

"Run, Girl, Run!" Heart-Healthy Town Survey Results 2005-2006

The Heart-Healthy Town Survey, developed by "Run Girl Run!", a program of Fit and Healthy Kids offered by the Vermont Department of Health, assists young girls in determining heart-healthy characteristics in their towns and in mapping resources in their local neighborhoods. The survey recognizes that a number of different factors contribute to the creation of heart-healthy towns (e.g., daily exercise routines, good food choices, and recreation opportunities). Therefore, towns are evaluated in three distinct categories: (1) Walkin' Towns, (2) Good-Eatin' Towns, and (3) Active Towns. Towns that score highly in all three categories are considered to provide the most resources and opportunities for local residents to lead healthy and active lives.

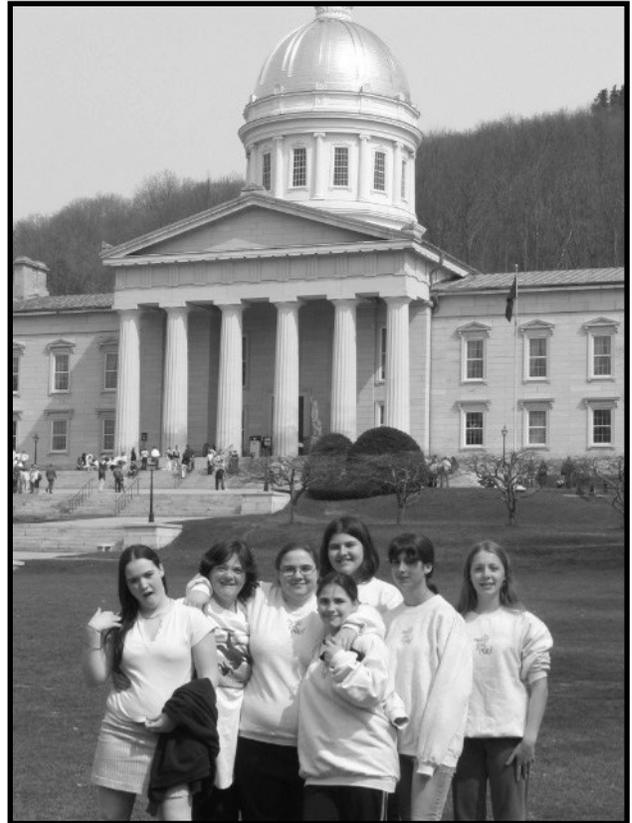


The Heart-Healthy Town Survey was conducted by girls in grades five through eight in 20 towns throughout the state of Vermont. These girls walked around their towns, asked questions, and mapped resources. For presentation purposes we aggregated the results of the survey across the twenty towns in the study. When two thirds or more of the towns displayed the particular heart-healthy characteristic, it was determined that we are "looking good" in that area. In cases where one third or more or more of the towns were lacking a particular characteristic, the girls recommend more work in that area.



The data for this survey was collected by "Run, Girl, Run" teams for the following Vermont towns:

Bennington
Bradford
East Burke
East Haven
Burlington
Colchester
Castleton
Cabot
Gilman
Morrisville
Montpelier
Middlebury
Newark
Rutland
Springfield
Sutton
St. Albans
Wallingford
West Burke
Windsor



"Run, Girl, Run!" is a year-long program that uses games, interactive learning, and training workouts to expose middle school-age girls to healthy lifestyle choices. The program begins with an intensive 8-week summer session where the girls train for a 5k race (3.1 miles) while exploring a number of relevant issues including setting goals, addressing challenges and overcoming barriers, building self esteem and positive body image, understanding good nutrition, and confronting peer pressure. During the school year, the program switches to monthly activities that expand upon these themes and introduce the girls to alternative forms of physical activity such as hiking, snow shoeing, cross training, and yoga.

"Run, Girl, Run!" is funded in partnership by Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Department of Education, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont, American Heart Association, and the American Cancer Society



Is your town a walkin' town?



Where we are looking good...

(Questions where two thirds or more of towns answered "yes")

- ♥ Town has sidewalks.
- ♥ Kids can walk to school.
- ♥ Kids can walk to places to meet their friends.
- ♥ There are fun places to walk and hike in the town.

Where we need some work...

(Question where one third or more of towns answered "no")

- ♥ People can walk to work.
- ♥ Sidewalks are useable, in good repair, and clear of snow and ice year-round.

Is your town a walkin' town? (continued)



Summary

Most of the towns are good places for walking. Having good sidewalks is important and in most places kids can walk to school and to meet their friends. The girls also found that most of the towns have fun places to walk and hike like trails, bike paths, and parks.

Even though the girls can walk to school and there are fun places to walk and hike in the town, in over one third of the towns, adults are not able to walk to work and more than one third of the teams feel that the sidewalks in their towns are not good year round, for example they are not always clear of snow and ice in the winter for walking. It is great that the girls can walk to school and other fun places, but it is unfortunate that they can't do so year round when sidewalks are not useable or in good repair.

Is your town a good-eatin' town?



Where we are looking good...

(Questions where two thirds or more towns answered "yes")

- ♥ There are healthy food choices for your parents at work.
- ♥ Local convenience stores offer healthy snack foods.
- ♥ Town has farmers' markets nearby where you can buy fresh fruits and vegetables (18 out of 20 towns answered yes to this one).

Where we need some work...

(Questions where one third or more towns answered "no")

- ♥ Schools are free of all soda and candy vending machines.
- ♥ There is a large grocery store near where you live.
- ♥ There are affordable restaurants near where you live that highlight heart-healthy menu choices.

Is your town a good-eatin' town? (continued)

Summary:

The good news is the girls found that their parents have healthy food choices at or near work and we can get healthy snacks at local convenience stores. In addition, we are very pleased to find that 18 out of 20 towns have farmers markets nearby where girls can get fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer.

However, in the girl's "work place", the schools, over half of the teams found soda and candy vending machines. Also, at least one third of the teams found they did not have a large grocery store near their homes which usually offer more options for healthy food choices at affordable prices and at least one third of the teams did not find affordable restaurants nearby that highlight heart healthy menu choices. All of these make it difficult for the girls to get affordable healthy snacks and meals that they need to be fit and healthy.

Is your town an active town?



Where we are looking good...

(Questions where two thirds or more towns answered "yes")

- ♥ Women have as many sports and fitness opportunities as men in your town.
- ♥ Girls have as many sports and fitness opportunities as boys in your town.
- ♥ Almost all of the towns (18) offered three or more free or low cost activities to residents.
- ♥ All of the towns had two or more free or low cost sports facilities available for residents to use.

Where we need some work...

(Questions where one third or more of towns answered "no")

- ♥ There is a recreation department in your town.
- ♥ PE or gym is required everyday in your school.
- ♥ The school gym is open to the public in the evenings or on the weekends.
- ♥ There are times set aside just for girls at sports facilities in your town.

Is your town an active town? (continued)

For this final area, our towns are doing pretty well. Towns offer many free and low cost activities for residents and there are lots of fitness opportunities for both boys and girls.

One area that would help the girls be more active would be to have PE or gym everyday at school. That would help them stay fit and active throughout the school day and throughout the school year. Having gym time is especially important during the winter. In addition, offering open gym times in the evening and on weekends for families and community residents would also benefit our whole community.

Overall we think our towns are doing pretty well at being heart healthy towns. We have a few suggestions to make things even better, like keeping sidewalks clear year round, encouraging people to walk to work, bringing in local restaurants with healthy and affordable foods, and giving kids gym time everyday during the school year.