



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

**October 2014**

### **REACH Obesity & Hypertension Demonstration 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, 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](#), focuses on the reduction of health inequities through five core initiatives: Community Physical Activity, Clinical Hypertension, Healthy Beverages & Sodium Reduction, Out-of-school Time, and Communications.

Local organizations, including five [Violence Intervention & Prevention groups](#), community health centers and hospitals, the [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 community-based organizations, are integral to the success of this work.

#### **Boston's First Parks Count**

On Saturday September 6th, the Boston Public Health Commission, [the Boston Parks and Recreation Department](#), [Boston Cares](#), [the Franklin Park Coalition](#), and [the Boston Park Advocates](#) conducted the City's very first [Parks Count](#). Twenty Park Captains and over 100 volunteers worked across nine parks in sweltering heat tracking park attendance and surveying visitors on park assets, interests and personal demographics. Parks Commissioner Chris Cook visited many locations throughout the day.



Parks Count 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. REACH Director Nineequa Blanding and Parks Department Director of External Affairs Ryan Woods discussed the event's goals on the Boston Neighborhood Network News recently (<http://vimeo.com/105993153>).

While survey results are still being analyzed, planning for Parks Count 2015 is already underway. Next year, we hope to expand to additional parks, collect information on early morning and late afternoon usage, and garner more support through the help of corporate sponsors and greater outreach. Check out [Parks Count](#) or email [parkscount@bphc.org](mailto:parkscount@bphc.org) for more information and/or to get involved.



### Fit Kits at the bWell Center

Boston Medical Center's bWell Center has partnered with the REACH Project to become a Fit Kit site!

[Fit Kits](#) are large mesh bags filled with sports equipment for the community to use to increase opportunities for physical activity.



The [bWell Center](#), part of Boston Medical Center's Pediatrics Department, provides resources to patients and their families geared toward improving overall health and wellness. The Center offers free *Fun with Food* healthy cooking classes, arts and crafts, fitness programs such as the *Jump Rope Clinic* and the *Outdoors Rx Program* in partnership with the Appalachian Mountain Club, and lends books through the Boston Public Library's *Check it Out!* program. The bWell Center will use Fit Kits as part of its hourly physical activity programming to create obstacle courses and games for kids at the clinic.

For further information on how your site can host Fit Kits, please contact Jose Masso at [jmasso@bphc.org](mailto:jmasso@bphc.org).

### #HydrationNation Healthy Beverage Campaign

This summer, six youth organizations, [Neighborhood of Affordable Housing](#) (NOAH), [Sociedad Latina](#), [Bird Street Community Center](#), [Youth & Family Enrichment Services](#) (YOFES), [Roxbury Youthworks](#), and [Press Pass TV](#), developed and promoted [#HydrationNation](#), a campaign encouraging Boston youth to drink tap water instead of sugary drinks. Each organization created videos, graphics, or images that were then posted on social media to increase awareness of the hydrating benefits of water.

To garner community support, Sociedad Latina invited all participating organizations to the final night of their Summer VIVA Night series on August 28th at Mission Hill's Sheehy Park to share their work. The event included video and infographic sharing, relay races, arts and crafts, quizzes, and Fit Kits. Press Pass TV chronicled the event, interviewing participating youth and staff (<http://youtu.be/KLROoUj6s5Y>). Over 140 residents attended this fun yet educational event. To continue what they'd learned at home, all attendees were given #HydrationNation water bottles to fill up with tap water.



The #HydrationNation celebrations continued on October 17th at the Kroc Center where the REACH Project thanked all youth organizations for their participation. The celebration included a highlight reel of all the youth projects, followed by a panel discussion on the importance of youth led campaigns such as #HydrationNation, the benefits of using social media as a way to disseminate messages, and the personal impact of this work on beverage choices. The evening ended with certificate presentations for the teens, raffles, give-aways, and "healthy selfies."

Stay tuned for your own personal viewing of the #HydrationNation videos. If you'd like to help share the youth produced videos on your social channels or website, please contact Debbie Lay at [dlay@bphc.org](mailto:dlay@bphc.org).



## 2014-15 Out of School Time Program Kick Off



The 2014-15 Out of School Time (OST) program began on October 21st. Based on the Harvard Prevention Research Center's Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity (OSNAP) curriculum, the program is a series of free workshops open to all Boston afterschool programs to support staff in establishing or continuing healthy practices and policies on food and beverages, physical activity, and screen time. Afterschool program staff attend a series of three Learning Community workshops during the school year (a total of 10 hours), and work to set goals related to each program's specific needs. Participants are eligible to earn CEUs, will be compensated for their time, and will receive incentives for their afterschool program.

We have 49 registered afterschool programs participating this year, including YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, Boston Centers for Youth & Families, tutoring programs, and other community programs.

Due to overwhelming interest and high registration, we've added a fourth set of workshops, scheduled to begin November 19th at the Egleston YMCA in Roxbury. Space is limited, so register now by visiting [www.surveymonkey.com/s/REACHOSNAP](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/REACHOSNAP).

For more information on the REACH OST program, visit [www.bphc.org/osnap](http://www.bphc.org/osnap), or email [REACHOST@bphc.org](mailto:REACHOST@bphc.org).

### Get Active! Program

The *Get Active!* program connects hypertensive Black and Latino patients with free YMCA gym memberships to help control their blood pressure. Five healthcare sites, the Family Van, Geiger Gibson Health Center, Neponset Health Center, Mattapan Community Health Center, and Whittier Street Health Center, are participating REACH partners.

In the three months since program launch, these sites have referred a total of 344 patients to the YMCA!

### 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)

For questions regarding the REACH newsletter, please contact Debbie Lay ([dlay@bphc.org](mailto:dlay@bphc.org); 617-534-2634)

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