



## R.E.A.C.H. NEWS

### August 2014

Welcome to the first edition of the Boston REACH Project newsletter!

The Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Demonstration Project is a 3-year grant from the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to develop and implement strategies that reduce obesity and hypertension among Black and Latino residents of Boston. While promoting health city-wide, the focus of REACH is in the communities of Mattapan, Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park, and East Boston.

REACH is a partnership between [the Boston Public Health Commission](#), [REACH Community Coalition](#), [the YMCA of Greater Boston](#), and the Harvard School of Public Health's [Prevention Research Center](#) and [Department of Nutrition](#). Additional partnerships include five [Violence Intervention & Prevention groups](#), community health centers and hospitals, [Boston Transportation Department](#), [Boston Parks and Recreation Department](#), three supermarket chains, over 40 out-of-school time programs, over 30 child care programs, [Health Care Without Harm](#), [City Fresh](#), and other community-based organizations.

We have four initiatives that focus on: Community Physical Activity, Hypertension, Healthy Beverages & Sodium Reduction, and Out of school time programs.

The **Community Physical Activity Initiative** seeks to increase indoor and outdoor physical activity opportunities through programs such as Fit Kits, PlayWays, and enhancement of access to city parks.

The **Hypertension Initiative's** *Get Active!* program encourages exercise as a method of controlling hypertension by connecting Black and Latino hypertensive patients with free YMCA memberships.

The **Healthy Beverage & Sodium Reduction Initiative** works with various sectors to increase access to healthy beverages like tap water, and more options for low-sodium foods.

The **Out of School Time Program** provides training to local after school programs on integrating healthy foods and beverages, physical activity, and reducing non-educational screen time into their classrooms.

Our collaborative efforts will be highlighted in these bi-monthly publications - stay tuned to learn more about the tremendous work of our partners here.

## Join Us for the First Boston Parks Count!

On Saturday, September 6, the Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Parks & Recreation Department, community stakeholders, and over 300 volunteers will come together for Boston's first Parks Count. The event will track park usage to better understand who is using Boston's parks, what features the parks are being used for, and establish measures for new community programs and health initiatives.



**Help us reach our goal of 350 volunteers by September 4!**

**All volunteers will receive a snazzy Parks Count T-shirt, a reusable water bottle, snacks, and entry into a raffle with fantastic prizes.**

Visit [www.bostoncares.org/ParksCount](http://www.bostoncares.org/ParksCount) to register!

## Making Water the Beverage of Choice: Healthy Beverages & Out of School Time Initiatives



Six Boston youth organizations have taken the lead in REACH's Healthy Beverage Initiative by spearheading the [#HydrationNation](https://www.rebelmouse.com/hydrationnation/) social media campaign. The youth and staff at [Sociedad Latina](#), [Press Pass TV](#), [Neighborhood of Affordable Housing](#), [Roxbury Youthworks Inc.](#), [Bird Street Community Center](#), and [Youth & Family Enrichment Services](#) have created designs and videos promoting tap water as a healthy alternative to sugary drinks.

Visit [www.rebelmouse.com/hydrationnation/](http://www.rebelmouse.com/hydrationnation/) to learn more

**Come check out the #HydrationNation Youth Campaign this Thursday!!!**

Sociedad Latina Presents  
**¡VIVA!**  
 #HydrationNation  
 Featuring youth-created videos &  
 interactive games!  
 Thursday, Aug. 28  
 5:00 - 7:00  
 Sheehy Park, Mission Hill  
 1545 Tremont Street

HydrationNation made possible by funding and support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's REACH Obesity & Hypertension Demonstration Project

Hydration brought to you by

NOAH  
 ROXBURY YOUTHWORKS  
 presspass TV  
 Bird Street Community Center  
 Boston Centers for Youth and Families  
 NCLR  
 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA  
 BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

The Out-of-School time initiative has worked with camps to promote water consumption this summer. Alexei Fraser, After School Program Director and Summer Camp Director of the Dorchester YMCA was interviewed on incorporating healthy beverages at her site.

**What motivated you to cut back on your program's sugary beverage intake?**

*Many of the families we work with struggle with obesity and diabetes. Cutting back on sugary beverages is a simple step to make you healthier!*

**What steps did your program take?**

*We have made a policy change to not allowing sugary drinks on site. When a child brings in a sugary drink, we confiscate it for the day and replace the drink with low-fat milk or water. We also provide water breaks throughout the day and during field trips.*

**What was most challenging along the way?**

*The most challenging experience for us has been explaining to families our policy change. Many do not necessarily understand why or how we are changing this policy. We have partnered with Carney Hospital to provide family-friendly activities on healthy eating.*

**What advice would you give to someone who is also trying to limit sugary beverages and promote water consumption?**

*Drink tap water! It's cheaper and healthier.*

**How has making the change benefitted your program?**

*The energy of the children in the program has become more constant. They are bringing their excitement about healthy eating home!*



**Hey!**

## Afterschool programs in the City of Boston:

a **FREE** training in nutrition and physical  
activity for afterschool programs is

**COMING THIS OCTOBER**

Trainings will be held in  
convenient locations  
near East Boston, Hyde  
Park and Dorchester!

Sponsored by the Boston Public Health Commission

Please contact [REACHOST@bphc.org](mailto:REACHOST@bphc.org) or  
[abhatti@bphc.org](mailto:abhatti@bphc.org) for details or to sign up.



City of Boston  
Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

### NOAH PlayWay on June 21st

Boston REACH held the first PlayWay of 2014, hosted by the **Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH)** in partnership with the Boston Transportation Department on Saturday, June 21.



[PlayWays](#) are small-scale, neighborhood-organized street closures for active recreation - a way for neighbors to transform their streets into residential playgrounds for all to engage in physical activity and enjoy.

The inaugural event was a large success, with hundreds of residents participating in many forms of physical activity, including Learn to Bike trainings, street games featuring the Fit Kits, and a special Learn to Kayak station. The June 21st event also featured a give-away of 16 bikes, fire engines for kids to explore, and face painting. The *East Boston Times* covered the festivities in their weekly edition.

However, the most exciting outcome of the PlayWay was the potential for future events: many residents expressed an interest in repeating the closure of Condor Street as a weekly occurrence. By promoting physical activity and creating a friendly atmosphere through a PlayWay, NOAH has turned a one-time event into a potential long-term program.

**Great job by Chris Marchi and his NOAH team!** We look forward to hearing more PlayWay success stories this summer!

To learn more about how to conduct your own PlayWay, please contact [Jose Masso](#)

### Get Active! Program

The Boston REACH Project and the YMCA of Greater Boston are encouraging Boston residents with hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, to get more physically active!

Visit [Neponset Health Center](#), [Whittier Street Health Center](#), [Geiger Gibson Health Center](#), [Mattapan Community Health Center](#), and [The Family Van](#) for more information.

### Public Awareness Campaigns

The Swap the Salt/Deja La Sal campaign provides tips on how to make healthier food choices while shopping, suggestions on how to cook without adding salt, and other ways to prevent hypertension for yourself, your family, and your community.



Our dual language ads have been featured on MBTA buses, bus shelters, and billboards throughout the city, and information is available on Twitter at [#swapthesalt](#) and [#dejalasal](#).

For more information, visit [www.bphc.org/swap-the-salt](http://www.bphc.org/swap-the-salt) or [www.bphc.org/dejalasal](http://www.bphc.org/dejalasal)

The Sugar Smarts/Azúcar Sabia campaign aims to increase awareness on the negative health effects of sugary beverages and provide options for healthier choices.

Our bilingual ads (English and Spanish) are featured on MBTA buses, bus shelters, and billboards throughout Boston in July. We also used Twitter and Facebook to educate followers on the dangers of sugary beverages through [#azucarsabia](#) and [#sugarsmarts](#).



Learn more about what you can do to educate yourself, your family, and your community by visiting [www.sugarsmarts.com](http://www.sugarsmarts.com) or [www.bphc.org/azucarsabia](http://www.bphc.org/azucarsabia)

## Contact Information

For questions regarding the REACH Obesity & Hypertension Project, please contact Director Nineequa Blanding ([nblanding@bphc.org](mailto:nblanding@bphc.org); 617-534-9681)

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