



Greenville, SC

▲ Community Example from Chapter 2 of "Lessons for Leaders:"
Lessons in Communication

Community Background

In 2008, the YMCA of Greenville received a *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) grant to support the work of its partners, who were concerned that more than 40 percent of Greenville children were obese or overweight. Focused on three high-need communities—Sterling, Nicholtown and Berea—HKHC funding was a foundation for the development of LiveWell Greenville (LWG), a countywide effort to drive a health and equity-focused, broad-scale community engagement approach for policy and environmental change. Persuading a diverse set of stakeholders to participate in such a process required a communication approach with an intentional and shared planning process among core team leadership. Potential stakeholders included key community leaders and advocates, local businesses, faith-based organizations, local government, healthcare systems and residents.

Community Action

In 2010, while undergoing a number of name changes and a rebranding process, the leadership team organized a convening of more than 80 key public and private stakeholders and residents, including those from the HKHC target communities. The purpose was to develop a strategic community action plan to address childhood obesity and foster broad-scale ownership across eight strategy-specific areas. During the retreat, leadership commitment and focus area assignments were coordinated for each workgroup. Partners provided capacity-building trainings to facilitate community action plans that targeted policy, systems and environmental changes. Eight workgroups addressed changes needed in the areas of active transportation, physical activity and recreation, access to healthy

foods, schools, worksites, health care, out-of-school time, and the faith community. Facilitative leadership was essential for ensuring multi-directional and reciprocal communication within and across workgroups. LWG utilized a leadership team member or an expert in the field to serve as lead facilitator within each workgroup during monthly meetings. Workgroups, community organizations, partner institutions, interested resident groups and new partners received follow-up training focusing on specific strategies. Monthly leadership meetings continue to ensure strategic movement across workgroups on the countywide action plan.

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The LWG website, designed as a vehicle for broader community engagement and impact, paired with connections to a variety of media outlets, and enabled partners to provide updates and accomplishments across the eight strategies. However, Sally Wills, LWG Executive Director, said, "LWG's most effective communications and advocacy approach has been through its partners. LWG has more than 100 public and private partners across a diversity of sectors and settings. LWG's message about policy, systems and environmental change has been evident in changes in their work, but also echoed by these partners to others who may have not yet been involved with LWG."