

# HEALTHIEST NATION IN 1 GENERATION

**Your Community:** Our nation's health is in poor shape, even though we spend more on health care than any other country. The places where we live—our communities—can have a large influence on our health. Where we live affects the air we breathe, the number of places we have to be physically active, the quality of our education, and the availability of healthy foods and preventive services. Public health at the community level provides an opportunity to address many of the broader issues that impact health across our nation.

**Think about how public health provides the foundation for a healthy community.**

**What can you do to raise awareness of the importance of quality programs and services?**

## Did you know...

- Millions of Americans now find themselves living in “food deserts”—places with little or no access to foods needed to maintain a healthy diet, and that are filled with fast-food restaurants.<sup>1</sup>
- Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found the two main reasons Americans give for not exercising are lack of structures or facilities (such as sidewalks and parks) and fears about safety.<sup>2</sup>
- As many as 25 percent of children in America live in areas that regularly exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's limits for ozone, more than 25 percent of which comes from car emissions.<sup>3</sup>
- A healthy community offers access to health care services that focus on both treatment and prevention for all members of the community.<sup>4</sup>

## Take action...

- ✓ Talk to your elected officials and urge them to fund community programs.
- ✓ Encourage your local paper to write a story on the ways national health policies affect your community.
- ✓ Take advantage of local walking paths and playgrounds.
- ✓ Praise local companies for making their facilities accessible to the disabled.
- ✓ Encourage health centers and retail stores to offer flu vaccines.
- ✓ Ensure that proper hazardous waste precautions are taken in your community.
- ✓ Organize a “clean-up” day for local and state parks, beaches and picnic areas.
- ✓ Issue a “gold star” to local restaurants that receive consistently high health ratings.

<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislators. Replenishing our Food Deserts. The National Magazine of Policy and Politics. September 2007.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2010. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for Improving Health. Vol. 1, Part 7. Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup> The President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. Asthma and the Environment: A Strategy to Protect Children. 2000.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Healthy People in Healthy Communities: A Community Planning Guide Using Healthy People 2010. Washington, DC 20001.