Wellness plan making strides in Cashton

Description: The Cashton Community Wellness Program developed a long-term and sustainable plan for creating convenient and engaging opportunities to combat the negative health impacts of living in a physically isolated region of the state. With the strength of current opportunities in Cashton and the addition of a well-designed plan, the project leaders are prepared to move on to the next phase of programming.

Relevance: Cashton, a federally designated health professional shortage area and medically underserved area, is located in Monroe County. Almost 4,000 people live in the Cashton School District, including 1,000 in the village of Cashton. The nearest urban center is La Crosse – 30 miles to the west.

Because of the community’s small size, residents often must travel to La Crosse or elsewhere for employment, shopping, medical and dental care, and other services. Thus, driving can consume a large portion of a resident’s day. Not only is driving a sedentary activity, the time required for traveling detracts from residents’ physical and social activities.

In addition, more than one-third of the school district’s students meet federal poverty criteria, 60 percent of sixth-graders in 2007 failed the Presidential Fitness Challenge and approximately 40 percent of students are considered overweight or at risk of overweight based on body mass index.

Results: This small development grant allowed the Community Wellness Committee to take the next step in its efforts to create a healthy community. Building on an existing partnership between the Cashton School District and Scenic Bluffs Health Center, the committee embarked on setting the stage for the future of this rural village.

Academic partner Will Cronin, MPA, of the University of Wisconsin Extension led the committee through a strategic planning process for improving the health and wellness of community members. This included program evaluations and a community needs assessment.

The evaluations showed that wellness programs generally attracted women and identified the need to improve outreach to men and Hispanic residents. Rather than a traditional survey of residents, the committee used a photo-visioning process that allowed Cashton residents to illustrate their health and wellness interests. The photos were displayed at a wellness celebration, and community members were invited to add their comments and suggestions.

The Cashton Community Wellness Program Strategic Plan, which serves as a framework for future programming and grant opportunities, identified four primary issues to be addressed:

- making wellness a year-round community norm for all ages and populations
- influencing village planners and decision makers to include wellness and multi-modal transportation in their planning
- developing a marketing and communication plan to better promote its vision
- creating a sustainable space to grow wellness programs

KEY INFORMATION

Grantee: Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center, Amy Schanhofer

Grant Title: Cashton Community Wellness Program

Academic Partner: Will Cronin, MPA, University of Wisconsin Extension

Dates: April 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013

Amount: $20,000

Program: Community-Academic Partnership

Project ID: 2277