



Community Grant Outcome Report

Name: Fluoridation for Healthy Communities

Grantee: Couleecap Inc.

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Academic Partner: James Terman, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine, UW SMPH, Gundersen Lutheran Clinic

Program: Development

Grant Duration: 04-01-2008 to 03-31-2009 (12 months)

Expenditures: \$67,000 (100%)

Use of Funds: Health Education, Public Advocacy and Policy

► **Description:** Fluoridation of public water supplies has been shown to be the most effective intervention against oral disease. In 2006, only 10 percent of the communities served by Couleecap (an anti-poverty agency in Southwest Wisconsin) had adequate levels of fluoride in drinking water. This project sought to increase awareness of the potential benefits of fluoridation through targeted educational and civic efforts in La Crosse, Vernon, Monroe and Crawford Counties. The overall project goal was to persuade communities to adjust public water supplies through grassroots advocacy and community organizing.

► **Results:** The initiative convened steering committees and coalitions in a number of communities to address fluoridation. Members of these steering committees made presentations to community groups. Couleecap's Health Advocate implemented an education campaign throughout the region, and created permanent displays designed to dispel myths about fluoridation. Documentation of these efforts resulted in over 163,000 individual public contacts. The steering committees also supported fluoridation referenda in two communities. The Village of Holmen, in La Crosse County, passed a fluoridation measure 2,118 to 1,856. A similar measure was defeated in Prairie du Chien (Crawford County) by 500 votes. Other communities in the region may also soon find fluoridation initiatives on the ballot.

Project staff attributed their success to a steady, neighborhood-based approach developed and

carried out by local citizens.

► **Met Objectives:** Project complete

► **Baseline Progress on State Health Plan Objectives:** Yes, Access to Primary and Preventive Health Services

► **Academic Partner Role:** Community and social advocacy, consultation and preparation of educational materials

► **Matched Dollars (cash or in-kind):** \$9,634

► **Dissemination:** A series of educational materials were prepared to aid these efforts, including brochures, PowerPoint presentations, and a resource notebook to aid in discussions. Public Service Announcements, letters to the editor, and radio interviews were elements of the electoral efforts in Holmen and Prairie du Chien.

Project staff disseminated and archived the project materials and results, and developed a list of community recommendations for future reference.

► **Sustained:** Couleecap applied for, but did not receive a WPP implementation grant in 2008. Without continued funding, the health advocate position expired. However, local coalitions in Vernon Crawford and La Crosse Counties are actively working on fluoridation efforts in their respective communities.