Summary

The collaboration between the CHC program, the Believe Center, and We Are Traffic, provided bike infrastructure allowing the opportunity to increase physical activity to more than 1,400 youth in South Toledo. Survey results indicated that with a secure location for bike parking, more youth are increasing physical activity by biking to and from the center to participate in planned activities. The bike racks have had a positive impact on this South Toledo community where bicycles are a main mode of transportation for youth.

Challenge

Childhood obesity has been an ongoing concern for the state of Ohio. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 30.8 percent of Ohio youth ages 10-17 are overweight or obese with Ohio ranking 24 out of 51. Childhood obesity can lead to chronic health conditions later in life such as asthma, sleep apnea, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Increasing physical activity is essential in preventing obesity so it is important to have infrastructure that supports those who wish to, or need to, bike or walk to their destinations. Many families in underserved areas lack access to cars, which may leave bicycles as the only means of transportation. Installing bike racks at key destinations helps to provide a safe place to secure bikes and promote physical activity.

Solution

Lucas County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) coalition brought together community stakeholders to determine the need for bike infrastructure for underserved youth in Lucas County. Through a partnership with We Are Traffic, a non-profit bicycling advocacy group, South Toledo’s Believe Center was identified as a prime location. The Believe Center is a community organization that promotes youth sports programs, education, and other activities to approximately 1,400 youth per year. A survey of all youth participating at the center indicated a high need for secure bike parking and bike safety education. To fulfill these needs, CHC worked with We Are Traffic to select bike racks and work with the Believe Center to coordinate a bike-fix-it event. As a result of the collaboration, two bike racks were installed as well as a bike-fix-it event that included bike repairs by Toledo Bikes, educational materials, a bike-safety game and helmet fittings by Safe Kids Greater Toledo.
Results

The installation of bike rack infrastructure at the Believe Center has been beneficial. A post survey of youth at the center indicated that 56 percent of youth have used the bike racks since their installation. Results also have shown that installing bike racks has had a significant influence (92 percent) on whether or not youth will ride their bike to the center for activities. Furthermore, observations of bike rack usage during the fall season show that the majority of youth participating in football use bicycles as their main mode of transportation to and from practice. After bike racks were installed, it was also discovered that there was an unforeseen need for bike locks in order to best utilize the bike racks. As a result, the Believe Center is now providing bike locks for youth to borrow when securing their bikes.

“The Believe Center has benefited from the bike racks because more kids are coming to activities since they have a safe place to park their bikes.”

— Tonya Duran, Director of The Believe Center

Sustaining Success

CHC will continue to partner with the local active transportation planning groups of the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, the City of Toledo, City of Oregon, Toledo Biking Coalition, and We Are Traffic to expand active transportation opportunities. Work will continue in 2017 to increase access to physical activity via promotion of Complete Streets policies, improving and expanding biking/walking trails, providing Share the Road education opportunities for safe biking and walking, and increasing bike infrastructure in underserved areas to make Lucas County a bike friendly community.

Your Involvement is Key

• Participate – Get on the road and join your local biking coalition
• Connect – Help connect local needs with local resources. Visit https://weartraffic.org/
• Encourage – Follow www.facebook.com/yourmoveohio

Contact:
Tony Maziarz or Amy Abodeely
Toledo-Lucas County Health Department
419-213-4168
maziarza@co.lucas.oh.us
abodeela@co.lucas.oh.us