

BUILDING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Where people live, work, and play

South County: United for Health Transforming Our Community



March 2015

Promoting Health Equity

Santa Clara County residents deserve every opportunity to live healthy lives. The ability to make healthy choices is shaped by where individuals live, work, learn, and play.

Through a collaborative effort known as “South County: United for Health,” Santa Clara County Public Health Department and its community partners are helping to improve and transform health for residents, with a particular focus on reaching low-income, underserved individuals who experience health inequities. South County: United for Health promoted healthier environments for over 90,000 residents in the cities of Morgan Hill, Gilroy, and San Martin.

The initiative launched in September 2012 with funding from a Community Transformation Grant (CTG) for Small Communities from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The two-year grant supported efforts to reduce preventable chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, which disproportionately affect South County residents. This area has high levels of health risk factors and poor health outcomes, which are associated with poverty and unequal access to resources. For example, Gilroy has a higher youth smoking rate compared with the County overall. Gilroy also has the highest rate of childhood overweight or obesity of any city in Santa Clara County. Among adults, the percentage of adults in Gilroy and Morgan Hill that are overweight or obese is approximately 10% higher than in the County overall.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:

- » Tobacco-Free Living
- » Healthy Eating
- » Active Living
- » Social & Emotional Wellness

Partnerships for Action

South County: United for Health advanced strategies to increase opportunities for healthy living for the community at large. The evidence-based activities ranged from **providing training and resources** to **implementing new or enhanced procedures, systems, and guidelines** in schools, clinics, worksites, neighborhoods and cities. The collaborative initiative brought together community partners to champion activities across the four strategies.

**SOUTH COUNTY:
UNITED FOR HEALTH**

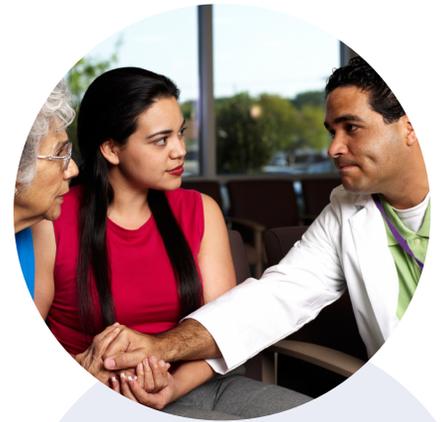


Tobacco-Free Living

Many South County residents live in environments where they face exposure to the harmful effects of tobacco products. Education, resources, and regulations on the sale and use of tobacco products can reduce the exposure to secondhand smoke and tobacco access and foster tobacco-free living. Research shows a decrease in tobacco use and exposure reduces risks of ill health.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- » The City of Morgan Hill and the City of Gilroy implemented **tobacco retail licensing** to reduce youth access to tobacco products. Tobacco retail licensing requires businesses to obtain a local license for the ability to sell tobacco products and provides local authority for enforcement. Over 85,000 Morgan Hill and Gilroy residents will benefit.
- » Three **multi-unit housing complexes adopted guidelines to restrict smoking** and tobacco use on their premises. Over 650 residents now enjoy tobacco-free living in their homes.
- » Students were taught strategies to **promote tobacco use prevention among their peers** and to work with community leaders to reduce youth exposure to tobacco products.
- » Two hundred healthcare providers received resources or training on the **“Ask, Advise, Refer” model** to support tobacco use screening and referrals to cessation services.



**2 cities
implemented
strong tobacco
retail licensing
requirements**

Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is an important component of a healthy lifestyle and can help reduce diabetes, overweight, and obesity among individuals. Successful strategies promote nutrition education and ensure that healthy foods are easily available and that school, worksite, and city environments support healthy behaviors.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Twenty-four worksites **strengthened or adopted guidelines** including: healthy food environments; tobacco-free environments; and breastfeeding and physical activity promotion. Over 4,200 employees have increased opportunities for health as a result of the guidelines. Worksites received a Healthy Worksite Toolkit, which included employer wellness information and sample guidelines, along with technical assistance.
- » The City of Gilroy implemented **guidelines for city-sponsored activities**, which require healthy food and beverage options at the city’s programs, special events, and meetings. At least half of the snacks and beverages sold in city vending machines must also meet healthy food requirements. This allows around 15,000 residents to have healthy options at city-sponsored events.
- » School staff received **training on how to integrate nutrition education** into classes and then conducted 13 nutrition classes with students. Nearly 1,500 parents received training on healthy eating strategies from Public Health staff and teachers.



**24 sites adopted
healthy worksite
guidelines**

Active Living

Safe parks, organized activities, programs, and scheduled events can create supportive environments that offer opportunities for community members to engage in physical activity. Partners worked together to ensure that schools and parks (specifically, San Ysidro Park and Galvan Park) in high-risk, low-income neighborhoods are places where residents can be physically active.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Partners **formed community coalitions to revitalize two city parks**. Coalition members, including monolingual Spanish speaking residents, worked with community-based organizations and youth task forces to identify barriers to park usage and opportunities to increase programming and events.
- » **Community events**, such as park restoration days and a “Party in the Park” community engagement series, reached approximately 1,500 residents. Events united over 20 community-based organizations and local agencies to promote physical activity and create a safe environment that fosters a sense of community.
- » Coalition efforts helped **build resident capacity to sustain park efforts** in collaboration with community partners. Members worked with Parks & Recreation Departments, Police Departments, and other organizations in both cities. The City of Morgan Hill allocated staff resources to continue work at Galvan Park.
- » Staff at six schools received **training on physical activity promotion**, including strategies and games to engage children. The trainings enhanced staff capacity to encourage students of all abilities to be physically active during recess periods.



500 people
attended the
**Party in the
Park events**

Social & Emotional Wellness

Healthy relationships in the learning environment contribute to students’ social and emotional wellbeing. Bullying prevention programs, along with school- and community-based supports, can help to build the social and emotional assets of students.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Ten schools began to implement the Olweus **evidence-based bullying prevention** program. Among the activities, schools identified the extent of bullying among students and established committees to plan prevention efforts.
- » School-based efforts were supported by **capacity-building trainings** to prevent and address bullying. Participants included administrators, teachers, yard duty staff, and parents. Staff shared their knowledge with students through assemblies and classes.
- » Staff from youth-serving community-based organizations received **training and technical assistance**. The range of organizations, which included libraries, health centers, police departments, and after-school programs, helped to broaden the scope of bullying prevention activities in South County.



10 schools
serving 2,200
students took
action against
bullying

Leadership Team

Creating environments that support healthy behaviors requires commitment and collaboration from community leaders. A complex and multi-faceted initiative, South County: United for Health relied on involvement of multiple sectors that support healthy communities. The Leadership Team was created as an advisory group to actively support and champion strategies of the grant. Members met regularly to discuss activities and to identify opportunities for facilitating progress towards grant goals.

The Leadership Team included representatives from:

- » City, County, State, and Federal leadership
- » City and County agencies
- » School districts
- » Healthcare organizations
- » Community-based organizations
- » Community leaders
- » CTG subcontractors

Four workgroups focused on advancing the changes in specific settings: in schools, in parks, at worksites, and at the city-level. The workgroups facilitated the ability to coordinate efforts and leverage resources around a common cause. The members received training to build their knowledge and skills related to needs in South County and strategies to address them. Many Leadership Team members worked to implement systems and environmental changes within their own organizations. Many also participated in community meetings, media activities, and other events to raise awareness about South County: United for Health.

Your Involvement is Key

Community involvement is vital to sustain the exciting work of South County: United for Health. For more information, call 408-793-2700 or visit the Community Transformation Grant page within the Santa Clara County Public Health Department's website at www.sccphd.org.



41 leaders
championed
efforts in their
organizations
and local
networks

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