. Sue and Bill Waller recently finalized the official grant application. The next planning meeting for this project is on January 29th -- 5:30—at City Hall. A date for plantings is yet to be set, however it looks to be some Saturday this spring. The date should be set on the 29th. There is a need for volunteers to help with plantings. There is also a need to look at other Active Living Bike and Pedestrian amenities or considerations that could be integrated into this landscape project.

Safe Routes to School: While we have a series of activities we'd like to begin planning around we still have not received official approval from the Federal Government giving us authority to spend money. We're holding off the planning process until we hear from them, as we don't want to make plans and promises that can't be fulfilled. We hope to hear very soon.

Mark Fenton Event: (arriving March 2 at 1:00 p.m. and available till noon on Tuesday, March 3rd). Linda Larson and Sean Dwyer have agreed to serve on a subcommittee with Sue and Chuck to plan activities for his visit. Anyone else wishing to work on this subcommittee should please contact either Sue or Chuck regarding planning times.

Certified Bike Instructor: Troy Ellis is making plans to attend a weekend March training in New Mexico. He'll then be available to provide our Coalition with 30 hours of instructional services —on bike safety and bike maintenance for children and adults. As part of these hours, we will also be asking Troy to work with teachers to develop units of bike safety instruction which can be built into the k-8 curriculum. We are also working with Troy to establish a school-based enterprise focused on Bike repair services and involving special education students. Troy has

numerous contacts in the bike world and is trying to develop partnerships with bike related businesses to bring in some income for service provided. He also envisions a program where donated bikes could be fixed up and sold as a source of income. A service such as this would be a great way to promote and support biking within our community. Chuck and Sue are working with Troy in developing a business plan for this venture.

Community Health Assessment –Survey: Brenda Rooney and Jenna Johnson continue to work on this. Sue and Chuck have met with them a couple times and we've brought Betsy Knowles – professor of business with a specialty in surveys -- into a couple assessment planning meetings to help us design the survey tool and the processes for administering it. . We're looking at surveys randomly distributed within the City of La Crescent and the La Crescent Township. Purposes of the survey include: 1) to give us baseline information which will hopefully show positive behavioral, attitude, awareness and knowledge changes over time and 2) to acquire information which could help us and decision-makers from public, governmental and private sectors move forward policy, infrastructure and programs related to active living.

One task we're giving thought to is how to frame questions related to people's perceived community and personal barriers to active living. We're thinking a likert type format for questions or a way to prioritise these barriers. To do this we need to develop a list of likely barriers in both the community and personal realms. Betsy mentioned this information, if cross-referenced with demographic information on respondents, will be useful to us as we consider changes in policy, infrastructure and programming. This Community Assessment Survey sub-committee meets again tomorrow—Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. -- in my office. If any of you would like to sit in on this meeting it will be held in Chuck's office. Our intention is present a finished plan for our AL Coalition's February 9 meeting.

Review and Revision of Community Plans The idea here is to take a good look at the current plans within the City of La Crescent to see that Active Living principles and interests are adequately built into the plans that will be implemented over the next few years. One important reason, beyond just the wisdom of having

plans which guide change in the community, is that state and federal funding sources often insist on having pre-existing plans which identify the changes for which a municipality is seeking funds. Those relevant plans that currently exist include the Parks and Rec Plan, the Bike/Ped Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Through conversations with Bill Waller, Mike Poellinger and Don Smith (of the Planning Committee) it's suggested that this spring we focus on the Park/Rec and Bike/Ped plans...and hold off on the review/revision of the comprehensive plan. Blue Cross/Blue Shield would like us to review and revise our comprehensive plan sometime in years 1-3 of our contract as they have seen this to be an important activity for moving forward AL change within communities. There have been meetings with Chris Peterson and others from Yaggy-Colby and Associates, Tom Faella and Jackie Eastwood of the La Crosse Area Planning Commission and Bill W., Mike P. and Don Smith -- to design a process for revising and reviewing the Park/Rec and Bike/Ped plans. We hope to have a proposal for the Coalition's review at our February 9 meeting. **Note:** Something we haven't talked about, and probably should talk about at our next Coalition meeting, is the idea of engaging people from the La Crescent Township (and maybe other towns neighboring the city La Crescent) to look at their plans and how we might work with them as we look at bringing about AL changes and help plan for the larger La Crescent community.

The La Crosse Area Planning Commission (LAPC) is currently revising the regional Bike/Ped plan and they would like members of the La Crescent community to attend a meeting in La Crosse at the La Crosse Administrative Building (300 north 4th street—room B190) on February 11th (5:30) to provide input La Crescent Biking needs, especially with respect to La Crescent to La Crosse Bike trail connections. Please consider this an invitation to attend and pass the word to other La Crescent folks who may be interested in this opportunity for input.

Logo: Public and private schools from the area have received the rules for our Coalition's logo competition. The deadline is January 30. We should have logos for our Coalition to see on February 9th.

ECFE –Large Motor Room and AL initiatives for young children and families.

Sue and Chuck met with Val Krage about this new early childhood large motor – physical activity room. This room is a new indoor facility available to young children for active play. We also talked about how ECFE and the Coalition might partner to support other physical fitness initiatives aimed at young children and their families. Val will be developing some new public awareness efforts and programs, and we've invited her to join our Coalition.

District Comprehensive Health Assessment and PEP Grant Planning:

Our Coalition provided the school district with \$560 for 10 substitute teachers so classroom teachers could participate in the District's Comprehensive Health Assessment. This assessment provides guidance to the development of P.E. and Health programs over the next couple years and is essential to the writing of a large federal 'Carol White' Physical Education grant for which the district will be applying (proposal due March 6). Below are notes from that 1/14 staff meeting.

Summary of District Gaps/weaknesses/needs and potential solutions

BCLO:

- a) **No P.E. options other than a broad recreation program – (volleyball)- focuses on behavioral objectives only. It's not standards based. No lifetime fitness components. No qualified instructor. They would like more options for kids and a P.E. instructor with a standards based curriculum.**
- b) **Limited nutritional options. Breakfast and lunch is shipped in. They would like more choices. They would like assistance from a professional food service person.**
- c) **Many inappropriate health habits. i.e. alcohol, chemicals, sexual risks (several kids are pregnant or parents), mental health issues. They have no qualified health teachers and limited contact with health professionals. They rely on public health, but this service is not available until the problem are already manifest. Few prevention activities. Students need help in making good decisions.**

Middle School/High School

- a) **Lack of P.E. Time. Currently, at the high school, only one semester of P.E. is required in grades 9-12. In Middle School it is offered every other day. National standard is 225 minutes of moderate to rigorous physical activity per week throughout the year.**
- a) **Lack of equipment for life time fitness activities. i.e. snowshoing, skiing, fishing, wall climbing, ice and in-line skiing, biking, and lack of fitness center space and equipment with fitness monitoring tools.**

- b) Need for transportation dollars for field trips/lifetime P.E. experiences.
- c) In Middle School, health is only offered in the 8th grade. Students need information and experiences which help them make good decisions and need this help throughout grades 6-12.
- d) Lack of adequate counseling and psychological services to meet mental and emotional health needs. Health behaviors and choices at younger ages are causing emotional health issues with this age group. We are too reactionary and not proactive enough. We need to help children make good choices and prevent poor choices. Integration and teacher collaboration –with new teaching models and structures we may be able to provide more time and attention to health and physical fitness needs of students.
- e) Call for more after school activities and parent involvement. Wellness club suggested with a wellness center within the building...with equipment and health monitoring tools.
- f) Credit for after school fitness and health activities was suggested as a way to help kids meet standards....and even counting sports activity toward meeting P.E. standards.
- g) Lacks of attention to helping kids prevent injuries and violence. Need to focus on building healthy relationships.
- h) Find more time during the day for student learning (8th hour). May require extending the school day.
- i) Inappropriate placement of health classes. Move to 6th grade in Middle school and have it offered sooner than 11th grade in the high school.

Elementary School:

- b) Increase P.E. time. Currently there is only about 100 minutes of P.E. per week (29 minute blocks of time 4 days out of 6) are offered. National standard is 150 minutes of moderate to rigorous physical activity per week.
- c) Need for staff development time for learning life time fitness/health teaching skills and help with learning integrated curricular approaches to teaching.
- d) No health curriculum in elementary.
- e) No time for collaborative planning.
- f) Need for more flexible scheduling.
- g) Need for more parent and community involvement
- h) No health standards in place. There is a need to help students make healthy choices and it needs to take place throughout the grades. Not being proactive enough.
- i) An integrated approach which blends physical activity and health standards into other content areas across grade levels and content areas may allow teachers to help students meet more standards with the time they have. There has also been a call for more time during the day to help meet standards.

District student support services: Generally seen as inadequate in terms of staffing—needs greater than help available. School Nursing services currently meet state recommendations, although that may change with current budget shortfalls.

Again –Our Next Coalition meeting is February 9 –3:45 at the Chamber. We'll send out an agenda on February 2. If you have some items you'd like to add to the agenda please contact either Sue or Chuck.