

Contact: *Risa Wilkerson*
517-347-7891

Michigan Communities Can Earn an Award for Creating Active Environments

Michigan Communities that are working to become healthier places may be eligible to get a statewide award for their efforts. The Promoting Active Communities Award will be given this fall to communities who complete the Michigan's Promoting Active Communities (PAC) online self-assessment. The PAC assessment and award are unique in the country. Besides opening the door for public recognition, the award application process increases awareness about the what it takes to make it easy for people to be physically active – including public policies, zoning, neighborhood environments, and programs.

Awareness of what it takes to create an active living community has made a big difference in many of the 70+ communities that completed the award over the first five years of its existence. According to Denise Siegel, Recreation Manager for the City of Kalamazoo Department of Parks and Recreation, "Kalamazoo recognizes the need for a healthy environment, and by utilizing the Promoting Active Community self-assessment tool we can plan for our community and provide healthy alternatives for all citizens."

This year, the PAC is "new and improved." It has been evaluated and revised as a result of a multi-year, grant-funded project. The grant team includes the Michigan Department of Community Health; Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports; Prevention Research Center of Michigan; and Michigan State University. A PAC steering committee of more than 15 state leaders took part in the revision process. "Some of the best minds in the state made sure that the new PAC would be truly helpful to communities that want to be healthier

places to live,” said the project leader, Dr. Katherine Alaimo, Assistant Professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, Michigan State University.

In addition to improvements to the PAC, a new companion guide has been developed to accompany the PAC Award. Created to help Michigan residents envision and create safe, walkable, bikeable communities, *Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities* is now available for downloading on the PAC website (www.mihealthtools.org/communities).

All improvements were made possible by a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The improvements were based on an extensive literature review of current research related to physical activity and community design; focus groups with previous PAC participants; a review of other community design evaluation tools, and input from state and national experts. “Improvements in the PAC award application process reflect the best scientific research available on how to promote physical activity in communities,” said Rochelle Hurst, manager of the Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section at the Michigan Department of Community Health. “We encourage all Michigan communities that want to prevent heart disease and strokes among their residents to complete the PAC assessment.”

Communities who complete the assessment and earn enough points receive one of five levels of an award at the Designing Healthy, Liveable Communities Conference on November 13. The deadline to submit completed assessments for award consideration is August 25. Award levels include:

- Copper: Communities have made a commitment to becoming a healthier place to live and have begun to take steps toward removing barriers to physical activity.
- Bronze: Communities have taken significant steps toward making it easy for people to be active.

Silver: Communities have achieved significant progress toward making it easy for people to be active.

○ Gold: Communities can document outstanding achievements in making it easy for people to be active.

○ Platinum: Communities are models of commitment to healthy, active living.

Communities can learn more or register to complete the self-assessment (and be eligible for an award) at www.mihealthtools.org/communities.

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