

## **Treeswing Focus Group Report**

**March 2010**

Treeswing hosted two focus groups in early March 2010. The purpose of the focus groups was to: engage school and community leaders in a discussion about healthy and active living/obesity prevention efforts in King County; identify gaps in service and; discover opportunities for Treeswing as the organization develops a 3 year work plan.

The first focus group was held at the Seattle Public Schools district offices and the second was held at the Star Equity offices. Both groups met for 2 hours each. Attendees included representatives from Seattle Public Schools, Public Health-Seattle and King County, and many organizations that serve youth in the county. Several key individuals were unable to attend the focus groups, however were engaged in follow up conversations.

### Treeswing Focus Group Attendee List:

#### ***March 15<sup>th</sup>***

Debra French	Executive Director, WA Dairy Council
Elizabeth Kimball	Program Manager, Public Health- Seattle and King County- Seattle Nutrition Action Consortium (SNAC)
Jill Lewis	Manager of Health Services, Seattle Public Schools
Maggie Anderson	Program Manager, King County Food & Fitness Initiative
Brandi Black	Note taker 3-15
*Carolyn Kramer	Facilitator

#### ***March 22<sup>nd</sup>***

Elizabeth Westberg	Program Manager, Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities
Erica Mullen	Program Manager, YMCA of Greater Seattle
Jen Cole	Program Manager, Feet First
Julie Salache	Program Manager, Cascade Bike Club
Mary Podrabsky	Program Manager, UW School Center of Public Health Nutrition
Mo Pomietto	Program Manager, Children's Hospital
Petrina Fisher	Executive Director, Communities in Schools
Russell Benaroya	Treeswing Board
Scott VanderWey	Program Manager , Washington State University Extension
Mary Wyckoff	Note taker 3-22
*Carolyn Kramer	Facilitator

The groups were guided through a process to identify existing organizations offering services (where we are at), visioning (where we want to ultimately be) and brainstorming opportunities and barriers (where we want to go now). Participants also provided written feedback on preliminary goals for Treeswing to pursue.

### Existing organizations/existing efforts:

Participants identified over 100 organizations and activities that were focused on nutrition, physical activity, and active living. This list is included at the end of this report.

## Visioning

The visioning process allowed participants to imagine a future where the obesity epidemic had been halted for both children and adults. Each participant developed a written description of their ideal world, considering what kinds of supports were in place to make this world a reality and then shared out with the entire group. In both groups these visions included specific and broad changes that will need to take place to reverse the epidemic- from sidewalks in every community to local Farmers Markets in all communities on a weekly basis. Many of the changes were specific to school- less/no processed food, Physical Education every day without any waivers, no student parking allowed at schools and more bike racks.

## Opportunities and barriers

Both groups identified various opportunities and barriers. The following themes emerged from the brainstorming:

Need for **coordination** of all organizations working on nutrition, PA, and Active Living in King County

- Overarching framework guiding obesity prevention work in the county- vision, mission, plan
- Web based catalog of organizations engaged in obesity prevention work, include information about the programs so that parents can use to see what is available for them
- Social networking site for organizations to share opportunities and work together
- Regular facilitated networking meeting between organizations

Need for better **communication** about what is going on in county to organizations and families

- Web based catalog (see above)
- Specifically in schools- promotion programming about what schools ARE doing to promote PA and N
- Work with community based organizations who already work with families. Schools are not always the best way to connect with families

Facilitative **connections** between community organizations and schools

- Assistance organizations connect work with schools

Need for **resources** within schools to support health initiatives

- Schools are interested in, however have very limited capacity to move health efforts forward. Need a person on the ground.
- Point of contact in districts and schools is essential to coordinate health efforts and marshal health resources

## **Conclusions**

There are many active living/obesity prevention efforts in King County. Both focus groups easily identified almost a hundred initiatives and programs. One of the focus groups felt that King County was approaching “Initiative saturation”. While the County does not need a new initiative, there is a strong need for coordination, evaluation to identify what works and what does not, and better communication between providers and consumers of these programs so that parents and children can better access these programs.