



**ACTIVATE
QUAD CITIES**

Creating a culture of community wellness
through a coalition led by the YMCA

CREATING A HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITY





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Dear Faith Community Members,

Thank you for taking a positive step in creating a culture of wellness to support all members of your faith community. Within this booklet you will find tips, suggested guidelines and sample policies for creating a healthy faith community that have been developed by Activate Quad Cities. Our mission is “to create a social and physical environment that encourages healthy lifestyles.” This resource is meant to compliment programs you may already have in place, as well as, assist you in creating other opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles within other areas of your community.

We have been taught to be mindful stewards of our bodies and to care for our neighbors as well. As the rates of chronic diseases climb higher, we need to be attentive to how we support and nurture healthy lifestyles within in our families, our youth and our community. Creating a healthier environment in your faith community is not difficult, but it does require commitment, leadership and a concentrated effort. It may mean offering healthier choices at gatherings, increasing physical activity in youth programs or increasing the educational opportunities for our members around health issues. I ask that you read through the information provided and think carefully about the changes you could champion in your faith community.

To begin, we ask that you fill out the “Healthy Faith Community Assessment Form” at the back of this booklet and return it to the email/address listed. This assessment is intended to guide your agency to some areas where you can, through use of the strategies in this booklet, begin making progress on creating a healthy environment. In addition, Activate Quad Cities will use the information provided in the assessment to track changes throughout the Quad Cities Area. At the end of this booklet you will find some examples of faith communities that are already beginning to make a difference. We invite you to join them by beginning your own efforts and encourage you to share them with us as well. Together we can impact the health of our entire community.

Rev. Ron Quay
Churches United
and member of the agency/faith-based division of Activate Quad Cities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHY CREATE A HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITY?	p. 3
How Do You Get Started?	p. 3
INITIATIVE 1: CREATE HEALTHY FOOD GUIDELINES	
Why Offer Healthy Food Alternatives?	p. 4
Making Change Happen	p. 4
Other Tips	p. 4
Menu Ideas	p. 5
Sample Healthy Foods Policy	p. 6
INITIATIVE 2: CREATE HEALTHY YOUTH PROGRAMS	
Why Create Healthy Youth Programs?	p. 7
Making Change Happen	p. 7
Other Tips	p. 7
Sample Youth Policy	p. 8
INITIATIVE 3: CREATE GUIDELINES THAT PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	
Why Promote Physical Activity?	p. 9
Making Change Happen	p. 9
Sample Physical Activity Policy	p. 10



“It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural and physical environment conspire against such change.”

- Institute of Medicine

WHY CREATE A HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITY?

The problems facing members of the faith communities we serve are numerous – broken families, financial stress, and negative societal pressures. Additionally, the number of members that are faced with chronic health issues is rising. In fact, over two-thirds of our members may be overweight or obese and this puts those members at-risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, cancer and breathing problems.

As a faith community, we are charged with ministering to the whole individual and supporting them in anyway we can. As we face this health crisis in our members, we need to take steps to create an environment that supports our members and their pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. To do this we need to consider how we serve our members in all areas of ministry. From social programs, to youth programs to our celebrations, we need to look at opportunities to increase our members’ physical activity and ways we can provide healthy food options.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

- Look for those in your faith community that champion wellness - those from the medical community, recreation or sports - and invite them to join a “wellness or “member care” committee.
- Review the examples of guidelines for food, youth programs and encouraging physical activity that are included in this booklet.
- Choose a project for the group to get started with such as planning a healthy menu for an event or leading physical activity in a youth program.
- Begin looking at the culture and policies in your organization surrounding food and physical activity in your meetings and programs. Implementing policies that promote healthy food choices at meetings and events, providing physical activity opportunities for members and requiring healthy food and physical activity in youth programs can make a definite impact on the health of your members.
- Gain commitment from the leadership of your faith community – your minister and governing council – to begin creating a healthier environment for members of your faith community.
- Develop guidelines that work for your organization and begin creating your own healthy environment.



Initiative 1: CREATE HEALTHY FOOD GUIDELINES

WHY OFFER HEALTHY FOOD ALTERNATIVES?

By offering healthful food choices at meetings and functions, your members will have increased opportunities for making healthy food choices. Also, offering healthy food choices shows your members that you care about their health and well-being.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

- *Offer healthy food choices at coffee hours, lunches, dinners, potlucks and receptions.* Offer fruits, vegetables, and baked, roasted or grilled meats and fish. Promote small portion sizes.
- *Re-think mid-morning or mid-afternoon meeting breaks.* Consider not offering food at breaks, or if you do, offer only fruits and vegetables. Try offering a “physical activity” break instead.
- *Try non-food fundraisers, or try substituting a healthier alternative.* Host a “yogurt parfait” social instead of an “ice cream social.”
- *Identify and promote healthier food and beverage providers.* Identify and promote businesses and caterers that are willing to alter their menu offerings or adjust their recipes to decrease fat and/or increase fruit and vegetable options.
- *Educate.* Provide educational opportunities for your members on how to make healthy food choices.
- *Provide healthy food and beverage choices in vending machines.* For foods, offer choices that are low in fat and low in sugar. For beverages, try 100% fruit juices and water.
- *Keep food safe to eat.* Use safe food practices to ensure foods are free from harmful bacteria and viruses. Keep cooked and raw foods separate, cook and chill foods to proper temperatures and maintain through serving.

OTHER TIPS

- Where applicable, ask the caterer or business providing food to serve added fats, like dressings or condiments, on the side. Encourage members to do the same for potlucks.
- Include whole grain breads and skip the butter or margarine.
- Choose entrees with tomato-based sauces rather than cream, butter or cheese sauces.
- Include at least one vegetable, fresh or steamed, without any sauces added.
- Skip dessert or choose lower fat and calorie desserts such as cut up fresh fruit with low-fat yogurt dip, low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, sherbet or sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping.
- Make sure the leadership of your faith community is fully behind the initiative and sets the tone that members’ health is a priority.



MENU IDEAS

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY VENDING ITEMS

Lowfat granola bars
Baked chips
Pretzels
Trail mix
Dried fruit
Fat-free popcorn
Beef jerky - 95% fat free
Whole-grain fruit bars
Animal crackers
Graham crackers
Plain & salted nuts
Fruit leather
Whole grain crackers
Low fat Chex mix
Rice cakes
Sunflower kernels
Water
Whole fruit juices

COFFEE HOUR

- Fruit and / or 100 percent fruit juices
- Whole grain cereal and low-fat dairy or soy milk
- Yogurt—flavored non-fat or fat-free
- Whole grain bagels (3 1/2” diameter or less) with reduced fat cream cheese or jam
- Muffins - small or mini (5g fat or less per muffin)
- Fruit bread (5g fat or less per 1 oz. slice)
- Granola bars
- English muffins with jam

LUNCH, POTLUCKS, EVENTS

- Entrée should contain no more than 12-15 grams of fat
- Baked chicken with vegetables and brown rice
- Pasta with vegetables
- Boxed lunches - sandwiches with fruit. Sandwiches should include whole grain breads or pita wraps with low-fat meats and no added mayonnaise or butter. Toppings may include lettuce, sprouts, tomatoes and low-fat mayo, mustard and ketchup.
- Meats, poultry or marinated tofu - low fat (3g fat per oz.)
- Veggie pizza
- Vegetable soups
- Whole grain breads (skip the butter or margarine)
- Green salads (dressings on the side)
- Bean or veggie burritos
- Grilled chicken/turkey wraps

RECEPTIONS

- Cut-up fresh fruit and vegetables with fat-free yogurt dip
- Pasta and vegetable salads with fat-free or low-fat dressing
- Cheese—3/4” squares or smaller
- Whole grain crackers
- Lean meats—1 oz. slices

MID-MORNING OR AFTERNOON MEETINGS

- Consider a “physical break” instead of a food break: lead a group walk around the meeting facility or do stretching or yoga exercises
- Apples, oranges, grapes, raisins or 100 percent fruit juice
- Sliced vegetables with low-fat dip
- Low-fat yogurt
- Pretzels
- Nuts, trail mixes
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa
- Reduced fat crackers
- Popcorn (air-popped or low fat - 5g fat or less per serving)



SAMPLE HEALTHY FOODS POLICY

FOR USE WITHIN ANY COMMUNITY WHERE FOOD OR BEVERAGES ARE SERVED

Whereas:

_____ (your organization name here) is concerned about the health of our _____ members);

Whereas:

People have become more and more interested in eating smart and moving more;

Whereas:

Heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are;

Whereas:

Foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas, and low-fat dairy products are better choices for preventing many diseases;

Therefore:

Effective _____ (today's date), it is the policy of _____ (your organization) that all activities and events (examples of events may include: meetings, potluck events, catered events, community-sponsored events, like health fairs, etc.) sponsored or supported by this organization will always include opportunities for healthy foods and beverages by:

• **Purchasing and serving one or more of these healthier items:**

Fruits and/or vegetables—Examples include fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits (such as grapefruit, oranges, apples, raisins or 100% fruit juices), and fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables

Low-fat milk and dairy products—Examples include skim/non-fat or 1% milk (also lactosefree); low-fat and fat-free yogurt; cheese and ice cream; and calcium-fortified soy beverages

Foods made from whole grains—Examples include low-fat whole-wheat crackers, bread and pasta; whole-grain ready-to-eat cereal; low-fat baked tortilla chips; pita bread

Water—will be available

• **Encouraging non-food fundraisers or offering healthier alternatives for traditional fundraising fare.**

• **Providing healthy vending opportunities**

Examples include low fat, low sugar snacks and water, milk and 100% fruit juices.

• **Providing encouragement from group leadership to select healthy foods**

Examples include leadership promotion of healthy lifestyles and modeling of healthy food choices.

Signature

Title

Name of Organization

Date



Initiative 2: CREATING HEALTHY YOUTH PROGRAM GUIDELINES

WHY CREATE HEALTHY YOUTH PROGRAMS?

Caring for our children is one of our most sacred responsibilities. We need to care not only for their spiritual health but for their mental and physical health as well. Over the last 30 years the obesity rates of youth and adolescents have nearly tripled. Today, nearly one in five is obese (greater than 30 lbs. overweight). Overweight and obese youth face a number of problems including an increased risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, and asthma. Additionally, many obese children and adolescents face social discrimination which can cause psychological stress and low self-esteem and lead to lower academic and social functioning.

By including opportunities for physical activity and providing only nutritious snacks or meals in youth programs, we can do our part to reverse the current trend and assist youth in recognizing the importance of living a healthy lifestyle.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Evaluate your current programs. Look at your current curriculum for Sunday school or vacation Bible school and evaluate the programs for any opportunities for physical activity. At a minimum, it is a good idea to have at least 5 minutes worth of movement for every 30 minutes of program. Also, evaluate any snacks or meals that are being served for the amount of sugar and fat they contain.

Keep it fresh. Wherever possible use fresh fruits and vegetables for snacks. Even better – start a youth garden. It is an exciting and educational way to involve your youth participants in their own nutrition.

Read that label. Incorporate a nutritional label reading lesson into snack time. Present two different snacks to pairs of participants. Teach them to identify the fat, sugar and salt content per serving (be sure to define what a “serving” is) of each snack and have them pick the healthier choice.

Hydrate au natural. Drinks sweetened with high fructose corn syrup such as soda pop and many “juices” add extra calories to children’s diets without any nutritional value. Serving water is always best and 100 percent fruit juice can also be a good choice. Just make sure to limit servings of juice to 6 oz. or less.

Involve parents. Plan a family day with the youth participants leading everyone in active games. Participants can also plan a healthy snack or meal and the recipes can be copied and handed out to parents.

OTHER TIPS

Be a role model. Have teachers and counselors participate with the children in active games. This highlights the importance of being active to the participants and besides – it will be more fun! Also, leaders of youth programs should be aware that participants may be watching what you drink or eat. Whenever possible, be sure to model healthy eating behaviors when participants are present.

Encourage a supportive congregation. Invite those in your congregation to get involved in the health of your youth members. Maybe there is a dietician or a coach in your congregation that can be a “special guest” during a youth program and share their knowledge of healthy lifestyles.



SAMPLE YOUTH POLICY

FOR USE WITHIN ANY ORGANIZATION OR COMMUNITY GROUP WHERE YOUTH PROGRAMS TAKE PLACE

Whereas:

_____ (your organization name here) is
concerned about the health of our _____ (youth);

Whereas:

People have recognized the benefit of eating smart and moving more, especially for our youth;

Whereas:

Heart disease, diabetes and asthma in youth are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are;

Whereas:

Food products that are lower in fat and sugar and contain whole grains are better choices for preventing many diseases;

Therefore:

Effective _____ (today's date), it is the policy of _____
_____ (your organization) that this organization in youth programs will always meet the following standards:

Nutrition Standards

- Have no more than 35 percent of its calories from total fat (not including nuts or seeds)
- Have no more than 10 percent of its calories from saturated fat
- Contain no trans fats
- Have no more than 35 percent sugar by weight (not including dried fruits, NO candy allowed)

In addition, all efforts will be made to include the following:

- Items that have no more than 360 mg of sodium per serving
- Items that contain at least 2 grams of dietary fiber per serving

Beverage Standards

- Beverages that contain 100% fruit or vegetable juice with no added sweeteners
- Water
- Nonfat or 1% lowfat milk
- Beverages that are limited to a portion size no greater than 12 ounces (no limit on water). If juices are available in smaller-sized portions (6 oz.) they would be preferred.

Physical Activity Standards

- For every 30 minutes of program time, five minutes must be devoted to physical activity all participants moving during that time to the extent that their abilities allow.
- Additionally, group leadership will provide encouragement to youth to enjoy healthy foods and be active more.
- Examples include community promotion of healthy lifestyles, group leadership being role models for healthy food choices and physical activity.

Signature

Title

Name of Organization

Date



Initiative 3: CREATE GUIDELINES THAT PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

WHY PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Physical activity can be a significant factor in preventing disease and improving one's outlook on life. It allows us to care for the needs of the whole individual.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

- *Provide an on-site fitness facility.* If space is available, ask for donations of gently used fitness equipment. This could be as large as treadmills or as simple as bands, mats and exercise balls. Ask for volunteers with a wellness background in your community to volunteer their time to assist those wanting to start becoming physically active.
- *Incorporate stretching or walking breaks into meetings.* A dose of physical activity can stimulate mental thought to move a meeting forward and a good stretch eases tired muscles and reinvigorates stiff joints.
- *Provide bike racks.* Encourage members to park the car at home and ride their bikes to services. Providing a safe, convenient place to park their bikes is an easy way to support this effort.
- *Spruce up your stairwells.* If you have a built-in exercise facility (stairs) at your site, begin a “take the stairs” campaign. If stairwells are uninviting, try additional lighting or new paint and murals on the walls.
- *Map out or create walking routes.* Create a map of the neighborhood around your site that includes .5, 1 or 2 mile walking routes. Members can choose one that fits the time that they have. Also, they can compare the time it takes them to walk a particular route over a period of weeks and measure their improvement.
- *Provide support and facilities for physical activity and nutrition programs.* When possible, offer space to members of your faith community to hold a “walking club” meeting or bring in a dietician to hold a healthy cooking class. Additionally, offer space to larger community groups, such as weight watchers, to hold meetings at your site.
- *Provide newsletter space to promote activities.* Encourage groups of people in your faith community who are trying to become more active to “advertise” in your newsletter. This is a great way to connect individuals and form supportive groups that are becoming physically active.



SAMPLE PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

FOR USE WITHIN ANY COMMUNITY

Whereas:

_____ (your organization name here) is concerned about the health of our _____ (members);

Whereas:

People have become more and more interested in eating smart and moving more;

Whereas:

Heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are;

Whereas:

Physical activity can be a significant factor in preventing disease, improving one's outlook on life;

Therefore:

Effective _____ (today's date), it is the policy of _____ (your organization) to acknowledge the role physical activity plays in the health of our members and to create a healthier community through the following:

- *Stairwells and elevators.* Create attractive stairwells to encourage their use and take measures to decrease use of elevators.
- *Incorporate stretching or walking breaks into meetings.* Provide a "physical activity break" to refocus a group.
- *Provide facilities that support physical activity.* Our facilities will be available to groups pursuing physical activity goals. Bike racks will be provided and an on-site activity area will be provided if possible.
- *Physical activity will be promoted.* Members will be encouraged through newsletter advertising or by providing other materials such as maps to become more physically active.
- *Providing encouragement from group leadership.* Includes leadership promotion of healthy lifestyles, and modeling physical activity.

Signature

Title

Name of Organization

Date

BEST PRACTICES - FAITH COMMUNITIES MAKING A “HEALTHY” DIFFERENCE

ST. PAUL’S LUTHERAN CHURCH, ORION

In response to a need of a member that has children with obesity/health issues, the Fun & Fit Club was created. This after school program is for children pre-k through 5th grade, and older children become ‘helpers’. It started last year as a 2 day a week program for one hour after school and now meets M,W,F. The children walk from the elementary school to the church (supervised) and then play games (exercise) while wearing step counters for half an hour. Next the participants wash up, pray, have a healthy snack, followed by devotions/bible study/stories for another 15 minutes, followed by homework time for another half hour. The program also includes a one week summer camp, monthly lessons from health department staff and meets on a Saturday morning once a month as breakfast club. The participants make their own breakfast, play, have devotions with their Pastor and exercise. The Fun & Fit Club also has involved parents through the “Building Strong Families” night which included a presentation by the Pastor, exercise and a healthy potluck.

CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC CHURCH, MOLINE

Has an established wellness committee and has made an effort to have healthy snacks at their spring & fall presentations. Snacks include cheese and crackers, fruit, veggies and healthy dip and fruit juices.

UNITED CHURCH OF WOODHULL

Focusing on the health of members by launching “Get My People Going” – a program based on the Exodus story which allows people to pick 3 areas of challenge in either spirit, mind or body and to choose activities to improve in those areas.

CHRIST CHURCH, MOLINE & CALVARY LUTHERAN, MOLINE

Offers space and leads exercise classes for members as well as non-member of their church.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES AND HOLY FAMILY CHURCHES, DAVENPORT

Encouraged parishioners to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day and increase their walking to the goal of 10,000 steps a day during the “Walking with Jesus” summer challenge. Pedometers, walking conversion charts, food serving charts and safe exercise articles were used to educate the walkers for a safe, healthy exercise experience.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MOLINE

Partners with Trinity college of Nursing to offer the “Human Adventures of Me” for 3 year olds through 6th grade for five days each summer. The program covers different aspects of the body such as lungs, heart, bones and also nutrition, water, dental, hazards, values and exercise. Only 100% fruit juice is served in the program as well as throughout the year in Sunday school. Healthy snacks such as fresh fruit, cheese, popcorn and crackers are served. In addition they offer an exercise program for parishioners over 60 years and partners with Trinity on smoking cessation, diabetes and blood pressure checks and flu clinics.

CREATING A HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Organization: _____ Contact Name: _____

Please return copy to: Christy Filby, Activate Quad Cities • fax: 277-0056 • email: cfilby@quadcitiesymca.org

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	N/A
Overall Commitment to Faith-Community Well-Being			
In our organization a focus on health and well-being practices are enthusiastically promoted across all programs.			
We encourage members to participate in physical activities and enjoy healthy eating.			
Members are provided access to health education, health screenings, and other health promotion opportunities.			
There is a member of the leadership team who is designated to promote the organization's health & wellness initiatives.			
Our faith leaders are committed to a healthy environment for their members.			
Healthy Eating			
Meetings and events have nutritious food and drink choices.			
Fundraisers utilizing food have nutritious food and drink choices.			
Donations are evaluated for nutritional value.			
Vending machines have nutritious food & drink choices.			
Members are provided with educational opportunities on how to prepare foods in healthier ways.			
Healthy Youth Programs			
Healthy, nutritious snacks are served in youth programs – preferably fruits and vegetables.			
Beverages served in youth programs are limited to water or 100% fruit juices.			
Physical activity is a part of all our youth programs.			
Parents are involved in efforts to encourage physical activity and nutrition with their children			
Promoting Physical Activity			
Stairways are attractive and safe for all (light, color, decoration, surfaces) and there is signage encouraging use of stairwells.			
There are safe and attractive outdoor walking paths / routes.			
We provide facilities that support physical activity, both for our members and the community.			
We promote physical activity opportunities to our members.			
Policies			
There are written policies/guidelines that encourage healthy eating at meetings and events.			
There are written policies/guidelines that ensure healthy eating and physical activity in youth programs.			
There are written policies/guidelines that encourage physical activity.			
Comments			



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For more information, or to become a part of
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