

## Live Healthy Iowa Summary-

It is widely accepted that rates of overweight and obesity across all age groups in the United States have risen to epidemic proportions over the past thirty years. Iowa has consistently reported overweight and obesity rates higher than the national average throughout this period of epidemic increase.<sup>1</sup> According to the results of the 2006 Iowa Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, the combined percentage of adults in Iowa who are overweight or obese totals 62.9%.<sup>1</sup> This number has many public health implications ranging from reduced quality of life to increased health care expenses as a result of disease complications.

Apart from the burden on daily living, obesity also increases the risk of several of the leading causes of death.<sup>2</sup> These include heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.<sup>2</sup> Without aggressive commitment to changing lifestyle behaviors, the trend of increasing obesity rates and health care costs will continue.

In effort to reduce the societal burden of the overweight and obesity epidemic in our state, Live Healthy Iowa (formerly Lighten Up Iowa) has promoted active living for almost a decade and engaged thousands of Iowans in group-reinforced weight loss and increased physical activity as a tool to improve health status. Since its inception, over 128,425 people have participated and together logged over 19.7 million miles of activity and lost over 491,344 pounds. This web-based, team-oriented program designed to help Iowans make positive lifestyle changes provides unlimited access to the resources available and fosters social support as well as a sense of accountability within each community.

Live Healthy Iowa works to increase the health of communities across the State of Iowa by providing engagement, guidance and toolkits for lifestyle change. By providing the software component, administrative tools and upstart grants, yet allowing each community to mold the program according to the needs of their community, there has been success in all regions of the state. Building a sustainable skill base in these communities and encouraging collaboration within and between communities are essential to the success of the program. The combined leadership capacity and resources of a collaborated effort between community members, organizations and governments allows the entire community to benefit from personal and environmental strides towards better health.

In effort to track the health status of the Live Healthy Iowa participants and also the success of the program, Live Healthy Iowa has partnered with Des Moines University for survey administration and evaluation. The 2008 preliminary post-program results are in and looking promising. Most notably, only 17% of participants reported consuming 5 fruits and vegetables per day at the start of the program while 32% reported this consumption level at the end of the program.<sup>3</sup> The number of participants who reported engaging in 30 min of moderate physical activity at least 5 days a week followed a similar trend.<sup>3</sup> The average BMI for both male and female participants was found to be significantly lower from pre- to post-program.<sup>3</sup>

Live Healthy Iowa is impacting the health of Iowans and will continue to be the springboard Iowa needs to become the healthiest state in America!

## References

<sup>1</sup>Iowa Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2006, Bureau of Health Statistics, Iowa Department of Public Health (2006).

<sup>2</sup>Overweight and Obesity Health Consequences, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 26, 2008, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/consequences.htm>.

<sup>3</sup>Live Healthy America 2008 Preliminary Post-program Report, Joens-Matre, et al., Des Moines University (2008).