

History, Public Health and Hip Hop: Moving toward a healthier community

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BACKGROUND

If health communication is to be effective in educating and giving a voice to underrepresented populations in the promotion of healthy minds and bodies, it must use an array of communication techniques and technologies to positively influence target audiences, maximize behavior change and health outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

- Making the prevention of obesity and related chronic diseases a top public health priority in an underserved urban environment requires
- effective health communication techniques, skills and technologies
 - creation of diverse community partnerships at local, state and federal levels
 - conditions that educate, encourage, nurture, promote wellness and prevention
 - validation and celebration of the culture, history & heritage of the community

DESCRIPTION

New Bedford, Massachusetts thrives on unique partnerships among traditional state (MDPH) and local public health departments, the Mayor's office, New Bedford Mass in Motion, GNB Allies for Health and Wellness/Health Equity Initiative, Southcoast Health Systems and many community groups. However, a more non-traditional approach to health and wellness also exists as a collaboration between an innovative community outreach and youth empowerment organization and the National Park Service that not only teaches leadership skills, music, art and film production to engage and build healthy, complete individuals, but also showcases their culture, history, and heritage.

While traditional capacity building methods and collaboration continues among municipal officials, community leaders, worksites, schools, health and local organizations, delivering today's healthy community messages must also include health communication approaches that utilize new strategies, creative media and social networking to reach youth audiences.

Examples include popular videos, as created by Third Eye Unlimited, an urban youth empowerment group. Their **"Get Outside and Move"** video is featured on First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" website. Available at: <http://www.letsmove.gov/blog/2010/12/09/success-story-lets-move-gets-musical-massachusetts>

Another excellent example is a walking tour of New Bedford in the **"Walk With Me"** video by the Youth Ambassador Program (YAP) ; available at <http://www.nps.gov/nebe/photosmultimedia/index.htm>



Success Story: Let's Move Gets Musical in Massachusetts!

-modified from post by Ali Kelley, National Park Service, 2010

In New Bedford, Massachusetts a group of teenagers is putting its passion for the outdoors into music, using catchy beats and smooth moves to persuade other young people to get moving outside. As part of the Youth Ambassador Program (YAP!) at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, these young people – the "Yappers" – share their experiences learning about and exploring their city through creative media. In their latest music video, inspired by the First Lady's Let's Move Outside initiative, the Yappers call upon their peers to get up, and get going:

"Don't be a couch potato; just get up off your feet. Go play a game or two and keep on rocking to this beat!"

The video illustrates how easy – and fun – it is to make outdoor activity part of a daily routine. Walking, skateboarding, running, and dancing, are just some of the ways that young people enjoy fresh air fitness. By engaging in all of these activities in downtown New Bedford, the Yappers demonstrate another important message: moving outside is a great way to learn about the community's history, culture and traditions (whaling/fishing, shipbuilding, textiles, the Underground Railroad) through a series of workshops, walking tours, and site visits.

The YAP! program is the result of an innovative partnership between the **National Park Service** and **3rd Eye Unlimited**, a local nonprofit dedicated to youth empowerment and social equality. From shooting hoops at the neighborhood court, to biking through a local greenway, to practicing hip-hop skills at a National Historical Park, there are many ways to "get outside and move."

"Get off of the computer, just go and have some fun. Fresh air will do you justice; go ahead and get some!"

Visit the [New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park](http://www.nps.gov/nebe) to learn more about the YAP! program and hear the Yappers' other songs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: POLICY, SYSTEMS, ENVIRONMENT

This innovative collaboration for a healthier community illustrates that

- convergence of sometimes unlikely partners can serve to enhance/expand opportunities to reach urban residents of all ages
- creative health communication can address social determinants of health and social justice while reflecting the historical, cultural, racial, ethnic and economic diversity of a community through nontraditional approaches
- there is a growing need for public-private partnerships to explore both traditional and innovative approaches to obesity and chronic disease prevention, health communication, health literacy, health education, social networking, history, music and the arts to improve the health of communities
- national priorities should include partnership opportunities for federal, state, and community health leaders and policymakers, academics, researchers, as well as the community-at-large and underrepresented groups of all ages

Park Walks and Calorie Counts:
Visitor Center to Rotch-Jones-Deff House .58 miles 72 calories (200 lbs) 54 calories (150 lbs)
Visitor Center to Nathan & Polly Johnson House 4 miles 42 calories (200 lbs) 32 calories (150 lbs)
Deck Walk 42 miles from the Visitor Center to the Wharrier Building to the Schooner Exchange 64 calories (200 lbs) 33 calories (150 lbs)
Easy National Park Loop 3 miles from the Visitor Center around to Union St and back via W Second Street 32 calories (200 lbs) 24 calories (150 lbs)

All calorie counts are calculated at a walking pace of 3mph or 20 minutes per mile.
 Calories calculated with Walking Calorie Calculator
<http://walking.about.com/library/walkcalc.shtml>
 Distances calculated with Google Maps Pedestrian
<http://walking.about.com/library/walkprogmap1.htm>

