

Active Living by Design

Active Living by Design (ALbD), a \$15.5 million national program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), was launched in late 2001. Located in Chapel Hill and part of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health at the UNC School of Public Health, ALbD helps communities increase physical activity and healthy eating through changes in community design, policies, and promotions.

In late 2003, twenty-five diverse partnerships from across the nation were selected from 966 applicants to receive \$200,000 grants and technical assistance over five years to implement comprehensive initiatives to increase physical activity in their communities. More recently, 12 of these partnerships received an additional \$50,000 over eighteen months to pilot test approaches to increase access to healthy foods for children in low-income neighborhoods.

ALbD provides technical assistance through a team of project officers and a comprehensive learning network. Like the partnerships they support, the ALbD project team includes representatives from a variety of disciplines, including public health, health policy, city and regional planning, parks and recreation, nutrition, and communications.

Community partnerships implement five strategies that address the social-ecological influences on physical activity and healthy eating: preparation, promotions, programs, policies, and physical projects. This "5P community action model" provides the intervention framework for each of the partnerships. Evidence of the effectiveness of these strategies can be found in various studies, many of which were summarized by the US Task Force on Community Preventive Services, which recommends interventions with informational, behavioral, environmental and policy approaches.

Now midway through their initiatives, the ALbD community partnerships are making excellent progress.

While it is too early to measure long-term behavior change, it is clear that community changes already are occurring. Partnerships have amended development ordinances and approved new street design standards, created trails and greenways, implemented social marketing campaigns to increase awareness of opportunities for physical activity, changed school policies regarding recess and lunch menus, established new community gardens and bicycle recycle programs, and more. In addition, during their first two-and-one-half years the ALbD partnerships have secured or leveraged additional funding equal to over sixteen times that of RWJF's initial investment in their communities.

In an effort to continue to test and replicate the 5P approach, ALbD is working with a variety of other organizations across the country. For example, ALbD is providing technical assistance to local partnerships in Minnesota for community engagement and assessment addressing active living. Funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, ALbD anticipates that these partnerships will eventually build a vision and principles for active living into their communities' comprehensive plans.

Closer to home, ALbD also provides technical assistance to counties and municipalities funded through the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund's Fit Community initiative and to rural communities through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation's Fit Together grant program.

Through these comprehensive efforts, ALbD and local partnerships are collaborating in neighborhoods, communities, counties and regions across the United States to combat the nation's epidemics of physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

For more information on ALbD, go to: www.activelivingbydesign.org.

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