

December 2009 - Issue #21

Local News

[Fight Against Obesity Taking Shape](#) (11/21/09)

The Republican, Peter Goonan

Springfield, Mass., Mayor Domenic J. Sarno announced in November the appointment of an 18-member leadership council to promote wellness and combat obesity. The Mass in Motion-Springfield Wellness Leadership Council was announced during a press conference at Springfield College. The assembled group immediately began a three-hour roundtable discussion regarding its mission, goals and objectives. Helen R. Caulton-Harris, the city's health director and a member of the leadership council, said the council's job is to mobilize the community and create policies the city can adopt to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

[Austin Recognized for Bicycle Friendliness](#) (11/20/09)

KVUE News, Shelton Green

The League of American Bicyclists, a 130-year-old organization with 26,000 members nationwide, presented Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell with the group's Silver Bicycle Friendly Business Award. Austin is the first city to ever receive this award.

[Everything's Bigger in Texas, Even Our Appetites](#) (11/19/09)

The Pine Log, Jonathan Garris

Many cities have started up grassroots programs to promote health and good eating habits as a means of reaching out to citizens young and old. Houston Mayor Bill White put together the "Get Moving Houston" wellness campaign and the Mayor's Wellness Council in 2005 to address the city's high rate of obesity. That same year, *Men's Fitness* magazine ranked Houston as the number one "fattest city in America." Through the campaign, residents of Houston became better educated about the dangers of being overweight and the need for better health. Houston's ranking in *Men's Fitness* fell to 10th place.

[On a Path to Fitness](#) (11/14/09)

The News Star, Editorial Staff

Monroe, La., recently opened two city-designated walking and biking paths that span 14 miles through the city. Speaking at their opening, Mayor Jamie Mayo said, "These two paths are a start of something really, really big, and we want to encourage our citizens to get in good shape and participate in this project."

[Somerville WIC Program Adds New Food Package](#) (11/09/09)

Wicked Local Somerville

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has introduced a new food package emphasizing healthy eating. It is the most substantial change since the WIC program's inception more than 30 years ago. "I'm very encouraged to learn of these latest changes in the food choices offered by WIC and pleased to see that the principles of Shape Up Somerville continue to extend further into the daily lives of residents in our community," said Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone. "This is yet one more great step to curbing childhood obesity nationwide."

National News

[WIC Aims to Fight Obesity as Well as Hunger](#) (11/23/09)

The Columbus Dispatch, Rita Price

The biggest overhaul in its 35-year history leaves the federal Women, Infants and Children

nutrition program with a dual mission: fight childhood hunger and childhood obesity at the same time. Proponents say it's possible to win on both fronts. But they also admit that it isn't easy turning WIC from a basic supplier of milk, eggs and cheese into a public-health campaign with food prescriptions so specific that only certain types of canned salmon (pink, not red) and sliced bread (whole wheat, never white) will do.

[Every Child Must Have the Guarantee of Food](#) (11/22/09)

Bradenton Herald, Tom Vilsack, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

We have another extraordinary opportunity to improve the health and nutrition of our children when Congress debates the coming Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The National School Lunch Program, for one, serves 31 million children a healthy meal each school day, and in some cases is a needy child's primary meal. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children ensures mothers and their children have access to nutritious options as well. Nearly half of all children born in this country participate in this program.

[President Tackling Kids' Obesity, Public Service on White House Lawn](#) (11/19/09)

USA TODAY, Mike McCarthy

In a TV spot that ran for the first time on Thanksgiving Day, viewers saw New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees zinging a pass to an unseen player. As we look closer, we realize the receiver was actually President Obama. The playing field is the White House lawn. The defender was Pittsburgh Steelers safety Troy Polamalu. The 90-second public service announcement is a joint effort between the NFL's Play 60 campaign to fight childhood obesity and the president's United We Serve public-service effort.

[USDA Backs Rewarding Schools Serving Healthy Food](#) (11/17/09)

Reuters, Christopher Doering

Schools that serve more fruits, vegetables and whole grains to pupils should see higher federal support rates than those serving less-healthy meals loaded with fat and sugar, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said last month. Child nutrition programs, which include school lunch and breakfast, are due for an overhaul but Congress is not expected to act before 2010. The government has targeted improving the nutritional quality and access to school meals amid rising child obesity rates.

[Fighting Obesity May Take a Village](#) (11/10/09)

The Wall Street Journal, Matthew Dalton

Exercise more. Avoid junk food. Such common-sense health advice has proved no match against the temptations of modern life, which have sent obesity rates around the world soaring. Now, government officials in a number of countries are pursuing an aggressive new strategy: enlisting entire communities to insulate people from these temptations and make healthier choices easier. "People are finally acknowledging that the obesity problem is so pervasive that it isn't just because people are making bad choices," says Laura Kettel Khan, an obesity expert at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Study Finds Majority of Parents Seek 'Healthier' Schools](#) (11/06/09)

Vending Times, Staff Reporter

The vast majority of parents want schools to limit students' access to high-calorie chips, sodas and candy, and to offer them opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, according to survey results released by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. Six hundred parents of children in grades K-12 were surveyed by KRC Research for the Alliance's study, and nearly eight in 10 said they are ready to get more involved to create a healthier environment in their local schools.

[Girding for an Uphill Battle for Recruits: Obesity, Poor Education Make Many Younger People Unfit for Military](#) (11/05/09)

The Washington Post, Christian Davenport and Emma Brown

It's tough enough selling military service to teenagers who might not be so keen on getting their heads shaved or buy the whole "we do more by 9 a.m." line. And the fact that enlisting today could very well mean a visit to the front lines doesn't help, either. But according to a new [report](#), there are other factors that make recruiters' jobs even more difficult: the country's poor education

system and the worsening obesity crisis.

[A White House Chef Who Wears Two Hats](#) (11/03/09)

New York Times, Rachel L. Swarms

Twice a month, President Obama's senior policy advisers gather at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to hash out strategies for improving the health of the country's children. Among the assistant secretaries, chiefs of staff and senior aides sits an unlikely participant: a bald, intense young man who happens to be the newest White House chef. His name is Sam Kass. And when he's not grilling fish for the first family or tending tomatillos in the White House garden, he is pondering the details of child nutrition legislation, funding streams for the school lunch program and the best tactics to fight childhood obesity.

Reports and Studies

[Play Matters Report from KaBOOM!](#) PDF

For 14 years, national non-profit KaBOOM! has been building playgrounds across the country in an effort to build communities and get children active and healthy. As part of the organization's Playful City USA campaign, which seeks to honor communities across the country who have made a commitment to improving the lives of their children through play, KaBOOM! commissioned a nation-wide study of different programs and local initiatives that increase children's activity levels. The resulting report, *Play Matters*, highlights 12 simple, cost-effective ways public managers and other local leaders can improve their communities using play.

[Voters View Prevention as an Effective Way Forward; Want to Make it a Top Priority](#) PDF

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Trust for America's Health released a new poll showing that 71 percent of Americans favor an increased investment in disease prevention and that disease prevention is one of the most popular components of health reform. The poll, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies, indicates majority support for disease prevention investments from across the political spectrum (85 percent of Democrats, 59 percent of Republicans and 68 percent of Independents) and across the country (72 percent in the Northeast, 73 percent in the South, 71 percent in the West and 69 percent in the Midwest).

[America's Health Rankings](#) PDF

Unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, poor eating habits and lack of exercise are costing the United States billions of dollars in the treatment of preventable diseases, a new report from the United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention finds. The twentieth edition of *America's Health Rankings* found that the nation's healthcare system has become adept at treating certain illnesses and disease, such as cancer and cardiovascular disease. However, Americans are struggling to modify behaviors that contribute to chronic diseases in the first place.

[Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity](#) PDF

This report prepared by [Active Living Research](#), a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, summarizes the most up-to-date research regarding how transportation investments can encourage healthful activity. The brief details how increasing access to public transportation, making streets and sidewalks safer and developing trails and bike lanes can affect people's health and how much they bike and walk for transportation.

[The Regional Response to Federal Funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects](#) PDF

This report, developed with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its national program [Active Living Research](#), examines how and to what extent regions across the country have used federal transportation funding to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The report documents wide variation in regional spending: among the 50 largest metropolitan areas, the five top-spending regions invested almost seven times as much per capita as the five lowest spenders. Case studies from Sacramento, Calif., and Baltimore, Md., show that use of federal funds for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is more likely to occur in places with stronger regional control over federal funds, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian staff and access to federal air

quality funds.

[Weighty Matters: How Obesity Drives Poor Health and Health Spending in the U.S.](#) PDF

A first-of-its-kind analysis, issued by Emory University in Atlanta for the National Business Group on Health, estimates that if current trends continue, 43 percent of American adults will be considered obese a decade from now. This would be a 12 percentage point increase from the current 31 percent. Treating the resulting conditions — diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, etc. — would cost an expected \$344 billion in 2018. That would account for more than 21 percent of all direct health care spending in the United States.

[Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences](#) PDF

This report to Congress by the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture presents the findings of a one-year study assessing the extent of areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, the characteristics and causes of such “food deserts”, and how limited access affects local populations. The report also outlines recommendations to address the problem.

Tools You Can Use

[Mayors' Guide to Fighting Childhood Obesity](#)

The *Mayors' Guide to Fighting Childhood Obesity*, developed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, provides suggested action steps that mayors and other local government leaders can take to address the childhood obesity epidemic in their communities. The action steps included are in three areas: the community food environment, the physical environment and the school and out-of-school environment.

Funding Resources

Health Impact Project Call for Proposals

The Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, encourages the use of the health impact assessment (HIA) approach to identify the health consequences of public policies, programs and projects and help decision-makers make better-informed choices that avoid unintended harm and unexpected costs. This call for proposals is intended to demonstrate the effectiveness of HIAs and promote their incorporation into local, state, tribal and federal decision-making. [Click here](#) for more details and how to apply. To learn more about the project, visit [Health Impact Project](#).

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