



Healthy Environments Partnership
Detroit, Michigan

Contact: Julia Weinert, MPH
Communications Specialist
weinertj@umich.edu
734-763-0741

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AUGUST 13, 2013

THE HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES HEART HEALTH THROUGH WALKING IN DETROIT

New collaborative research initiative supports Detroit community-based walking groups.

DETROIT, MI— Cardiovascular risk is significantly higher in some Detroit neighborhoods, including Northwest, Southwest and East Side Detroit, than state and national averages. Disparities in income, access to health care and safe places to be physically active make it more challenging for residents who live in these neighborhoods to address health concerns. Community Approaches to Cardiovascular Health – Dissemination (CATCH-D) is an extension of the Walk Your Heart to Health walking group intervention (WYHH) that HEP began in 2008 to promote heart health through leadership development, community action and policy advocacy in an effort to enhance neighborhood environments that support and sustain active living in Detroit. Part of this past intervention involved walking groups that met 3 times per week at community-based and faith-based organizations in three Detroit neighborhoods. Community Health Promoters led the walking groups and built leadership capacity among group members who gradually assumed leadership roles.

The Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP) has been awarded a Community Based Participatory Research Initiative grant by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. CATCH-D aims to integrate and share results from a multi-level walking group intervention aimed at promoting heart health in Detroit. Over the next 3 years, HEP will work with community-based, faith-based and health services organizations in the Detroit to expand the walking group initiative and enhance neighborhood environments to promote heart health.

“Residents in Detroit want more opportunities to be healthy. Walking groups are an easy way for residents to get together and be active while learning about health and having fun. Plus, it’s free to walk!” said Zachery Rowe, Executive Director of Friends of Parkside and founding HEP Steering Committee Member.

Results from WYHH showed that Detroit residents who participated in the walking groups increased the number of steps they walked. As participants increased the number of steps they walked they saw significant decreases in risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, including waist circumference, body mass index (BMI), blood sugar levels, cholesterol and high blood pressure.

“The benefits [of walking] are incredible. My sugar was out of control and it came down. I am off my insulin! My doctors love my numbers. It was amazing what walking did for me,” said Marlene Peoples, Walk Your Heart to Health walking group member.

With CATCH-D HEP plans to build on the walking movement taking place in Detroit. HEP will expand the walking groups and will support training of new walking group leaders. In addition, HEP plans to share findings from the WYHH intervention with Detroit residents, public health professionals, local funding organizations, policy makers and other key decision makers to encourage them to take action to support activity friendly environments. HEP will facilitate town hall meetings, community forums, and meetings with policy makers to share the benefits of; and will build the capacity of communities to engage in research initiatives similar to this one, that benefit the communities in which participants live.

“Our goal is to support walkers in Detroit. The vision is that residents will enjoy improved health through physical activity, community and faith-based organizations will increasingly host new walking groups, and decision-makers will support policies to enhance neighborhood environments, improve safety, and encourage active living,” said Amy Schulz, Professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health and Principal Investigator of the Healthy Environments Partnership.

HEP recently selected, through a competitive process, the first group of community-based organizations that will participate in the walking group capacity building program. HEP will provide technical assistance, training and financial support to the selected organizations to start and maintain walking groups. Organizations selected include: American Indian Health and Family Services, Hannan Center for Senior Learning (Luella Hannan Memorial Foundation), Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development, and North Rosedale Park Civic Association. A call for proposals for a second round of the capacity building program is expected in early 2014.

For more details about CATCH-D and WYHH and for information about how to get involved visit: www.hepdetroit.org.

About the Healthy Environments Partnership

The Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP) is a community-based participatory research partnership made up of community-based organizations, health services organizations and academic partners with a focus on understanding and promoting heart health in Detroit neighborhoods. HEP examines and develops interventions to address aspects of the social and physical environment that contribute to racial and socioeconomic disparities in cardiovascular disease.

Partner organizations include: Brightmoor Community Center, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation, Friends of Parkside, Detroit Neighborhood Partnership East- Warren/Conner Development Coalition, the Institute for Population Health, Henry Ford Health System, the University of Michigan School of Public Health and a community member at large. HEP uses a community-based participatory research approach in which all partners are involved in all phases of the work, including defining the research problem, design and implementation of the study, interpretation and dissemination of the results, and decisions about how the results will be applied to improve heart health in the city of Detroit.

HEP is an affiliated partnership of the Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center (www.detroiturc.org)

###