

Healthy Communities

Health is more than the absence of physical ailments in an individual—it encompasses the well-being of an entire population. AIHA's healthy communities partnership program moves partners outside hospital walls and into the heart of the villages and cities they are seeking to serve. Participants work hand-in-hand with a host of community stakeholders ranging from teachers and religious leaders to business owners and government officials in an effort to address

such diverse issues as substance abuse, environmental protection, healthy lifestyles, and intimate partner violence. AIHA's partnerships are part of a worldwide effort to create healthy communities and redefine what health means.

Using time-tested strategies for engaging and empowering members of the community to play an active role in maintaining their own health and improving the safety and health status of their towns, AIHA partners join forces with

local stakeholders to assess and prioritize problems, achieve consensus on appropriate ways of addressing the issues, and implement solutions that focus on quality of life issues, as well as medical concerns. In keeping with this concept, partners address not only physical ailments, but problems associated with modern life, such as overcrowded living conditions, pollution, and high unemployment, that ultimately affect the health status of their communities.

Through a series of partnership exchanges and other activities, professionals are exposed to an array of community-based organizations and intervention approaches addressing issues that have been identified as priorities in their communities—violence and substance abuse among adolescents, lack of services for the elderly, hospice care, or managing chronic diseases, for example. The entire process is dynamic, energizing, and can spread the impact of partnership activities to other communities throughout the region by improving the health literacy of entire populations.

The Slovakian towns of Martin, Banska Bystrica, and Turcianske Teplice, for example, worked with their US partners to conduct needs assessments in a way that enabled the CEE members to learn of specific health risk factors in their communities, identify the underlying cause of the problems, and develop intervention strategies geared toward both resolving existing threats and preventing potential hazards. The healthy community approach insures that communities develop services that really improve the health of their citizens.

"We decided the best way to mobilize and inform the community was to involve the mass media, community leaders, and stakeholders. By doing this, we were able to reach . . . all age groups as well as ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds through newspapers, radios, and television."

Dr. Daniel Verma, chief, Health Promotion Department, Constanta Public Health Authority, Romania (Constanta/Louisville partnership).



PHOTO: BARRY KINSELLA

Encouraging people to incorporate exercise into their daily routine can help them reduce stress and lead longer, healthier lives.

Пропаганда регулярных физических упражнений направлена на то, чтобы люди лучше справлялись со стрессом и вели долгую и здоровую жизнь.

- After conducting a needs assessment, AIHA's Constanta/Louisville partnership determined that programs focusing on issues of concern for women, including depression, intimate partner violence, and smoking cessation, would help improve the overall health status of the population in the Romanian port city of Constanta.
- Members of the Vac/Winston-Salem partnership have established a Healthy Community Center in Vac, Hungary, hold community outreach and education programs including health fairs and a camp for children, and have set up "Healthy Corners" offering nutritious food items as well as educational pamphlets and brochures in local supermarkets.
- The partnership between Banska Bystrica-Martin, Slovakia, and Cleveland has resulted in, among other things, the establishment of a Non-smoking Promotion Center that focuses on prevention and community outreach programs and also offers smoking cessation courses.



For more information on AIHA visit www.aiha.com.

AIHA PARTNERSHIPS PARTICIPATING IN THE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Hungary
Vac/Winston-Salem

Latvia
Riga/St. Louis

Romania
Constanta/Louisville

Slovakia
Banska Bystrica-
Martin/Cleveland
Petrzalka/Kansas City
Turcianske Teplice/
Cleveland