

Preliminary Report

Shaping America's Youth® Town Meeting
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – April 21, 2007



Nearly 350 residents of the Philadelphia area gathered on April 21st at the Liacouras Center of Temple University to identify what the various sectors of the community can do to create healthier lifestyles for children. The purpose of the meeting was to develop and gather support for obesity prevention programs in the Philadelphia region as well as to gather input for a Community-Based Plan of Action, a detailed plan that will provide unified direction to nationwide efforts to improve nutrition and increase physical activity among children.

The meeting was convened by *Shaping America's Youth*® (SAY®), a unique public-private initiative created in 2003 to bring together the efforts of many groups and programs working to combat physical inactivity and inadequate nutrition among children. SAY seeks to identify community programs and solicit grassroots input in order to find effective ways to promote childhood exercise and healthy eating and to put these into action. The meeting was hosted locally by CODA (Childhood Origins of Diseases of Adulthood), The Health Promotion Council, Drexel University, Temple University, Thomas Jefferson University, University of Pennsylvania, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Mayor's Office, and Philadelphia Department of Public Health.



Participants took an exercise break during the SAY Town Meeting

The SAY Town Meeting was free and open to all. Outreach was conducted through community organizations, events, print coverage, and radio and TV public service announcements voiced by Coach John Chaney. Free childcare, transportation, and language translation were provided in order to encourage participation by a diverse cross-section of the Philadelphia community.

Who Attended the Shaping America's Youth Town Meeting?

Shaping America's Youth sought to represent the diversity of the Philadelphia area. Participants' demographics are compared below to the make up of the city, according to 2005 U.S. Census Data.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>April 21</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>April 21</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Female	65%	54%	African-American/Black	60%	45%
Male	35%	46%	Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	5%
<u>Age</u>			Caucasian	25%	42%
15-19	30%	9%	Native American	0%	<1%
20-34	23%	27%	Native Hawaiian	0%	<1%
35-44	16%	18%	Mixed Race	7%	2%
45-54	17%	17%	Other	6%	6%
55-64	13%	13%	Hispanic/Latino	7%	10%
65 and better	2%	16%	Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	93%	90%
<u>Household Income*</u>			<u>Affiliations Represented</u>		
Less than \$25,000	21%	40%	Youth	26%	
\$25,000 – 49,999	22%	27%	Parents/Guardians	21%	
\$50,000 – 74,999	10%	16%	Educators/Schools	15%	
\$75,000 – 99,999	13%	8%	Community Leaders/ Service Providers	20%	
\$100,000 and over	17%	8%	Business/Private Sector	7%	
			Healthcare Community	11%	
			Legislators/Polymakers	1%	

*17% Not sure of their household income

How Did the Meeting Work?

Shaping America's Youth®, which registered about 500 participants from throughout the Philadelphia area, enlisted the talent and technology of AmericaSpeaks, a national non-profit and nonpartisan group that developed a remarkably effective real-time process to generate information and ideas.

To increase participation and input, the 21st Century Town Meeting® divided the total group of participants into groups of 7-10. A trained facilitator worked with each small group throughout the day to ensure each person had an opportunity to share their opinion. Throughout the day, the meeting's lead moderators presented discussion questions to the group. The ideas from each discussion were collected through networked computers stationed at each table. A team of data analysts reviewed the comments from all of the tables simultaneously and reported the common ideas back to the group almost immediately.

Then, using keypad polling devices, the participants reviewed and prioritized these ideas in order to develop a clear plan for action. The results from the polls were reported instantly to the group via large video screens. Polling was used both to gather demographic information and to give participants the opportunity to prioritize options.

Before their discussions began, participants had an opportunity to learn more about the issue. SAY developed a comprehensive issue guide that provided information about the causes and prevalence of inactivity and poor nutrition among children in Philadelphia, the state of Pennsylvania, and the nation. Participants listened to a brief presentation about these issues, reviewed the issue guide, and discussed these issues in detail. In addition, local and national issue experts were available throughout the program to address specific, issue-related questions generated by the tables.

Participation of Political & Community Leaders

Local, state, and national leaders have strongly supported the SAY® initiative and the Philadelphia Town Meeting. Speakers included Mayor John Street, Congressman Chaka Fattah, Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Calvin Johnson, and Acting U.S. Surgeon General, Rear Admiral Kenneth P. Moritsugu via videotape.

At the end of the day, Dr. Kenneth Smith from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health thanked the participants for their time and work, and committed the Philadelphia Planning Committee to work with member organizations and the public to improve the well-being of our children.

Family Actions

Since families have the greatest single impact on a child's eating and activity habits, participants began their discussions by considering what actions could be taken within families to improve nutrition and increase activity among their children. Participants identified many actions specific to the following age ranges, and these were ranked as the highest priorities:

Prenatal to 5 Years Old

- Parents should serve as role models. (52%)
- Parents should spend time with children playing sports and active games. (45%)

6-11 Years Old

- Families should prepare and eat dinner together to model healthy eating behaviors. (51%)
- Families should determine physical activities that are fun for all family members. (42%)

12-19 Years Old

- Parents should serve as role models. (18%)
- Families should shop and cook together. (14%)
- Parents should provide fruits, vegetables and healthy snacks available. (13%)
- Parents should advocate PE in schools (13%)
- Families should make physical activities possible for adolescents (walk, bike, sports, dance) (13%)

Barriers to Family Actions

Having addressed the actions that families could take to benefit their children's health, the participants then discussed barriers that can impede these actions. By identifying these barriers early in the day, participants were encouraged to address these barriers in the future discussions and to develop strategies to overcome them.

Please note that participants were not asked to rank barriers – all will be considered in detail by SAY and the Philadelphia Planning Committee in future planning and for inclusion in the Community-Based Plan of Action. Participants identified a variety of barriers for families with children of various ages, and the following examples appeared across multiple age ranges:

- Lack of money to buy healthy food.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness about nutritious food.
- Insufficient time to prepare healthy food.
- Insufficient time to participate in physical activities.
- Lack of safe places to exercise and play.

Supporting Families

Moving beyond families, participants turned their attention to the other members of the community with a stake in improving children's health. While families play a central role in impacting children's behaviors, families are strongly impacted by the social and cultural context around them. Participants were asked to identify specific ways that these stakeholder groups could support families in the priority actions identified earlier in the day. Following are recommended actions, in order of priority, for each of the stakeholders:

Healthcare Community

- Offer insurance for obesity treatment and prevention. (41%)
- Engage in community health fairs and other events. (26%)
- Cover costs of accessible nutritionists. (10%)

Business/Private Sector

- Provide free programs for youth. (53%)
- Fund community-based health promotion events. (45%)
- Provide support to employees' families. (2%)

Educators/Schools

- Provide more PE in schools (60%)
- Offer healthier food and beverages (39%)
- Provide more after school sports and activities (1%)

Community Leaders/Service Providers

- Provide more nutrition education opportunities. (28%)
- Foster more partnerships among community groups. (15%)
- Encourage exercise through community projects. (14%)
- Implement "town watch" programs to increase safety. (14%)

Legislators/Policy Makers

- Mandate improved nutrition and physical activity in schools. (28%)
- Increase funds for physical activity and nutrition programs. (22%)
- Legislated prices to increase access to healthy foods. (17%)
- Legislate pricing of healthy foods to increase access (17%)



For more information on
Shaping America's Youth,
please visit our website at:
www.shapingamericasyouth.org

or call us at 1-800-SAY-9221.

National Actions

Recognizing that local and regional efforts to promote change will benefit from commitment on a national level, participants considered what actions might be taken by national leaders and institutions to help improve nutrition and increase activity among children. The following actions were identified and ranked* in order of their potential impact:

- Legislators/policy makers should increase national awareness of funding for programs that support healthier lifestyles. (30%)
- Healthcare community should advocate for insurance coverage for obesity treatment and prevention. (24%)
- Community leaders/service providers should allocate for national funds for local programs and organizations that work to decrease obesity. (22%)
- Educators/schools should advocate for national awareness campaigns & programs (13%)
- Business/private sector should encourage corporations to invest in making their employees and their families healthier. (11%)

Creating Partnerships

Having identified actions of individual stakeholders, participants extended the discussion to consider actions that would require combined efforts among two or more stakeholders. Participants identified the following partnership suggestions:

- Community beautification program that students design, schools support, local businesses fund, legislators promote, and communities maintain
- Corporations and medical institutions adopt a school and build a nutrition/physical activity program
- Citywide nutrition education campaign involving hospitals, government, and community centers
- Businesses provide funds and community partners provide leadership for low-income food programs
- Town watch program for crime prevention to allow for outdoor activity: community leaders organize, businesses sponsor, police educate and provide support, and community provides manpower.
- Government to give health care industry incentives to promote community-based programs
- Sporting good manufacturers donate equipment to schools

Next Steps

In the final stage of the meeting, participants discussed how to implement these ideas within the Philadelphia area. The Philadelphia Planning Committee was on hand during this section of the program to hear from participants and learn how to support their continued actions.

Following today's meeting, the following actions will be taken locally by the Philadelphia Planning Committee:

- Developing a more comprehensive report covering the recommendations generated during today's meeting
- Convening a follow-up community meeting for those participants in today's meeting interested in staying involved in this effort
- Providing the opportunity for today's participants to be involved in a new program being funded by an award from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop a community plan to improve access to locally grown fruits and vegetables and neighborhood recreation opportunities for communities in Philadelphia currently lacking this access.
- Creating a coalition of stakeholders to help implement system-wide changes in approaching childhood obesity. This coalition will be organized by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

In late 2007, recommendations from all the *Shaping America's Youth*® Town Meetings will be presented to Congressional officials as a proposal for a Community-Based Plan of Action to reverse the incidence of childhood overweight.

Please Note: Complete results from the Town Meeting will be available in the near future on the SAY website: www.shapingamericasyouth.org.