

# INVEST IN HEALTHY ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN OHIO

Empowering Communities for Health Opportunity, Equity and Sustainability (ECHOES) - a joint project by the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL) and Asian Services for Action (ASIA), Inc.

## ECHOES: MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES THE EASIER CHOICES

**Empowering Communities for Health Opportunity, Equity and Sustainability (ECHOES)** is a national network initiative funded by the Affordable Care Act, under the Community Transformation Grant (CTG) Program. CTG supports states and communities in tackling the root causes of poor health, so that Americans can lead healthier, more productive lives. The goals of ECHOES are to increase awareness of strategies that have worked in making healthier choices the easier choices in Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AA & NHPI) communities, and to increase implementation of these strategies. Ohio's AA and NHPI population stands at approximately 228,000 today, having increased by 40% from 2000 to 2009.<sup>1</sup> Economists at the Cleveland Federal Reserve have shown that **greater economic and racial equality in regions also corresponds with more robust economic growth; thus, responsiveness to the needs of Ohio's diverse citizens is not just a moral imperative, but also an economic one.**<sup>2</sup>

## CANCER & CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IS OUR ISSUE

- **Cancer.** In Ohio, more AAs and NHPIs die of cancer than any other cause, despite having lower cancer rates than Whites. Lung cancer is the leading cause of death for our communities.<sup>1</sup>
- **Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** is the number two and stroke is the number three leading cause of death amongst AAs and NHPIs in the United States. Asian Indians, the largest Asian ethnic subgroup in Ohio, have Coronary Artery Disease prevalence rates four times that of the general US population.<sup>1</sup>
- At least 80% of premature heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes cases could be prevented through healthy diet, regular physical activity, and avoidance of tobacco products.<sup>3</sup>
- However, **smoking rates remain high** among many Asian American groups, with overall smoking prevalence rates of 14.4% among male respondents. Rates are highest among Vietnamese (23%) and Korean (22%) men.<sup>1</sup>
- Additionally, although prevalence of obesity is generally low among Asian adults, **Asian Americans appear to be at greater risk of CVD at a lower body mass index (BMI)** than other ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup>



ASIA's Healthy Asian Pacific Islander (HAPI) Fresh Farmer's Market provides farm training to enhance job opportunities for Asian immigrants and refugees in Cuyahoga County.



ASIA's annual food drive distributed 1400 lbs of produce, including organic produce from HAPI, helping 92 families in Northeast Ohio.

Prevention shows a 5-to-1 return on investment. An investment of \$10 per person per year in community-based programs proven to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 million annually within five years.

*“Having arrived recently from Burma with very little resources, my family and I must purchase cheap prepared food at the local grocery store. Items like frozen pizza, potato chips, and canned soup are so affordable.*

*My family and other families were recently introduced to an opportunity to have a small plot of land. While it’s not the quantity of land we’re accustomed to back home, we were thrilled to have this land to grow the vegetables that we miss so dearly from back home. More importantly, it’ll help our family spend less money on unhealthy food from the grocery store.”*

– Translated from ethnic Karen mother in Northeastern Ohio

## PLACE MATTERS

Of course individuals are responsible for their own health and that of their children’s. But health is also determined by forces outside the family. After all:

- People who live near an abundance of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, instead of grocery stores and fresh produce vendors, have higher prevalence rates of diabetes and obesity;<sup>6</sup>
- People who live in walkable neighborhoods and have access to nearby recreation facilities are more likely to have higher levels of physical activity;<sup>7</sup>
- Yet, lower income neighborhoods that are commonly populated by communities of color often have fewer grocery stores, greater abundance of fast food outlets and convenience stores, and less access to safe spaces for physical activity.<sup>8,9,10,11,12</sup>

## SUPPORT HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Prevention shows a 5-to-1 return on investment. An investment of \$10 per person per year in community-based programs proven to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 million annually within five years.<sup>13</sup> A 2011 study showed that a **10 percent increase in local public health spending led to significant decreases in deaths from CVD, cancer and diabetes.** Effective evidence- and practice-based community, environmental, and infrastructure interventions can help our children and families make healthier choices. Will you support healthy Asian American communities in Ohio by using policies to advance the following evidence- and practice-based strategies?

- Support the production and marketing of healthy, fresh foods;
- Support active living land-use planning and development;
- Eliminate nonsmokers’ exposure to secondhand smoke;



This is part of the APPEAL ECHOES project. For more information about ECHOES, visit APPEAL’s website at [www.appealforcommunities.org](http://www.appealforcommunities.org).

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- <sup>11</sup> Helling, A. (2003). Race and Residential Accessibility to Shopping and Services. *Housing Policy Debate*, 14(2):69-102.
- <sup>12</sup> Trust for America's Health. (2009). *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*. <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/prevention08/Prevention08.pdf>. Accessed February 2012.
- <sup>13</sup> Mays, G.P. & Smith, S.A. (2011). Evidence Links Increases in Public Health Spending to Declines in Preventable Deaths. *Health Affairs*, 30(8):1585-1593.