

Empowering Health Professionals to become Community Leaders & Change Agents[©]

Presented by

Kathleen L. B. Beine, M.D.

e-mail: kbeine@tricon.net

Obesity Epidemic: “This may be the first generation that does not live as long as their parents.”

“Be the change that you want to see in the world.” --- Ghandi

“Walking is man’s best medicine.” --- Hippocrates

“Communities do not embrace change. Change is hard. We must make it compelling so they will want to change.” ---Mark Fenton, host, “America’s Walking”, PBS

Excellent 20 minute video - www.ted.com/talks James Howard Kunstler “The Tragedy of Suburbia”

Inspiring 20 minute video - www.ted.com/talks Majora Carter “The Greening of the Ghetto”

Tools for Community Advocacy (partial list):

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| -phone call | -a brief conversation | -join a group |
| -sign a petition | - send an e-mail | -provide leadership to a group |
| -write letter of support | - do a presentation | -collaborate with others - local, region, & national |

Essential: Persevere – this is a medical mission!

Background:

A community’s physical design impacts the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic well-being of its citizens. For the past 50+ years community design has been driven primarily by developers and focused on automobile transportation. With the increased understanding of the relationship of lack of exercise with chronic diseases (obesity, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc.), it is essential that health care professionals advocate for positive community design changes. By professionals providing leadership in collaboration with their communities, positive physical changes will result. Cumulative local changes improve livability and quality of life. These in turn impact global issues of sustainability, such as water and air quality, food, fuel, and climate change.

Creating healthy places, via policy interventions, that correct some of the worst features of sprawl is both a general public health strategy and a targeted strategy to promote and protect the health of vulnerable populations.

Health care professionals, by virtue of your positions, are community leaders. You have power, are respected and are the health experts. You have credibility and responsibility. There is opportunity and need to be proactive outside of your offices – in your communities to improve community design to promote physical activity

American Heart Association: “A key goal is to motivate health professionals to contribute directly to obesity prevention – treating the community ... influencing community design of sidewalks, recreational facilities, parks, public transportation, to affect the level of physical activity.” ---July, 2008

Symptoms of Community “Dis-ease” – as manifested in community design:

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Sprawl development | • Loss of jobs | • Economic stagnation |
| • Separated land use | • Loss of population | • Poverty and Blight |
| • Deteriorated core | • Loss of tax base | • Pollution |

Symptoms of Community “Dis-ease” – as manifested in community residents’ health:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| <u>Public Health Issues:</u> | ○ Obesity | ○ High Blood Pressure | ○ Discouragement |
| | ○ Diabetes | ○ Asthma | ○ Social Isolation |
| | ○ Heart Disease | ○ Depression / Anxiety | |
| <u>Public Safety:</u> | ○ Traffic accidents | ○ Injuries (pedestrian, bicyclists, traffic) | |

Beine & Associates

Kingsport, Tennessee

Negative Impact of Sprawl on Special Demographic Groups:

- Women - more sedentary and isolated, health impacts (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, cancer, stroke, depression, anxiety); drive more, chauffeuring children, etc, so increased risk of accidents
- Children – air pollution, physical inactivity, injuries (pedestrian-car, bicyclist-car, automobile crashes), increased isolation, less freedom to explore, lower self-esteem, health problems (obesity, diabetes, asthma), behavioral problems, depression, few social gathering spots, especially for teens, loss of social networks & support in neighborhoods
- Elderly – loss of independence, mobility and community social support networks; depression
- Poor People – difficulty getting transportation to jobs, reinforces poverty cycle with high unemployment, substance abuse, violence; air pollution; increased pedestrian fatalities
- People with Disabilities – frequently sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic light systems poorly designed for persons in wheelchairs, walkers, or are blind

Research Study in Kingsport, Tennessee by Dr, Kathleen Beine

“**Visual Image Study**”, with 1,100 participants, utilizing photographs and survey tools, resulted in major findings that included strong desires for “**Green – Clean – Sidewalks – Parks & Playgrounds – Neighborhoods**” and a community consensus that visual attractiveness reaps economic benefits. Improvement opportunities identified included more walkability, more parks and green spaces, and re-vitalizing downtown.

References / Resources: (partial listing – many more are available)

Project for Public Spaces www.pps.org

Smart Growth www.smartgrowth.org

Improving the Pedestrian Environment Through Innovative Transportation Design, Institute of Transportation Engineers www.ite.org

National Complete Streets Coalition www.completestreets.org

Step Into Action: A Collaborative Approach to Community Health and Livability. National Recreation and Parks Association (2007) www.nrpa.org

Accessible Sidewalks and Streets Crossings - An Informational Guide www.bikewalk.org/pdfs/sopada_fhwa.pdf

The National Center for Bicycling and Walking www.bikewalk.org/index.php , www.bikewalk.org/thepractice.php

Safe Routes to School Guide www.saferoutesinfo.org

Burden, D., Wallwork, M., Sides, K., Trias, R., Rue, HB. Street Design Guidelines for Healthy Neighborhoods. Local Government Commission Center for Livable Communities, 1999.

Burden, D. Streets and Sidewalks, People and Cars: The Citizens' Guide to Traffic Calming. Local Government Commission Center for Livable Communities. Sacramento, CA, 2000.

Frumkin, H., Frank, L., Jackson, R. Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning, and Building for Healthy Communities. Island Press, Washington, D.C., 2004.

Nozzi, D. Road to Ruin: An Introduction to Sprawl and How to Cure It. Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT. 2003.

Fodor, E. Better Not Bigger: How to Take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada, 1999.

Beine & Associates
Kingsport, Tennessee