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# making the healthy choice the easy choice

Community Obesity Strategy Newsletter

WINTER 2007  
ISSUE 1

## A message from the Chair

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the first issue of *Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice Newsletter*. In one short year, we've held three community forums, a Community Obesity Strategy Steering Committee was created, vision and mission statements were developed, and sub-committees have come together to work on community-identified priorities.

This newsletter will be produced three times a year, and it is one way that we aim to keep you informed and up-to-date about the Community Obesity Strategy. The premier issue provides information about all of the accomplishments mentioned above. Please feel free to share this newsletter with your colleagues.

The rise in overweight and obesity rates is a key health priority for our community, and we all have a role to play to ensure that the citizens of Hamilton are healthy. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to contribute your time and expertise to the Community Obesity Strategy.

Dr. Elizabeth Richardson, Chair,  
Community Obesity Strategy Steering Committee

## Steering Committee Members

Dr. Elizabeth Richardson, Chair  
City of Hamilton, Public Health Services

Randy Calvert, Co-Chair,  
Children's Exercise & Nutrition Centre

Genevieve Hladysh, YMCA

Marg Taylor, YWCA Hamilton

Tracy Hussey, Hamilton Family Health Team

Jackie Bajus, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board

Debbie Sprentz, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Donna Rawlin, Mohawk College

Vanessa Grupe, City of Hamilton,  
Planning & Economic Development

Shatha Qaisi, SISO

Bill Fenwick, City of Hamilton,  
Community Services, Culture & Recreation

Duane Dahl, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' & Girls' Club

Joanne Malar, La Santé Life

Kristen West, City of Hamilton,  
Planning & Economic Development

Arya Sharma, Canadian Obesity Network

Bonnie Topic, Dofasco, Medical Services

Carol Clarke, Hamilton Family Health Team

John Byl, Redeemer College



# Baseline Data Sub-Committee

In response to one of the four key priorities identified by the community, the Baseline Data Sub-Committee was formed in late April 2006. This group's initial task was to gather the baseline data needed to help inform the obesity strategy. In less than a year this sub-committee has accomplished much.

To date, the group has:

- developed Terms of Reference to help guide their work
- gathered local, provincial, and national epidemiological data
- mapped local nutrition and physical activity opportunities
- reviewed key documents for evidence for effective strategies
- conducted an electronic survey of local healthy weights/obesity programs and initiatives
- conducted an electronic survey of local researchers

Next steps include developing a framework to build a “database” of the information within the areas mentioned above. The group is offering to host a meeting to facilitate the potential for collaboration amongst researchers in Hamilton. This group will also be further defining their role in supporting the evaluation pieces for the community obesity strategy. In anticipation of the group's role involving surveillance activities, the name has been changed to Community Obesity Strategy Surveillance Committee.

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# Policy Sub-Committee

The first meeting of the Policy Sub-Committee took place on Tuesday, December 11, 2006. The group looked at Hamilton specific physical activity and healthy eating policies that are currently being developed or that are already in existence. From this list, gaps in policy were identified, especially in regards to the built environment. In order to provide environments that support a healthy, active lifestyle, the committee brainstormed ideas about how we can advocate for healthy public policy in attempts to close some of these policy gaps. Further discussion and brainstorming will occur at the next meeting, which is scheduled for late January.

## Members

**Dr. Julie Emili, City of Hamilton,  
Public Health Services**

**Terry Petrenchik,  
School of Rehabilitation Science  
CANCHILD Centre for Childhood Disability Research,  
McMaster University**

**Tracy Hussey, Hamilton Family Health Team**

**Anwar Merchant, Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics,  
Population Health Research Institute, McMaster University**

**Amy Pender, Hamilton Family Health Team & McMaster  
Children's Hospital**

**Bonnie Topic, Dofasco, Medical Services**

**Mamdouh Shubair, City of Hamilton, Public Health Services**

**Sandy Skrzypczyk, City of Hamilton,  
Public Health Services**



## Members

**Jackie Bajus, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board**

**Alison Bochsler,  
City of Hamilton, Public Health Services**

**Dorothy Elliott,  
City of Hamilton, Public Health Services**

**Vanessa Grupe, City of Hamilton,  
Planning & Economic Development**

**Gary Makins, City of Hamilton,  
Community Services, Culture & Recreation**

**Anwar Merchant, Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics,  
Population Health Research Institute, McMaster University**

**Marg Taylor, YWCA Hamilton**

**Kristen West, City of Hamilton,  
Planning & Economic Development**

**Duane Dahl, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' & Girls' Club**

# Communication Campaign Sub-Committee

The Communication Campaign Sub-Committee has been meeting since December 2006, and they are in the initial phase of developing a social marketing campaign. The committee's objective is to develop an awareness campaign that will encourage small lifestyle changes. The campaign will target families and encourage healthy eating and physical activity changes to prevent weight gain and support the efforts of those trying to achieve a healthy weight. Implementation for the campaign is scheduled for 2007.

The communication campaign will target parents of elementary school children ages 4 to 12. This will be an enhancement to the daily physical activity requirements currently being implemented in the schools. Research suggests that parents can play a key role in children's eating and physical activity patterns, which can develop into behaviours that promote good health or contribute to poor health. The family environment can affect a child's weight through the family's food preferences and activity

patterns. Parental obesity is associated with youth obesity. Unfortunately, obesity often persists into adulthood; once a child is overweight or obese, further weight gain is likely and few return to a normal weight range.

The behaviours the campaign will focus on are physical activity, healthy eating, and healthy family choices related to physical activity and meal time. Physical activity messages will focus on the daily integration of activity, decreasing screen time, and playing outside. The nutrition messages will focus on healthy snacks/lunches, increasing vegetable and fruit consumption, and decreasing the intake of soft drinks and other high calorie, low nutrient beverages.

A graphic design company has been selected and will be presenting the initial design concept at the end of January 2007. The Sub-Committee will be providing recommendations and a budget for the communication campaign to the Steering Committee by early spring.

## Members

**Genevieve Hladysh, Chair, YMCA**

**Marg Taylor, YWCA Hamilton**

**Carol Clarke,  
Hamilton Family Health Team**

**Joanne Malar, La Santé Life**

**Tammy Falletta,  
Hamilton Diabetes Network**

**Sandy Skrzypczyk, City of Hamilton,  
Public Health Services**

**Mohit Wadhvani, City of Hamilton,  
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