

“Healthy Community” Workshop Aims to Empower Underserved Neighborhoods

UNITE **4** HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

**a community gathering to inspire healthy, positive, grassroots change
for the community, by the community**

Inspiring and empowering the Columbia community to get fired up about eating healthy and living an active life is the goal of *Unite 4 Healthy Neighborhoods (U4HN)*, a 2-day open community workshop. Hosted by the PedNet Coalition, the free event will convene at Progressive Missionary Baptist Church on April 9, 2010 from 5:30 - 8:30 pm and the Activity & Recreation Center (ARC) on April 10 from 10:30 am - 3:30 pm.

U4HN will feature a dynamic mix of national and local speakers, large-group presentations, interactive small-group brainstorming sessions, hands-on activities, demonstrations and performances, all aimed at educating, engaging and empowering residents of underserved neighborhoods and launching a local movement focused on community health, equity and sustainability.

Community Co-Chairs, Verna Harris-LaBoy (CGM Ladies Night Out), Eduardo Crespi (Centro Latino), and Sam Robinson (Urban Empowerment Ministries) expect the event to bring together neighborhood residents of all ages and local leaders to discuss emerging health and public policy issues facing the Columbia population and explore solutions. Participants will also hear from nationally recognized activists Erika Allen, project manager for Growing Power, Inc. a non profit organization that empowers urban residents to grow healthy foods and Lucy Gomez-Feliciano, of Logan Square Neighborhood Association, both of Chicago IL; and Eduardo Sanchez, Chief Medical Officer of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas and member of the Institute of Medicine’s Standing Committee on Childhood Obesity Prevention. All three of these dynamic speakers have worked at the grass-roots level and successfully implemented healthy program and policy changes in underserved communities.

Children, adults, and seniors will enjoy fun, hands-on learning activities such as cooking demonstrations, container gardening, composting with worms, walkability assessments, advocacy training, dance and exercise activities, free health screenings and much more - throughout the 2-day event. There will also be local entertainment, delicious local food, prizes, and special incentives. Free childcare and transportation will be available.

The PedNet Coalition consists of almost 7,000 Columbia residents committed to the vision of a healthy, active community. In collaboration with the Columbia/Boone County Dept. of Public Health and Human Services, PedNet coordinates the Healthy Community Partnership – about 70 Columbia-based government, academic, education, business, non-profit, and community agencies working to promote health, equity, and sustainability.

“With this event, we are trying to foster mutual respect, a shared educational exchange, and productive problem-solving activities between local residents, community advocates, city leaders, government partners and academic researchers,” said Ian Thomas, executive director of PedNet. “We also hope to encourage and inspire residents to add their weight to this new, local movement that seeks to make the healthy choice the easy choice for everyone, regardless of income, ... such that routine physical activity and nutritious foods will always be available and automatic.”

To register for the *U4HN* Community Workshop or for more information, visit www.pednet.org/unite or call Sam Robinson at 573-356-3037.