

# North Country Health Alliance



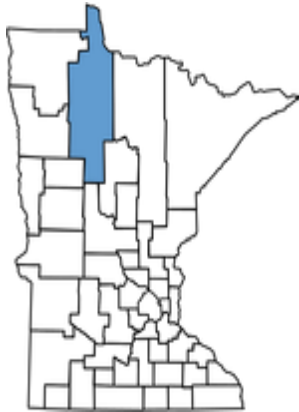
*Building Healthier Communities Together*

# Fact Sheet

June 2016

## About North Country Community Health Services

North Country Community Health Services (CHS) is creating healthier communities in Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard and Lake of the Woods counties. Our work focuses on promoting smoke-free environments, healthy eating and active living where people live, work and play.



## North Country Community Health Services by the numbers

FY 2016-17 award: \$490,605  
Partner sites: 40  
Years as SHIP grantee: 7

## Working together to create healthier communities

Since the inception of our SHIP grant in 2009, North Country CHS has had tremendous success. As of 2015, we established 90 partner sites and of those sites, 83 were actively implementing strategies. Due to a reduction in our funding in the latest round of SHIP, we are focusing our resources in Healthcare, Workplaces, Schools and Community settings and will target our strategies for the greatest impact.

## Why SHIP matters

Cities and towns are investing in the health of schools, worksites, housing, health care and child care facilities. While we have made great progress through our SHIP efforts, there's more work to do. According to the 2014 Northwest Minnesota

### Health Needs Assessment Survey:

- 66.3 percent of adult residents are either overweight or obese (35.9 percent overweight/30.4 percent obese).
- 12.9 percent of adult residents smoke cigarettes.
- 69 percent of adult residents are *not* meeting recommended physical activity guidelines – that is, either doing 30+ minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days per week, or doing 20+ minutes of vigorous physical activity at least three days per week.

## Where we're working & how we're making a difference



### 24 School Partners

- Farm to School
- Smarter Lunchroom
- Active living
- Safe Routes to School
- Food hub



### 3 Healthcare Partners

- Falls prevention (assess for Screen, Counsel, Refer, Follow-up in clinical settings)
- Develop a referral process in all four counties in health care and/or long-term care organizations



### 5 Tobacco-free Living Partners

- Point of sale training
- Smoke-free housing



### 8 Workplace Partners

- Organizational planning
- Tobacco-free living
- Healthy eating
- Active living
- Breastfeeding support

## **LOW County counters tobacco industry advertising strategies to reduce youth tobacco use**

Nearly one in five Minnesota high school students use tobacco, according to the 2014 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey. More than 102,100 Minnesota youth are projected to die from smoking alone, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Lake of the Woods Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) is working to reduce youth tobacco use and exposure by countering industry advertising and marketing strategies.

Tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Minnesota, and industry marketing strategies still target youth by placing cigarette advertisements at child-eye level or offering candy-like flavors in tobacco products, like grape or bubble gum. These strategies are often referred to as point-of-sale (POS) strategies.

National data on smoking use by teens also raises concerns. The CDC notes that if the current rate of smoking persists, one in every 13 youth ages 17 years or younger are predicted to die prematurely from a smoking-related illness.

In March 2016, Lake of the Woods SHIP staff received the American Lung Association's Point of Sale training, which detailed how the commercial tobacco industry influences youth and adult tobacco use behaviors through POS marketing strategies. It also outlined POS policy options. "We were trained on conducting tobacco audits in our area to help learn which stores or bars are selling tobacco products and what marketing strategies they are using," said Melody Otto, Lake of the Woods SHIP staff.

Beltrami and Clearwater counties conducted POS audits in 2014. Results helped gain support for policy change, such as increased tobacco licensing costs for tobacco retailers. "We plan to share the information across the county to demonstrate how POS impacts youth and adult tobacco behavior,"



she added. The training included representation from the County Sheriff Department, District Attorney, Public Health, the Prevention Coalition and Social Services.

### **Reaching out to property managers**

In conjunction with the POS training, Lake of the Woods SHIP has also been working with landlords and property managers on implementing a "no tobacco use" policy for rental properties throughout the county. With help from the American Lung Association, Otto mailed post cards to landlords and property managers in Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard and Lake of the Woods counties inviting them to adopt a smoke-free policy in 2016. Otto is also planning a "lunch and learn" session later this year.

"Our goal is to decrease the amount of tobacco use in the county, especially among youth. We want to raise awareness about how industry marketing practices impact youth and adult tobacco use behavior and learn how data can be used to support policy and community change efforts," said Otto.

Lake of the Woods SHIP will conduct tobacco audits in summer 2016 and will share results later this year.

## Expanding healthy eating for Park Rapids and Laporte schools

More fresh, locally-grown foods will make their way into cafeterias in Park Rapids and Laporte school districts, thanks to a \$45,000 Farm to School grant awarded to the districts through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The drive to receive the grant is a natural extension of the schools' work to expand healthy eating options for students through the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

North Country Community Health Services Agency, in cooperation with Catholic Health Initiative (CHI) St. Joseph's Health in Park Rapids, worked with the two schools since SHIP first launched in 2009.

The SHIP collaboration led both districts to start wellness committees that have guided Farm to School plans. Park Rapids School District now has a school-based agriculture plot on its property and has purchased a new hoop house that will extend the school's growing season. Laporte's staff attended SHIP-sponsored local food service training, and several initiatives were launched after their participation.

Laporte also has tastings of locally grown foods in school cafeterias, and there are plans for a school-based food plot. Students there already have access to locally grown foods, with 10 percent of the school's food budget spent on produce from the area. With the new Farm to School grant, the goal is to increase the purchase of local foods by 20 percent.

The Farm to School grant for Park Rapids Area and Laporte schools is one of 74 projects spanning 39 states to receive funding from the USDA.



### Farm to School enriches connections to healthy food

Farm to School enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools. In addition to improving students' health, when schools buy local, they create new markets for producers and contribute to vibrant communities.

"In our planning we found that if kids get involved in the growing process they understand that the foods that look less appealing, often the vegetables, can actually be pretty tasty," said RaeAnn Mayer, Community Health Director at CHI St. Joseph's Health. "Kids like to eat things they have helped produce, from planting the seed to harvesting the crop."

The Laporte taste testing resulted in getting students more willing to sample foods. They also tried some vegetables, including beets, and liked those, too.

The need to change eating habits early in life is there. According to the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey, 22.5 percent of Hubbard County 8th graders identified themselves as overweight.

Efforts like Farm to School should help that change over time as students learn about healthier food options and eat healthier.

## Kelliher School District gets the gold for healthy eating, active schools efforts

Kelliher School District is the first and only district in the U.S. to win the Gold Award of Distinction under new, harder-to-achieve criteria in the 2015 U.S. Department of Agriculture's HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms competition, which recognizes districts that successfully incorporate nutrition and physical activity into their curriculum.

That's a big honor for a small northern Minnesota school district of about 250 students. The recognition in 2015 grew in part out of the district's participation in the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

"Kelliher has been involved with SHIP since it started," said Josh Larson, North Country Health Alliance SHIP staff. "That early involvement helped them start programs that helped them get the award."

Many of those initiatives are now a normal part of the Kelliher school day, and SHIP continues to help the district improve students' lives.

### Recognizing the value of SHIP

"We immediately recognized the value and worth of what SHIP was offering," said Tim Lutz, Kelliher School District superintendent. "As a rural school with a high poverty level, we were very cognizant of the needs of our students to learn about healthy eating, physical activity and social/emotional well-being."

Kelliher efforts include "Grab and Go" breakfast, a fruit and vegetable bar, a school-based agriculture project, Farm to School activities, increased physical education and after-school programs.

The HealthierUS Schools Challenge recognizes schools that have made changes like those supported through SHIP. In 2014 the USDA incorporated new criteria for the challenge, including Smarter Lunchroom components. The Gold Award of Distinction was awarded to 319 schools before 2014, but Kelliher is the only district honored since the changes.



The Smarter Lunchroom movement applies practical, research-based principles and strategies that encourage kids to make healthier choices and decrease plate waste. They include structuring lunch lines so healthier food options are easier to access, having cafeteria staff encourage better choices and giving healthier foods creative, more appealing names.

"For our small district, this recognition is a validation of all that we try to do to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff," Lutz said. "We believe that this honor is a strong testimonial that if a district as small as Kelliher can achieve positive changes, then it is possible in any school district anywhere."

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## North Country Health Alliance

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