

press release



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LiveWell Colorado Spearheads Programs Statewide to Address Colorado's Childhood Obesity Crisis; Highlights Efforts during National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Colorado's Childhood Obesity Rates are Outpacing the Rest of the Country; LiveWell Colorado Promotes Change in Homes, Schools and Communities

DENVER (Sept. 20, 2011) – Colorado may have the lowest adult obesity rate in the U.S., but its childhood obesity rate – 23rd in the country – is no cause for celebration. Childhood obesity in Colorado increased 23 percent between 2003 and 2007, the second-fastest rate of increase in the nation. To address this critical health issue, LiveWell Colorado has been taking a multi-faceted, collaborative approach, working with organizations across Colorado to create programs that tackle childhood obesity at the household, school, community and policy level.

On Aug. 31, 2011, President Barack Obama issued a proclamation naming September National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, citing the dramatic rise in obesity as a threat with “far-reaching, long-term effects on our children's health, livelihoods and futures.”

“We all play a role in ensuring the health of our children,” said Maren Stewart, president and CEO of [LiveWell Colorado](http://www.livewellcolorado.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado. “A long-term solution must combine personal behavior change with environmental and policy changes, including the availability of safe, walkable routes to schools and parks; changes in school policy, such as scratch cooking in cafeterias and physical activity minimums; and changes in state and community policy that provide more opportunities for all Coloradans to eat healthy and be active. All of these elements have an impact and only together will they enact sustainable change.”

LiveWell Colorado's efforts to tackle childhood obesity include:

- **Changes in Schools:** LiveWell Colorado is responsible for coordinating programming that educates Colorado nutrition staff on how to create healthier school lunches via its [culinary boot camp program](#). In 2011, LiveWell Colorado is hosting eight boot camps in five locations throughout the state, training workers from 40 school districts. In addition, LiveWell Colorado and its LiveWell Communities are addressing childhood obesity through:
 - Planting and maintaining school gardens, giving students an opportunity to learn about and enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables in the classroom and cafeteria
 - Facilitating farm-to-school programs
 - Facilitating recess before lunch programs, which are proven to help children eat a more complete and healthier lunch

- Creating school policies that encourage healthy school parties and events
- Incorporating physical activity into the classroom and overall school environment
- **Changes in Public Policy:** LiveWell Colorado worked collaboratively in passing [House Bill 11-1069](#), a new law that requires Colorado public elementary schools to allow an average of 30 minutes a day for physical activity. Last year, LiveWell Colorado initiated a bill creating the [Food Systems Advisory Council](#), which is working to create better access to healthy foods for all Coloradans while supporting agriculture development.
- **Changes in Communities:** LiveWell Colorado funds [22 communities](#) throughout the state that address childhood obesity at the local level. Efforts include policy changes at the municipal level that result in safe, pedestrian-friendly streets that encourage walking and biking to school and playing outside. In fact, several communities in Colorado have created walking school buses, where one adult walks several children to school each day and picks up others along the way. LiveWell Colorado communities also work with municipalities to change zoning to allow for community gardens where families can grow produce for themselves and the community, which results in greater access to healthy food. Some communities work with local farmers to facilitate availability of fresh produce and meat to local schools.
- **Changes in Individual Behavior:** To communicate to individuals, LiveWell Colorado launched a culture change campaign focused on helping Coloradans recognize obesity in themselves and their families. The “Gut Check” tool has been utilized 218,000 times since its launch during the summer and thousands have accessed advice and tips for making healthier choices for their families at [livewellcolorado.org](#). Via its [LiveWell Moms ambassador program](#), LiveWell Colorado also encourages moms around the state to share their thoughts about raising healthy families and to use their personal networks – both online and offline – to spread the word about the childhood obesity prevention programs and policies.

"As a mother of young children, I applaud LiveWell Colorado for not only taking a firm stance on childhood obesity prevention and education, but also for giving regular moms like me a voice in this important fight for the health of our children," said Maggie Murphy, a LiveWell Mom ambassador and blogger from Denver.

About LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living. Leading a comprehensive approach, LiveWell Colorado inspires and advances policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that aim to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity in the places they live, work, learn and play. LiveWell Colorado's strategic partners and funders are The Colorado Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente and the Kresge Foundation, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

For more information about LiveWell Colorado, visit www.livewellcolorado.org.