

press release



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Healthier Communities Initiative Launched by LiveWell Colorado

Five Colorado communities are the first to join the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign and pledge to pursue healthy eating, active living (HEAL) policies.

DENVER (June 18, 2013) – The [HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado](#) kicks off this month to promote healthy eating and active living policies – known as “[HEAL](#)” [policies](#) – and support local municipal leaders in their commitment to address both their city’s physical and fiscal health.

As part of the program, LiveWell Colorado, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing and reducing obesity, will provide free training, support and technical policy assistance to community leaders as they plan and implement strategies focused on improving access to healthy foods, enabling active lifestyles and encouraging workplace wellness. LiveWell Colorado launched the campaign in June in partnership with the Colorado Municipal League (CML), and it is quickly gaining momentum throughout the state.

Five Colorado communities – Littleton, Brush, Oak Creek, Bennett and Cortez – have committed to proactively incorporating HEAL policies and are the first to [join the Heal Cities & Towns Campaign](#). This week at the CML annual conference, Brush will be one of the towns highlighted for their efforts during a session featuring the new campaign.

“Coloradans continue to face a health and economic crisis caused by obesity,” said Maren Stewart, president and CEO of LiveWell Colorado. “To make the healthy choice the easy choice – and create lasting change – we must foster leadership at every level, including local municipalities. Now is an important time to continue to build momentum through collaborative programs like the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign.”

The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado is a great example of a unified effort to encourage Colorado to become the healthiest state in America, an initiative announced by Governor John Hickenlooper in May 2013 as part of a statewide health care focus that includes promoting disease prevention and wellness.

The statistics in Colorado confirm that a majority (58%) of adults and nearly a quarter of children are obese or overweight. Our state spent \$1.637 billion treating diseases and conditions related to obesity in 2009.

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Cities can also lead by example and dramatically cut health care costs by implementing wellness programs for city employees. Studies have shown a 3-to-1 return on investments in employee wellness programs, meaning for every dollar invested by employers in workplace wellness, there was an average savings of more than \$3.

LiveWell Colorado teamed with the Colorado Municipal League to create an eight-person advisory committee that provides insight on local needs and champions the role municipalities can play in creating healthier communities in our state.

LiveWell Colorado will work with city or town officials to analyze their community's current policies regarding healthy eating and active living. Once a community joins the HEAL Cities & Town Campaign, [LiveWell Colorado offers training, expertise and inspiration](#) for creating and sustaining the momentum for building a healthier community. The benefits of increasing access to healthy food and physical activity may include a reduction in health care costs, safer community environments, improved quality of life and economic development by attracting companies looking to relocate.

Becoming a designated HEAL City or Town is easy and free. The first step is for the local city council or town leadership to adopt a public resolution that expresses a commitment to implement HEAL policies for the betterment of the community.

"HEAL policies can greatly impact the way people live, and city and civic leaders are now recognizing that these policies can be a valuable part of short- and long-term city planning," said Colorado Municipal League Executive Director Sam Mamet. "The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign is a very important effort, not only to the individual health of citizens but also as a way to establish a stronger sense of community and promote business investment in a community as a whole."

HEAL efforts can be undertaken for both large cities and small towns. Littleton was the first in Colorado to pass a resolution to join the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign, having previously demonstrated the city's commitment by starting an employee health-care clinic, expanding open space and trails, and adding bicycle/pedestrian components to the city's master plan.

In other examples, the Town of Oak Creek created a Recreation Master Plan that set forth a roadmap to make the best use of public lands and led to the development of a Trail Plan to establish connections for pedestrians and cyclists and improve safety for foot and bike travel. Meanwhile, communities like Brush and Cortez are tackling everything from healthy food at city-run meetings to offering employee wellness programs.

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"We are hoping to have several more communities that commit to the HEAL campaign by the year's end, but, ultimately, our goal is to create impactful, lasting, healthy change in communities all across the state," said Stewart. "This is just the beginning!"

About the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado

The HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado is designed to foster local government policies that improve access to healthy foods and physical activity in communities throughout Colorado. The campaign is a partnership between LiveWell Colorado, a nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living, and the Colorado Municipal League, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has served and represented Colorado's cities and towns since 1923. The goal for the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado is to help build healthier communities and support local leaders in their commitment to address both a city's physical and fiscal health. Participation is free, thanks to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease and Pulmonary Disease Grant Program and the support of Kaiser Permanente. Colorado's initiative is modeled after the HEAL Cities Campaign created in California and is part of the HEAL Nation network.

For more information, visit livewellcolorado.org/healcampaign or contact Julie George, director of the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign of Colorado, at 720-353-4120 or juliegeorge@livewellcolorado.org.

For more information about LiveWell Colorado, visit livewellcolorado.org, "like" LiveWell Colorado on [Facebook](#) or "follow" @livewellco on [Twitter](#).

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