

*Let's Move Cities and Towns: Maryland Status Report*  
November 6, 2011  
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#### Background:

On September 30, 2010 the American Dietetic Association's (ADA) Washington DC office summoned for a Let's Move Coordinator from each state who would lead volunteers in Michelle Obama's *Let's Move Cities and Towns* initiative. The overall purpose of ADA partnership in the *Let's Move Cities and Towns* is to have a seat at the policy table while improving community wellness and promoting the utilization and recognition of registered dietitians as the nutrition expert. ADA's goal is to use *Let's Move* as a vehicle for a larger vision of ongoing advocacy work at the local level. The Maryland Dietetic Association (MDA) Board of Directors met October 12, 2010 to discuss the program at the monthly Board meeting, and nominated MDA Public Policy Coordinator, Berit Christensen, to coordinate the initiative for the state. Christensen then contacted ADA who was to present names of Let's Move Coordinators to the White House.

ADA contacted Let's Move Coordinators February 4, 2011 with an announcement for the next steps with the program. At the time, over 400 cities and towns across the country were participating in the program and the rate was increasing. A city becomes a participating city through the *Let's Move* website, and the mayor usually takes the lead to sign up. In Maryland, 26 participating cities needed a nutrition expert volunteer who would help the mayor implement their city plan of action, and include nutrition in the initiative while promoting registered dietitians in the community. The cities include: Aberdeen, Annapolis, Baltimore, Bladensburg, Brentwood, Cecilton, Centreville, Charlestown, College Park, Colmar Manor, Crisfield, District Heights, Elkton, Forest Heights, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Greensboro, Laurel, Mount Rainier, Myersville, North Brentwood, Rockville, Seat Pleasant, Somerset, and Westminster. Christensen contacted the MDA Public Policy Panel to take the next steps in recruiting volunteers, and took the next couple months to be trained and prepare an action plan.

Initial steps to recruit volunteers began April 6, 2011 when Christensen, using the MDA membership DMIs data, sent emails to every member living in the 26 Maryland participating cities asking them to represent their city in the *Let's Move Cities and Towns* campaign. Volunteers were asked to meet with their mayor or *Let's Move* city leader to assist in their plan of action, a requirement to be considered a participating city. Some suggested goals for their plan of action may include: 1) help parents make healthy family choices, 2) create healthy schools, 3) provide access to healthy and affordable food, and 4) promote physical activity.

Since April 2011 ongoing recruiting has been done to fill the need for a volunteer in all 26 participating cities. As of October 2011, fifteen of the 26 participating cities have a volunteer representative which may include the same person representing more than one city, and some cities have more than one volunteer. Cities still needing a volunteer include: Aberdeen, Brentwood, Cecilton, Charlestown, Colmar Manor, District Heights, Elkton, Forest Heights, Greensboro, North Brentwood, and Seat Pleasant. Since recruitment, volunteers have been involved in conference calls, sent materials, and ongoing emails provided by ADA and MDA to provide training and tools needed to accomplish the goals of the *Let's Move* campaign.

#### Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of what MDA volunteers have been doing in their communities including mayor visits and events spun out of those meetings, and where there is a need for more involvement. More information, meeting minutes, pictures, and resources can be found on the always updated MDA website:

<http://www.eatwellmd.org/page/lets-move>.

#### Annapolis:

- Meeting on July 27, 2011 with LeeAnn Plumer the Director of Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department (ARPD) at the “Pip” Moyer Recreation Center in Truxton Park. It was scheduled by volunteer Sheila Mackertich and was attended by volunteers Sheryl Hoehner and Jane Ruemke. Plumer works with Health and Aquatics Coordinator, Jennifer Bistrack, who is the contact name for Annapolis. Bistrack was not able to attend the meeting. ARPD has programs with city schools, including seven elementary schools, and a Country school, Hillsmere. They reviewed *Let’s Move* Annapolis and ACHIEVE Annapolis documents created by City of Annapolis teams. *Let’s Move* Annapolis physical activity plan has been achieved, but assistance is needed with the nutrition portion. Potential areas of support for ARPD were noted by MDA volunteers:
  - a. Suitable products for before and after school snacks. US summer foods program
  - b. Nutrition training for staff and coaches
  - c. Healthy options for sports beverages and snacks
  - d. Work with vending machine vendor to provide healthy choices.MDA volunteers will continue to meet with Plumer and Bistrack to review next steps and to obtain local health statistics from Bistrack.

#### Baltimore:

- *Let’s Move* Mid Atlantic Summit was attended June 14-16, 2011 at the Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore. Summary of Summit was reported through email and conference call held June 23, 2011.
- As of August 3, 2011 there has been no meeting with the mayor. According to volunteer, Karen Bellesky, after many contacts through the Baltimore City Health Department that Laura Fox, who is responsible for the Virtual Supermarket program in Baltimore City, will probably be in charge of the *Let’s Move* program.
- Bellesky spoke with the Kay Sibetta (who has since been replaced) who was going to be working on the *Let’s Move* Baltimore! promotion. Sibetta said it was mostly a school thing and would love to do more, although there is a very limited budget to do anything. Baltimore City Health Dept is willing to work with MDA volunteers, but wants the volunteers to come up with the plan. The Baltimore volunteers have made suggestions for a plan.
- Bellesky has met and been in contact with a researcher from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health who is trying to do a walking bus program for specific Baltimore City elementary schools. As of October 8, 2011 the contact Keshia Pollack reported to Bellesky that they are taking a school-by-school approach and working to identify a parent at each school to serve as the lead so the walking buses can be sustainable.
- Over the summer months Bellesky has also contacted the Health Officer at the Baltimore City Health Department. She is overseeing the Healthy Baltimore 2015 program in

which the *Let's Move* program could fit. Bellesky has sent her an email monthly, with little response.

- Bellesky corresponded with Michael Young, the President of *Let's Move* Everyone Foundation, about the "Let's Move Baltimore" Gala and Fitness Challenge event that she attended, and also obtained a Media Kit. Kick-off event at Coppin State was held in September 2011.

Bladensburg:

- Volunteer, Edith Clogg, has made initial and ongoing contacts with the mayor's office since July and is seeking another volunteer to assist her in Bladensburg.

College Park:

- Volunteer, Dr. Meena Somanchi, left a message to meet with the mayor.

Crisfield:

- Since August 2011, volunteer, Karen Bellesky, has been in touch with LaVerne Johnson who is in the process of offering workshops at City Hall in regard to Health and Housing. Unfortunately, no other town on the lower shore has shown interest.

Frederick:

- Volunteer, Emily Spear, will be making contacts to meet with the mayor.

Gaithersburg:

- Volunteer, Andrea Troutner, met with Mayor Sidney Katz; Department Director, Michele Potter; and Lifetime Recreation Services Director, Jim McGuire, on August 29, 2011 at The City of Gaithersburg Activity Center. Some of the topics discussed included: City of Gaithersburg "GFit" wellness programs; Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture; Nutrition in Action, and other community services. At the meeting Troutner was invited by the mayor to attend "SCUP" School-Community United in Partnership on September 26, 2011. Business cards were exchanged and Troutner's CCI Patient Nutrition Information and Services Brochure was provided as an outpatient facility resource for the City of Gaithersburg. Additional community program materials were provided to Troutner.

Greenbelt:

- Volunteer, Dr. Meena Somanchi, met multiple times with Julia McKale, the director of recreation, and discussed topics including sharing nutrition information during National Walk to School, gardening, vending machines, and nutrition education in schools.
- Somanchi organized a meeting to start a vegetable garden in the Spring Hill Lake Elementary School, a bronze medal winner for Healthier Schools program. Esther Mitchell, a Master Gardener Coordinator at the University of Maryland Extension Prince George's County Master Gardener Program, gave a power point presentation on starting a vegetable school garden. Some of the school teachers and volunteers for the *Let's Move* program attended the meeting.

Mount Rainier:

- On August 22, 2011 volunteer, Karen Bellesky, met with Jeannelle Wallace who is City Manager for the City of Mount Rainier. According to Bellesky, Wallace seems to be expecting to have the federal program do the work. Bellesky offered her assistance in any way that her schedule would allow. Bellesky sent her a thank you note and the contact information of other towns that are engaged in *Let's Move* that are in the area. Bellesky also suggested a booth at least once at the farmers' markets to promote "My Plate" and activity for the whole family.
- Mayor Miles notified Bellesky over email that she would like to start a program for the children and seniors, and seemed excited Bellesky contacted her.

#### Rockville:

- Meeting July 6, 2011 with Betsy Thompson, superintendent of recreation, for July 28, 2011 event "*Let's Move* Celebration of Health" in Civic Park. The event included 500 kids, activities, and 3 nutrition topic booths. The event was showcased on FOX News featuring volunteer, Elaine Trujillo, was also made known at FNCE 2011 during a *Let's Move* presentation, and Trujillo shared the event with Meaghan Messner who is a presidential fellow working with the White House on this campaign. Trujillo will be speaking at MDA annual conference in April 2012.
- According to volunteer, Andrea Troutner, no mayor visit has been scheduled at this time.
- Troutner agreed to contact Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) foodservice by Fall 2011 as a partnership inquiry for the Rockville/Gaithersburg *Let's Move Cities and Towns* campaign.
- Troutner also agreed to chair a PTA sponsored second annual "Fitness in February 2012" event at Redland Middle School scheduled February 24, 2011, and be a RD contact with the Magruder High School cluster school community health nurse. Troutner has reviewed MCPS Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health policy.
- Troutner, in October 2011, met with head of the physical education department at Redland Middle School to discuss *Let's Move in School* initiative.

#### Somerset:

- In July 2011, volunteer Ann Gerber spoke with the mayor and will meet in person to discuss opportunities.

#### Westminster:

- Volunteer, Anders Grant, reports July 22, 2011 discussion with Ron Schroers, who signed up on behalf of the mayor's office, from the Carroll County City of Parks and Recreation regarding the *Let's Move* campaign. He states *Project Access Program* offered in the elementary schools is a program that has been offered for over eight years. Physical fitness educators are motivated to do the two week physical fitness program because they receive funding from the government for their participation. The program promotes increased physical activity and offers an open fitness day with family fitness night. This was spearheaded by Dawn Elderidge at the Department of Health and Human Services.
- On July 26, 2011 Grant spoke with Dorothy Fox who is with the Partnership for a Healthier Carroll. LEAN Carroll is the umbrella program (name to be changed to *Healthy Carroll*). The Partnership worked with the dietitians at Carroll Hospital center to start the

nutrition component of the program. They worked with the Partnership to come up with a resource guide of both exercise programs and nutrition counseling available in the community. Together, they produced the 'resource guide' which has been provided to all physician offices in the area. With this new edit of the guide, at Grant's suggestion, they will highlight the "dietitian as the expert."

- A pilot program trialed this year was "Crunch Time" offered in the elementary schools promoting eating more crunchy fruits and vegetables with awards to families who do that during the two month time period. The Ravens football team sponsored the program and was featured in the Carroll County Times.
- *Farm-to-School* is also in Carroll County Public Schools. *HS Vending Machine Project* uses green, yellow, and red signage (like a stop light) to educate what to eat and what to avoid. Healthy Carroll Families includes a document with healthy recipes and worksite wellness for the County newsletter.
- From July 28 to August 31, 2011 Grant made several contact requests to meet with Mayor Utz and left messages regarding setting up a brief meeting to review the campaign, what's currently being done in the community, and how to get the information in front of the public. According to Grant, the mayor himself knows nothing of the campaign. No mayor visit has been made yet.
- Grant has sent several requests to the media, including Carroll County Times, to promote the community activities.

#### Conclusion:

Regardless of formally following an initiative like *Let's Move Cities and Towns*, community involvement is important in promoting the visibility and utilization of registered dietitians. The next steps for MDA involvement include continuing to recruit nutrition professional volunteers, meet with the mayor or city leader for initial visit and ongoing relationship building, and finding ways to implement or improve nutrition programs in the community. MDA leaders will be communicating with nearby state dietetic associations in order to find volunteers for the remaining Maryland participating cities that are still in need of a representative. Current volunteers are encouraged to continue their efforts and involvement, especially now that the school year is underway.

If you are interested in becoming a Maryland *Let's Move Cities and Towns* volunteer, please contact Berit Christensen at [bmchrist@cord.edu](mailto:bmchrist@cord.edu).