

March, 2009 - Issue #16

## Local News

### [Farm to School Investment Yields a Healthy Return into State Coffers](#) (3/18/09)

As state lawmakers search for ways to immediately stimulate Oregon's malnourished economy, a new economic impact analysis proves that investing in locally produced foods for the school lunchroom fortifies the state's economy with dollars previously spent elsewhere. A preliminary analysis of the impact of investing school food dollars in the local food economy was released today by [Ecotrust](#). *PRNewswire* reports that an input-output analysis was used to estimate the economic benefits of these purchases to the Oregon economy and showed that for every food dollar spent locally by the two school districts, an additional 87 cents was spent in Oregon, generating a multiplier of 1.87 for farm to school spending.

### [City Of Miami Commission Unanimously Supports Complete Streets" Program](#) (3/12/09)

"Rates of childhood obesity have tripled in recent years, due in large part to the lack of a pedestrian infrastructure," says Mayor Diaz. "In opening streets to multiple modes of transportation, we are enabling a more active lifestyle by providing the option to get out of cars." With this resolution, the City Commission has directed the administration to develop the guidelines necessary to fully integrate complete streets planning and implementation into the City's transportation, climate and energy policy initiatives within the next 60 days.

### [Study Links Fitness to Academic, Behavioral Improvement in Texas Students](#) (3/10/09)

Texas students who are physically fit are more likely to do well on achievement tests and less likely to have disciplinary problems, according to a study released Monday by the Texas Education Agency and reported on in the *Dallas Daily News*. Based on annual physical fitness assessments of more than 2.4 million students in the public schools, the study found that increased exercise enhances the ability to learn, as evidenced by the higher scores of physically fit children on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills,

### [A Food Policy for New York](#) (3/04/09)

Food policy, nutrition and public health have played a central and often contentious role in the Bloomberg administration's agenda for the city. Achieving the goal of a healthier New York City has led the mayor to employ both legislation and executive order. Now Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer has joined the push to increase the availability of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables in an effort to improve public health, the *Gotham Gazette* reports. Stringer recommends the city create "food enterprise zones" to attract food retailers to underserved areas through zoning and tax incentives. The plan calls for public financing or micro loans to community food partnerships, allowing food vendors tax abatements under the Industrial and Commercial Abatement Program and exempting vendors from business taxes.

## National News

#### [Obesity Rates Steady Among American Children](#) (3/30/09)

*Voice of America* reports that US Lawmakers on Capitol Hill were briefed on obesity in the United States. The good news is: childhood obesity has leveled off in the past nine years. But William Dietz, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says it's still an epidemic. "There's a total of 31 percent of children and adolescents in the United States at risk for the complications of obesity," Dietz said

#### [Calorie Information Must be Prominent](#) (3/30/09)

The *Yale Daily News* reports that researchers from the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity released the results of an observational study conducted at several fast food locations, showing that only 6 out of 4,311 — or 0.1 percent — patrons looked at nutritional information before they ordered. The study's authors suggested fast food restaurants display nutritional information more prominently. "Why not make it easier for people to make a better decision?" Christina Roberto, the lead researcher on the study, said. "Customers have a right to know."

#### [Proximity to Fast Food a Factor in Student Obesity](#) (3/25/09)

The *New York Times* reports that ninth graders whose schools are within a block of a fast-food outlet are more likely to be obese than students whose schools are a quarter of a mile or more away, according to a study of millions of schoolchildren by economists at the University of California and Columbia University. The study, a widely circulated working paper of the independent National Bureau of Economic Research, marks an intensive effort by economists to determine whether close geographic proximity to fast food plays a causal role in obesity.

#### [Shovel-Ready Project: A White House Garden](#) (3/20/09)

For more than a decade, food activists have rallied, cajoled, even pleaded for a vegetable garden on the White House lawn. Now they're finally going to get it. According to the *Washington Post*, the 1,100-square-foot garden will include 55 kinds of vegetables, including peppers, spinach and arugula. Speaking of the new garden in the April issue of *O* magazine, First Lady Michelle Obama said, "We want to use it as a point of education . . . We want to talk about health and how delicious it is to eat fresh food, and how you can take that food and make it part of a healthy diet."

## Reports and Studies

#### [Safe Routes to School 2009 Policy Report](#)

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership, a national network of more than 400 organizations, has released *Safe Routes to School 2009 Policy Report: Moving to the Future and Building on Early Achievements*. This report, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, explores the challenges and opportunities raised during the implementation of the federal Safe Routes to School program. The report also identifies ways in which the program could be strengthened to create communities that help even more children be physically active by walking and bicycling to school.

### [Majority of Fire and Ambulance Recruits Overweight](#)

Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM), Boston Medical Center, Harvard University and the Cambridge Health Alliance found that more than 75 percent of emergency responder candidates for fire and ambulance services in Massachusetts are either overweight or obese. The findings, which appear online in the journal *Obesity* on March 19, have significant consequences for public health and safety.

### [Healthy Food Availability Could Depend on Where You Live—So Does the Quality of Your Diet](#)

The availability of healthy food choices and your quality of diet is associated with where you live, according to two studies conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Researchers examined healthy food availability and diet quality among Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Md., residents and found that availability of healthy foods was associated with quality of diet and 46 percent of lower-income neighborhoods had a low availability of healthy foods. The results are published in the March 2009 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and the December 2008 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

### [Journal of Public Health Policy](#)

The *Journal of Public Health Policy* has devoted its March issue to the promotion of active living. The papers in this supplement were presented at the 2008 Active Living Research Conference whose theme was "Connecting Active Living Research to Policy Solutions." The papers include evaluations of policy initiatives and research that suggests promising new policies.

## **Tools You Can Use**

### [Legal Tools to Create Joint Use Agreements](#)

Many communities lack safe, adequate places for children and their families to exercise and play. Schools might have a variety of recreational facilities —gymnasiums, playgrounds, fields, courts, tracks—but many districts close their property to the public after school hours because of concerns about costs, vandalism, security, maintenance, and liability in the event of injury. The good news is that city, county, and town governments can partner with school districts through what are known as joint use agreements to address these concerns. A joint use agreement is a formal agreement between two separate government entities— often a school district and a city or county—setting forth the terms and conditions for the shared use of public property. The National Policy and Legal Analysis Network (NPLAN) has prepared legal tools to assist communities in forming joint use agreements.

### [Walkability Checklist](#)

The Partnership for a Walkable America (PWA) is a national coalition working to improve the conditions for walking in America and to increase the number of Americans who walk regularly. This checklist can be used to assess how walkable a neighborhood is.

### [Mayors' Guide to Fighting Childhood Obesity](#)

The *Mayors' Guide to Fighting Childhood Obesity* provides suggested action steps that mayors and other local government leaders can take to address the childhood obesity epidemic in their communities in three areas: the community food environment; the physical environment; and the school and out-of-school environment.

## Funding Resources

### [Active Living Research and Healthy Eating Research Rapid Response Grants Round 2](#)

*Active Living Research* and *Healthy Eating Research* are national programs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that support research to identify promising policy and environmental strategies for increasing physical activity, promoting healthy eating and preventing obesity. This call for proposals (CFP) supports time-sensitive, opportunistic studies to evaluate changes in policies or environments with the potential to reach children who are at highest risk for obesity, including African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian-American and Pacific Islander children (ages 3 to 18) who live in low-income communities or communities with limited access to affordable healthy foods and/or safe opportunities for physical activity. Research studies may focus on one or both sides of the energy balance equation—on physical activity (including sedentary behavior), healthy eating or both. Studies funded under this CFP are expected to advance RWJF's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015

**Deadline:** July 17, 2009

### [Funding Sources for Healthy Food Retail](#)

This Web site is a clearinghouse for funding opportunities related to developing food retail outlets. Funding sources, which are categorized by eligibility, source and type of assistance for easy searching, include several available to local governments.

### [Jenny's Heroes Community Grant Program](#)

Talk show host and philanthropist Jenny Jones has announced that she will donate an additional \$1 million to continue her community grant program. Jenny's Heroes provides grants of up to \$25,000 each to fund projects that promise long-term community benefits.

**Deadline:** Open

### [Bikes Belong Offers Funding for Bicycle Advocacy and Facilities](#)

U.S. nonprofits and public agencies working to put "more people on bicycles more often" will be awarded grants of up to \$10,000 for facilities and advocacy projects.

**Deadline:** Quarterly

## Upcoming Conferences

### **Save the Date: Leadership for Healthy Communities' 2009 Childhood Obesity Prevention Summit, May 7-8, in Washington, DC**

Leadership for Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is hosting a childhood obesity prevention summit on May 7-8 in Washington, DC. Keynote speakers include RWJF Foundation President and CEO Risa Lavizzo-Mourey. Policy-makers from the federal, state and local level of government will be participating. More information about the summit as well as online registration will be available on the Leadership for Healthy Communities Web site ([www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org](http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org)).