

West Central Wellness

Funded by the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Cities Look toward Complete Streets

Facing aging infrastructure in the heart of their downtowns, cities like Alexandria, Osakis, Battle Lake and Glenwood are tackling the challenges head on and looking to the future at the same time.

Each of these cities is using a concept called Complete Streets to guide their downtown street planning. The term Complete Streets means that our streets are planned to be safe and accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicle drivers – all users, regardless of their age and abilities. And the movement is taking hold in communities that West Central Wellness serves.

The City of Alexandria embarked on a lengthy journey in 2009 to plan for and reconstruct a five block stretch of their downtown with some clear purposes in mind; replace failing underground infrastructure, improve safety for all users, and boost the local economy. Alexandria's downtown project was completed in October of 2015 with anticipation. Soon after, other cities began to take note and follow suit. Osakis is set to reconstruct their downtown using a complete street concept in 2016 and Glenwood in 2018.

For many that live in Alexandria, the new infrastructure is a breath of fresh air. "I'm so honored to be a part of a community that is willing to put the funds, time and energy into improving our beautiful downtown", said one downtown Alexandria business owner.

Message from the President

Investing in the health of employees by creating a workplace wellness initiative is an important step that 20 employers are taking to increase productivity, improve morale and better manage health care costs.

Wellness champions from these worksites have been met on a quarterly basis to learn more about sustainable wellness policies and system changes that they can develop and implement in the workplaces. One worksite, Stevens Community Medical Center has created a worksite bike share program for employees to use on their breaks.

West Central Wellness FY 2014-15 Quick Facts

- ❖ Population served: 65,783
- ❖ Setting: Rural
- ❖ Square miles: 3,161
- ❖ FY14-15 Grant Award: \$250,000
- ❖ Years as SHIP grantee: 5
- ❖ # of Partner sites: 75
- ❖ # of Strategies implemented: 7
- ❖ Key partners: Schools, nonprofit organizations, local business & government entities



A bump out is shown at the corner of Broadway and 4th Ave. in downtown Alexandria

“Not only have these programs motivated management to continue the work started by the wellness committee, but long term wellness projects are being planned and funded through our company.”

Ashby School Garden Data:
 1,080 sq ft high tunnel
 10,000 sq ft garden
 720 sq ft raised garden beds
 24 tree apple & plum orchard
 200 sq ft indoor starter room



Ashby High School students pick vegetables from their school garden

“The vast majority of tenants agreed they wanted to live in smoke-free housing.”

A Bumper Crop of Healthy Food Choices

Fresh, locally produced fruit and veggies? Check. Recipe ideas? Check. Healthy food choices? Check. Students harvesting and preparing produce for school snacks and meals. Check.

You can find all that and more at school gardens in west central Minnesota.

At Ashby School, it all started in 2010 with a simple jar of homemade salsa. The Agriculture teacher organized a taste testing of homemade salsa. Only one student brought in salsa and that was when the teacher realized that the students did not have exposure to gardening and fresh vegetables.

That got the wheels turning for the school of Ashby. Over the course of a few years through SHIP and other grants students are now harvesting produce that goes onto the lunch line.

Ashby has developed a garden complex which is comprised of a high tunnel structure, raised garden beds, a 10,000 square foot garden, 24 tree apple and plum orchard, and an indoor grow/starter room.

Over 250 students and 40 staff are directly impacted by the gardens through creating a sustainable, local food supply on school grounds. Students are also now growing veggies to make their own homemade salsa.

Smoke-Free Housing Options Increase

In an effort to protect health, the Grant County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has worked hard over the past year to provide more smoke-free housing options for their tenants. Recently the Grant County HRA passed policy that assigns three of their buildings 100% smoke-free status. When asked about the change, the vast majority of tenants agreed they wanted to live in smoke-free housing. These kinds of changes are creating a ripple effect as other housing management companies in Hoffman, Ashby and beyond are recognizing that the health of their tenants is a top priority.

Creating Communities that Support Healthy Choices

West Central Wellness is a regional SHIP initiative that serves the counties of Douglas, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Grant. SHIP is the Statewide Health Improvement Program, helping to create good health where Minnesotans live, work, learn and play.

