Creating a Coalition to Reduce Obesity in Richland County

Community members work to create countywide environmental change.

**Description:** The Richland County Community-Academic Partnership for Obesity Prevention team created a coalition, Richland Fitness in Total (Richland FIT), and developed a plan to address the high rates of overweight and obesity in Richland County.

**Relevance:** With an adult obesity rate of 32 percent, Richland County ranked 56 of 72 overall in Wisconsin’s 2013 County Health Rankings.

**Partnerships:** With a subsequent Community Transformation Grant and partnerships with community organizations, including the Richland School District, Richland Medical Center and UW Extension, the coalition is implementing a plan to increase physical activity and the availability of healthy foods for all residents. Richland FIT has also partnered with a local newspaper and radio station to launch “FITness Champions,” a series highlighting community members who have made commitments to be healthy.

**Results:** Richland FIT attracted participation from the medical, education, public health, recreation and business communities. Richland FIT completed an assessment of community barriers and assets and developed a strategic plan to prevent obesity by increasing physical activity and promoting healthy nutrition.

A community assessment involving focus groups, key informant interviews, environmental audit surveys and a photo voice project. This creative project invited county residents to capture their environment and experiences in photos and use their “voice” to raise questions and suggest solutions for barriers to physical activity and healthy nutrition. For example, seniors in the county have identified safety and isolation issues related to exercising.

This project was awarded a $400,000 implementation grant by the Wisconsin Partnership Program in 2012.

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**RICHLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP FOR OBESITY PREVENTION**

**Grantee:** Richland County Health and Human Services, Public Health  
**Contact:** Marianne Stanek, Richland County Public Health, stanekm@co.richland.wi.us  
**Academic Partner:** Neil Bard, MD, Family Medicine, Richland Medical Center, neil.bard@richlandmedctr.com  
**Award:** $50,000 over one year