

Active Living By Design

You, Your Family, and the Environment

1. How does your environment affect your level of exercise? Compare the United States to other countries, or compare regions with this country. (Rural vs. Suburban vs. Urban; agricultural vs. industrial; prevalence of cars due to manufacturing/high standard of living, lack of mass transit systems)
2. What are some barriers to exercise in your community? Do a "walkability" survey to establish conditions in one area of your town, meeting area, playground, etc.(see attached). Are facilities accessible to everyone (seniors, those with disabilities)? How can they be improved? Some barriers might be: lack of sidewalks, bike or walking paths, poor lighting, too much traffic, and no pedestrian crosswalks.
3. How has technology improved and hindered active living? Compare the amount of activity that your family does in the present vs. historically. Look at modern developments such as the telephone, washing machines, cars, TV's. Discuss how technology has impacted our daily lives. How much time per week do you spend sitting in front of a TV or a computer?
4. Find ways in which technology can help us be more active: for example, pedometers/heart rate monitors, treadmills, etc. Would changing your use of technology increase activity level in your life? Develop a plan to change something in your life and do it for 1 month!
5. Find out about the recreational facilities in your town. What types of recreation do they provide? Visit one of them and try it out!!! OR Find interesting places that you can bike or walk to in your community. Learn how to get to one of them safely.

Active Living and Your Community

1. Look at some recent construction in your town, and determine how it has impacted your ability to live actively in your community. Has it caused changes to pedestrian or car traffic, noise or pollution, or loss of green space that could be used for recreation? Does it provide for any active recreation capability (par course, bike racks, provide an attractive destination for bikers/walkers?). Create an environmental impact statement for this project or review the one filed by the builders.
2. Learn about the regional plan for your town. How much space is dedicated for active and passive recreation? What percent of your town is built up, what percent is still vacant or open space? What purposes are the not-yet developed space designed for? (Residential, commercial/industrial, recreational, green acres, etc.) Is the balance in line with the needs of the community? What factors need to be considered? (i. e. Placement of schools, need for taxable income, environmentally sensitive areas, etc.)
3. Career component – Meet with someone in your town who has a role in town planning and development – For example, planning board member, town engineering, architect for public building, etc. Find out what this person does, and what role they play in deciding what is built. Do they take active living into account when they do their planning? What about environmental health? (indoor air quality, natural lighting, etc.)
4. Take a role in improving your community design to promote active living, and/or promote increased understanding of this concept. Some service projects might be:
 - a. Do a sidewalk or safety survey and present your findings to a town committee.
 - b. Help build a bike or walking trail, or get your town to do so. Contact your town Parks and Recreation Department.
 - c. Help support a community fair or activity in your town that promotes active living. (Bike to Work Day, Walk to School Day, etc.) Provide bikes to those in need.
 - d. Put together an information packet on bike trails or walking trails in your town to promote awareness and use them.
 - e. Start a walking group for your friends or senior citizens.
 - f. Get your town to consider traffic safety and calming devices in an area key to biking/walking – road humps, islands, or marking a specific bike lane in the road, or signs warning for pedestrians and bikers.
 - g. Organize a family "Leave Your Car at Home Day" or a bike safety/rodeo.
 - h. Create incentives with local retailers to people who walk or bike to their stores...
 - i. Teach a group of younger children about the benefits of active living, and how they can achieve it in their lives.
 - j. Make a video, brochure, or display poster how to live actively in your town. List supporting services, agencies, etc. and distribute them.
 - k. Reclaim a vacant lot and get permission to make it into a site that encourages active living, with a playground, par course, or sports field.
 - l. Participate in Turn OFF Your T.V. a Week (in April). Instead of TV, do some different types of exercise activities, such as walking, swimming, hiking on a nature trail, etc.