

# Hello!

## INTRODUCTION

Hearts N' Parks is a national, community-based program supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). It is designed to help local agencies promote heart-healthy lifestyle changes among their residents. The objectives of Hearts N' Parks are to increase the number of children and adults who engage in heart-healthy behavior and to demonstrate the impact that community park and recreation programs can have on behavior. The long-term goal is to decrease the number of people with heart disease. Hearts N' Parks seeks to bring about these changes in the following ways:

- Identifying target groups
- Creating heart-healthy activities and techniques
- Raising the level of awareness of Hearts N' Parks and its messages
- Making the most of existing community resources to extend the reach and effectiveness of Hearts N' Parks
- Conducting an evaluation to document the results of Hearts N' Parks' efforts.

Hearts N' Parks is meant to be **fun** and **flexible**. And it's for **everybody**—young and old, active and nonactive. This Hearts N' Parks Community Mobilization Guide provides the background and resources needed to implement the program. But each community can adapt the material to its own design, resources, and needs.

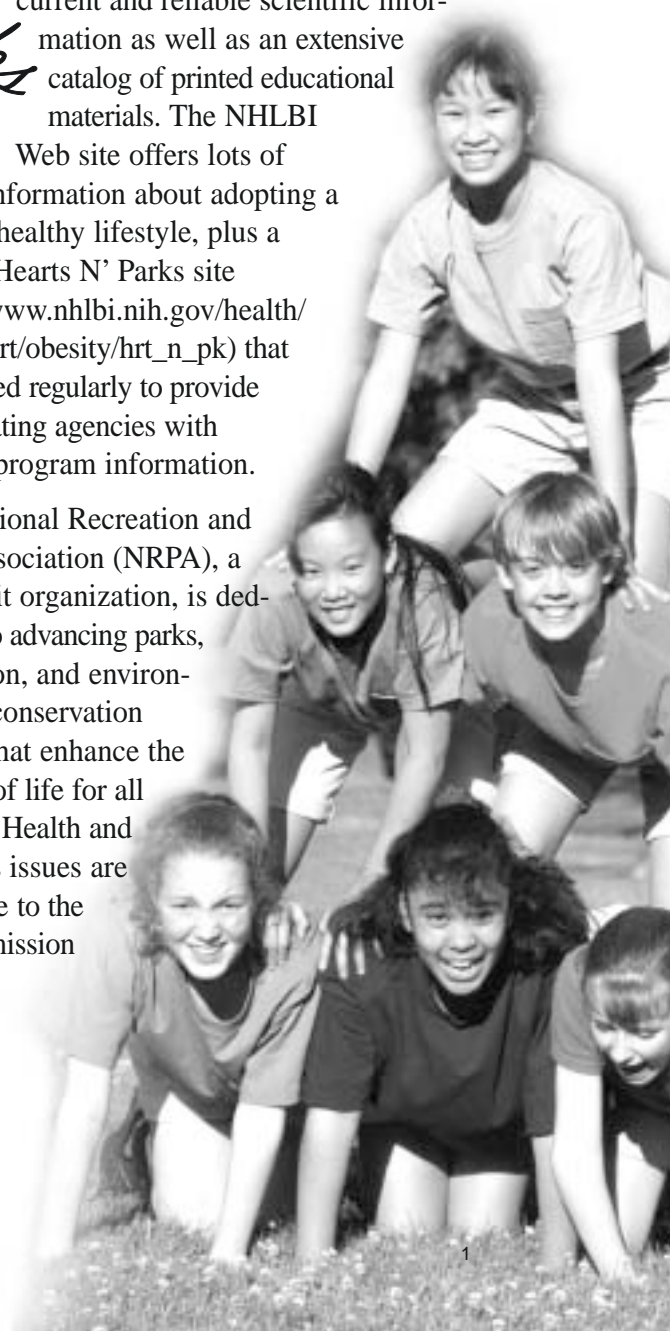
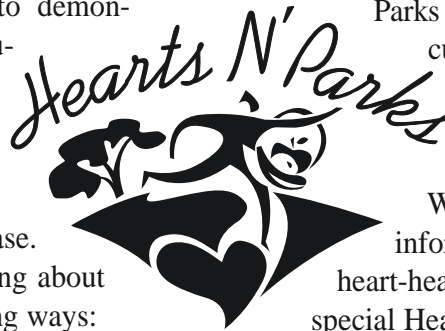
## THE PARTNERSHIP

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute is one of the Institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The mission of the NHLBI is to provide leadership for a national program in diseases of the heart, blood vessels, lungs, and blood; sleep disorders; and blood resources management. The NHLBI supports Hearts N'

Parks with a wealth of resources, including current and reliable scientific information as well as an extensive catalog of printed educational materials. The NHLBI

Web site offers lots of information about adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle, plus a special Hearts N' Parks site ([http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/obesity/hrt\\_n\\_pk](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/heart/obesity/hrt_n_pk)) that is updated regularly to provide participating agencies with current program information.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), a nonprofit organization, is dedicated to advancing parks, recreation, and environmental conservation efforts that enhance the quality of life for all people. Health and wellness issues are also core to the NRPA mission



(<http://www.activeparks.org>). Information about Hearts N' Parks can be found at <http://www.heartsnparks.org>.

Local park and recreation departments and other community agencies that foster Hearts N' Parks efforts are part of the partnership. While national agencies, such as the NHLBI and the NRPA, provide basic resources, information, and support, those who work in community programs come face to face with local residents on a daily basis, and are thus better positioned to provide information and services, as well as raising awareness to support and sustain healthy lifestyles. Accordingly, they are able to involve and **keep** people involved in heart-healthy programs, thus ensuring long-term adoption of heart-healthy behavior.

## THE BEGINNING OF HEARTS N' PARKS

Hearts N' Parks began in the summer of 1999 as a pilot initiative in North Carolina called *Hearts N' Parks Y2K*. Parks and recreation agencies in

12 communities throughout the State utilized training and resources from the NHLBI and the NRPA to incorporate heart-healthy lifestyle messages in programs for children, adolescents, and adults. More than 2,000 participants, ranging in age from 4 to 74, took part in a number of unique programs. Some of the agencies were very small, with less than 30 people in the Hearts N' Parks program, while one agency, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department in Charlotte, operated a number of Hearts N' Parks programs for more than 1,500 participants.

An important element of the pilot was an attempt to consider changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of the participants related to heart-healthy eating and physical activity. Despite some limitations in data collection, pre- and posttests administered by the sites provided

# SOS

*Signs of Success*

NORTH CAROLINA, 1999



The Roanoke Rapids Park and Recreation Department conducted a program for children that taught the basics of nutrition to 4 to 6 year-olds in its FLIP (Fun for Little Interested People) camp. One of the activities was an arts and craft program that helped the children learn about different kinds of foods and which ones were healthy for them.

The Garner Parks and Recreation Department sponsored both senior-citizen and youth programs. The senior fitness program, "Keep the Beat...Circle Yourself in Health," lasted 5 weeks and included 12 participants. Participants kept a journal of their involvement and received credit for prizes as an incentive to "keep the beat" toward a healthier lifestyle. Blood pressure screenings were also offered to senior participants.

In Wilson, the Parks and Recreation Department offered a drop-in weightlifting program for adults, and participants were given a journal to track their progress. The department also partnered with local trainers and nutrition specialists to discuss the importance of proper use of weights, the role nutrition plays in building muscle, and the benefits of increasing muscle mass.



valuable insights to the program in a variety of ways. A comparison between pre- and posttests showed that the children participating in Hearts N' Parks appeared to improve their knowledge of healthy eating and expressed greater intentions to eat healthier. The children also reported, on average, learning four new physical activities and getting better at six physical activities. Senior participants reported some improvements in nearly all the variables considered, as well as feeling healthier at the end of the program.

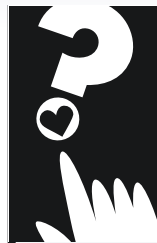
In the spring of 2000, the Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources, a large, multifaceted agency in Northern Virginia, kicked off a second pilot initiative of Hearts N' Parks. Arlington County was selected as the second pilot site for Hearts N' Parks because of the variety of recreational programs at its two flagship sites: Thomas Jefferson Community Center and Barcroft Sport and Fitness Center.

Arlington's promotion of Hearts N' Parks included programs focused on both adults and children. It featured activities such as blood pressure screenings and a seated exercise class for adults, jumping rope and tennis for kids, and a biking program for all age groups called "Cycle Reebok." The Hearts N' Parks logo was printed on trail maps, mile markers, and other promotional materials for programs and facilities that offer heart-healthy activities. The "Recreation and Leisure" class catalog promoted a series of heart-healthy classes in the fall of 2000.

### **HEARTS N' PARKS IS SPECIAL**

Hearts N' Parks is a unique approach to promoting healthy hearts in the United States. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer in this country, and lifestyle change is the primary and most important step toward

## *Do you know?*



There is no one size of agency or one type of staff person that works best for participation in Hearts N' Parks. In fact, the pilot sites differed from one another on the basis of size, organizational structure, population density and, most of all, the individual who headed up the Hearts N' Parks effort. For example:


Some of the agencies were large, countywide departments where "large" refers to either size of population or size of geographic area. Moderate to large cities as well as small and medium-sized communities have also been successful at delivering Hearts N' Parks.

Many differences existed among staff people, who either elected or were "selected" to coordinate Hearts N' Parks. Successful Hearts N' Parks coordinators ranged from people who had little or no prior experience in heart-healthy behavior or were actually new to the community service field, to individuals who had extensive backgrounds in health and wellness, experience in community service, or human services.

Congratulations to those people behind the success stories of our pilot sites in North Carolina, who included a summer intern, a newly hired college graduate, a long-time program supervisor, a department manager, a wellness coordinator, and a director of education.

That's right. There is no one specific type of community, agency, or person needed to move forward with Hearts N' Parks. Big or small, experienced or novice, you can become the coordinator of a successful Hearts N' Parks project, and we'd like to help you with that endeavor.

# Focused facts



- Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for all people in the United States.
- 60.8 million Americans had one or more types of cardiovascular disease in 1998.
- Cardiovascular disease claimed 949,000 lives in the United States in 1998.
- 41 percent of all deaths in 1998 were attributable to cardiovascular disease.

Source: NHLBI FY 2000 Fact Book

prevention. However, getting the message out to those who most need to hear it is often difficult and confusing.

Hearts N' Parks provides all the tools...

- Hearts N' Parks provides community agencies with the resources to communicate lifestyle changes in a clear and concise way to all kinds of people.
- Hearts N' Parks can be part of health-related programs, such as aerobic or wellness classes, but can also be part of nonhealth-related programs, such as senior center drop-in programs or day camps. It is easily integrated into existing programs, so it doesn't require the effort involved in starting a new program.
- Hearts N' Parks provides the information and tools to spread the word through media support and partnerships.
  - Media support can be advertising your event on radio or television or in the newspaper, and even having the media cover a special event or a day in your program.

- Partnerships can be of any kind...Some examples are local hospitals providing health screenings at your community center or during a special hospital event, health professionals giving lectures, neighborhood grocery stores or restaurants donating heart-healthy snacks, or a more focused effort with one of your current partners.

- Hearts N' Parks programs have increased credibility and visibility because they are supported by two highly respected national organizations, the NHLBI and the NRPA.
- Hearts N' Parks is self-sustaining because it is developed by a community agency that must operate within the means of the community.
- Hearts N' Parks provides the tools to measure what your participants have learned and done. This information helps motivate participants as well as engage partners and senior management.
- Hearts N' Parks is meant for everyone. Information and materials are available for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors.

## THE BAD NEWS: CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

The goal of Hearts N' Parks is to increase the number of children and adults who engage in heart-healthy behavior.

### Why Heart-Healthy Behavior?

Heart-healthy behavior can prevent the development of **cardiovascular disease (CVD)** and reduce its severity among those who already have it. CVD includes such diseases as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease (myocardial infarction and angina pectoris), stroke, rheumatic fever/rheumatic heart disease, and congestive heart failure.

The risk factors for cardiovascular disease include high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, overweight, obesity, diabetes, smoking, and physical inactivity. These factors do not



## RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE

### High Blood Cholesterol

High blood cholesterol plays an important part in deciding a person's chance or risk of getting coronary heart disease. The higher your blood cholesterol, the greater your risk. When you have too much cholesterol in your blood, the excess builds up on the walls of the arteries that carry blood to the heart. This buildup is called "atherosclerosis," or "hardening of the arteries." It narrows the arteries and can slow down or block blood flow to the heart. With less blood, the heart gets less oxygen. Without enough oxygen to the heart, there may be chest pain ("angina" or "angina pectoris"), heart attack ("myocardial infarction"), or death. Cholesterol buildup is the most common cause of heart disease, but it happens so slowly that people are not aware of it. Blood cholesterol level is influenced by many factors. These include:

- Diet
- Level of physical activity
- Age
- Weight
- Heredity
- Gender

### High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is a risk factor for heart and kidney diseases and stroke. Blood is carried from the heart to all of the body's tissues and organs in vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of arteries. Each time the heart beats (about 60–70 times a minute at rest), it pumps blood into the arteries. Some people have blood pressure that stays high all or most of the time. Their blood pushes against the walls of their arteries with higher-than-normal force. If untreated, this can lead to serious medical problems like atherosclerosis, heart attack, enlarged heart, kidney damage, and stroke. High blood pressure is influenced by several factors. These include:

- Diet
- Physical activity
- Family history
- Weight
- Alcohol consumption
- Ethnicity

### Diabetes

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism—the way our bodies use digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food we eat is broken down into a simple sugar called glucose, which is the main source of fuel for the body. For the glucose to get into the body's cells, insulin must be present. In people with diabetes the body produces little or no insulin, or the cells do not respond to the insulin that is produced. As a result, glucose builds up in the blood, overflows into the urine, and passes out of the body. Thus, the body loses its main source of fuel, even though the blood contains large amounts of glucose.

Diabetes is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. Diabetes is associated with long-term complications that affect almost every major organ of the body. It contributes to blindness, heart disease, strokes, kidney failure, amputations, and nerve damage. Diabetes is not contagious. People cannot catch it from each other. However, certain factors can increase one's risk of developing diabetes. People at risk for diabetes include:

- Those with family members who have diabetes (especially type 2 diabetes)
- Those who are overweight
- Those who are African American, Hispanic, or Native American

### Overweight and Obesity

Over the past four decades, the number of overweight children, adolescents, and adults has risen. In 1998, a little over one-half of all American adults (about 97 million) and one in five children over the age of 6 were considered overweight or obese, levels unmatched in our nation's history. In 1995, the costs attributed to obesity alone amounted to an estimated \$99 billion.



## RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE (CONTINUED)

Being overweight or obese puts someone at risk for developing many problems, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, gallbladder disease, arthritis, sleep apnea, and breathing problems. Losing weight helps to prevent and control these diseases and conditions. Obesity is a complex, chronic disease that develops from an interaction of genetics and the environment. Our understanding of how and why obesity develops is incomplete, but involves the integration of social, behavioral, cultural, physiological, metabolic, and genetic factors. Assessment and classification of overweight and obesity uses three key measures:

- Body mass index (BMI)
- Waist circumference
- Risk factors for diseases and conditions associated with obesity.

### Smoking

Smoking is a major risk factor in four of the five leading causes of death, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, and lung diseases like emphysema and bronchitis. For adults 60 and over, smoking is a major risk factor for 6 of the top 14 causes of death. The good news is that stopping smoking reduces these risks and improves outcomes for people who have suffered a heart attack. In some cases, ex-smokers can cut their risk of another heart attack by half or more.

### Physical Inactivity

Physical inactivity increases the risk of heart disease. It contributes directly to heart-related problems and increases the chances of developing other conditions that raise heart disease risk, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Unfortunately, too few Americans are active enough. Consider:

- About 40 percent of Americans age 18 or older reported no leisure-time physical activity in 1997.
- About 23 percent of U.S. adults engaged in regular vigorous physical activity 3 times a week for at least 20 minutes in 1997.
- Less-active, less-fit persons have a 30–50 percent greater risk of developing high blood pressure.

But the good news is that regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. Staying active helps take off extra pounds, helps to control blood pressure, boosts the level of “good” HDL-cholesterol, helps to prevent diabetes, and helps to prevent heart attacks. For those who have heart disease, regular, moderate physical activity lowers the risk of death from heart-related causes. Physical activity has many other benefits. It strengthens the lungs, tones the muscles, keep the joints in good condition, maintains bone density, improves balance, and helps prevent and treat depression. Many people find that physical activity helps them cope better with stress and anxiety.

To reap benefits from physical activity, you don't need to train for a marathon. You need to engage in only about 30 minutes of moderate-level activity on most—and preferably all—days. A moderate-level activity is one that's about as demanding as brisk walking.



## RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE (CONTINUED)

### Children and Heart Disease

The evidence shows that the atherosclerotic process begins in childhood and that many American children have risk factors for coronary heart disease. A report card on the state of the cardiovascular health of America's children revealed:

| <u>Health factor</u>          | <u>Status</u>  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>High Blood Cholesterol</b> | Average blood cholesterol levels in American children and adolescents are too high. Children and adolescents with elevated blood cholesterol levels are more likely to have elevated levels as adults. Research shows that atherosclerosis develops in the late teenage years, and cholesterol levels in young adults predict the risk of coronary disease over the next 40 years.   |
| <b>Overweight</b>             | Nearly 14 percent of children and 11.5 percent of adolescents are overweight (NHANES III), more than double the percentage of a decade ago. Up to 20 percent of overweight children remain so throughout life. One in five children over the age of 6 is considered overweight, and overweight or obesity acquired during childhood or adolescence may persist into adulthood and increase the risk for some chronic diseases later in life. |
| <b>Physical Activity</b>      | Most children accumulate at least 1 hour of activity daily, but a sizable percentage do not get frequent, vigorous, continuous activity. Of high school students, about 70 percent of boys and 55 percent of girls do a vigorous physical activity three or more times per week. Activity levels of girls are below those of boys and tend to decline with age.  |

just add up in a simple manner. Instead, each one multiplies the effects of the other risk factors. For example, if you smoke and have high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol, you're eight times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than someone with no risk factors. The good news is that all of these risk factors, except for smoking, can be prevented or controlled by two important behaviors: **heart-healthy eating** and **physical activity**.

*Hearts N' Parks incorporates both of these behaviors and strives to make them attainable and fun.*

## THE GOOD NEWS: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY EATING

As you can see from the discussion about cardiovascular risks, the good news is that the likelihood of developing heart disease can be reduced by focusing on **physical activity** and **heart-healthy eating**. It's simple, and it's easy.

### Physical Activity

Although physical activity is fundamental to cardiovascular fitness, it is important to understand that it doesn't have to be vigorous in order to be beneficial to your health. Any *moderate physical activity*, if engaged in often enough, can improve and maintain cardiovascular health. This is not to say that vigorous activity such as jogging is unnecessary, but only to say that at a minimum, everyone should engage in at least 30 minutes of

moderate physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week for adequate fitness. The U.S. Surgeon General, in his 1996 "Exercise Lite" message, endorsed this recommendation, which cited the conclusions outlined in a pivotal 1995 report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.\*

So what constitutes *moderate physical activity* in "Exercise Lite"? The most common example is brisk walking, typically at a pace of about 15 minutes per mile. Thus, walking about 2 miles (for 30 minutes) would provide a day's worth of moderate activity.

- Consider measuring 2 miles from your home (or wherever you might walk from) using the odometer in your car. That way, you don't have to keep track of time or distance when you walk, and you'll know just how far you need to go to get your day's worth of activity.

Other kinds of moderate activity might include walking your dog, playing golf, or tossing a Frisbee. Count vacuuming, but not washing dishes. Mowing your lawn with a power mower is moderate activity, but a push mower is vigorous activity. You can ride your bike to the store, play table tennis, go square dancing, or do some serious yard work, and it adds up to 30 minutes before you know it.

The idea is to have an active lifestyle: don't ride in a car when you can walk, don't take the elevator when you can climb the stairs, don't fax something you can deliver by hand, and don't use automated or electronic devices just because they exist.

### Seniors and Physical Activity

Moderate physical activity is important for older adults because it can help reduce the chances of developing high blood pressure,

\* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), *Journal of American Medical Association*, Feb. 1, 1995.

## Resources

The "Guide to Physical Activity" in the reproducible section of this guide gives examples of moderate amounts of physical activity and ideas for fitting physical activity into your schedule.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS

**As a Hearts N' Parks coordinator, you have a unique and remarkable opportunity to positively impact your participants' lives by exposing them to the fulfilling and fun rewards of physical activity. Below are a few tips to ensure that your physical activity-based programs are effective for participants of all ages:**

- Encourage activities that can be done easily throughout life.
- Focus instructional feedback on process, not product.
- Offer a diverse range of competitive and noncompetitive activities appropriate for different ages and abilities.
- Provide participants with the skills and confidence they need to be physically active.
- Individualize activities.
- Make sure activities are inclusive and get everyone off the sidelines.
- Be an active role model. Get out there and join in the fun.

obesity, and other ailments. It may also help prevent problems related to mobility. It is never too late for seniors to start being physically active. Moreover, studies have shown that when seniors visit community parks for recreation and activity they acquire a feeling of renewal and social fulfillment, which provides further incentive to continue being physically active. Walking and playing with grandchildren are activities seniors can enjoy for moderate activity. Swimming, jogging, or biking are more intense and should only be undertaken by seniors who have checked with a doctor first.

### **Kids and Physical Activity**

Keep in mind that kids, especially 6- to 10-year-olds, are usually different from adults in the way they engage in physical activity. Most kids tend to have quick bursts of energy that come between longer periods of rest, which is perfectly normal and should be encouraged. However, if the children you work with are in the 11- to 14-year-old range, they may be active for longer periods of time. It is a good idea to try to get a sense of your kids' physical limitations early on

and remain aware of how active they are during the program. This will help ensure that their level of intensity does not compromise the quality of the activity or lead to injuries.

### **Heart-Healthy Eating**

Adopting a heart-healthy eating plan provides individuals with health benefits without the necessity of giving up favorite foods. Such an eating plan balances calorie intake with physical activity and is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium, and rich in fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, and whole grains. A heart-healthy eating plan can help protect against high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and overweight. It may also protect against cancer and other health problems.

The earlier individuals take action to adopt a heart-healthy eating plan, the better. Research shows that heart disease begins early in life and that, once learned, bad habits are difficult to break.

### **What is A Heart-Healthy Eating Plan?**

To follow a heart-healthy eating plan means basically eating some foods more often and

## HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO HELP FOLLOW A HEART-HEALTHY EATING PLAN:

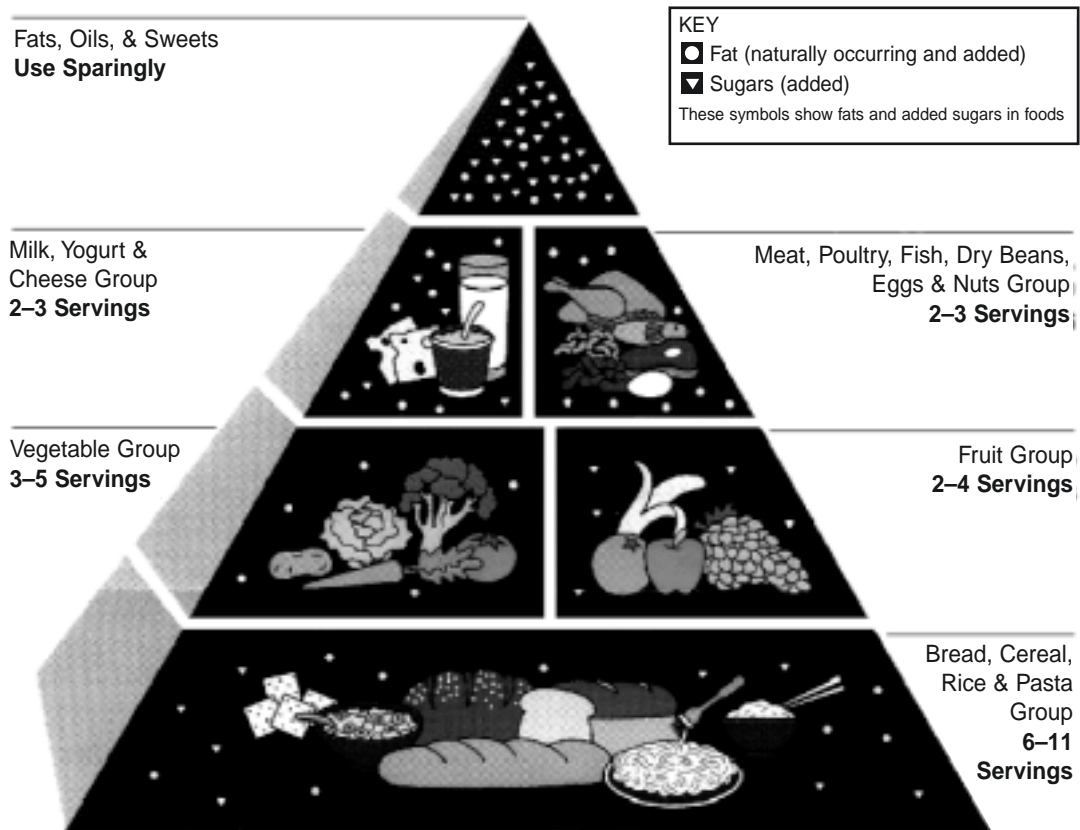
- Practice balance, variety, and moderation in your eating habits.
- Eat fewer high fat meats and eggs. Choose lean meats, chicken or turkey without skin, or fish.
- Eat lower fat dairy items—fat-free or 1 percent milk, low-fat yogurt, and cheese.
- Choose bread, rice, pasta, and other starches that are made of whole grains.
- Choose whole grain and high fiber cereals that are also low in sugar.
- Avoid high fat, high sugar snacks and desserts.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Limit processed foods that have a lot of salt or fat, such as regular luncheon meats, prepared food, fast food, and canned soups and sauces.
- Substitute corn, safflower, sunflower, peanut, canola, and olive oils for butter, shortening, and stick margarine.
- Avoid foods made with coconut and palm oils.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- For greater variety, include healthy cultural traditions when planning meals.

other foods less often. Foods that can be eaten more often include those that are lower in calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Examples of these foods include low-fat dairy products, lean meat, fish, and poultry, as well as high-fiber foods and complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, starches, fruit, and vegetables. Saturated fat raises blood cholesterol levels and should be avoided. It is found mainly in fresh and processed meats; high-fat dairy products (like cheese, whole milk, cream, butter, and ice cream); lard; and in the coconut and palm oils found in many processed foods. Cholesterol is found in eggs, organ meats, and dairy fats.

Calories are the energy from carbohydrates, fats, and protein contained in foods. Fat contains more calories than these other

components, so eating high-fat foods can make it difficult to avoid excess calories. Low-fat, however, doesn't necessarily mean low calorie. Sometimes extra sugar is added to low-fat muffins or desserts, and they may be just as high in calories. Limit portion sizes of foods high in calories, such as cookies, cakes, other sweets, french fries, and fats, oils, and spreads.

These tips are consistent with the latest version of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans* released in May 2000 by the Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These guidelines provide the basis for Federal nutrition policies, education, and dietary guidance for healthy Americans ages 2 and up. The 10 Dietary Guidelines emphasize the following ABCs for building a healthy diet and lifestyle:



**Aim for Fitness:**

1. Aim for a healthy weight.
2. Be physically active each day.

**Build a Healthy Base:**

1. Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
2. Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
3. Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
4. Keep foods safe to eat.

**Choose Sensibly:**

1. Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
2. Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
3. Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
4. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

The *Dietary Guidelines* include the Food Guide Pyramid to help with healthy food choices and daily servings or portion sizes.

**Weight Control on a Heart-Healthy Eating Plan**

Balancing calorie intake with regular physical activity can help individuals achieve or maintain a healthy weight. For individuals who are overweight, even modest amounts of weight loss of approximately 10 percent of initial body weight can have health benefits. Weight loss can lower high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol levels, and high blood sugar levels. Reducing these risk factors helps to prevent cardiovascular disease and/or decrease its severity in those with existing disease.

To maintain or lose weight, it is important to watch the types and amounts of food consumed. In general:

- Begin the day with a hearty breakfast to provide energy and nutrients, and to jump-start metabolism.
- Control calories by eating smaller meals spaced throughout the day rather than eating one or two large meals.

- Read food labels and choose foods lower in calories, total fat, and saturated fat.
- Keep simple sugars, such as desserts and sweetened beverages, to a minimum.
- Be familiar with portion sizes and avoid eating second portions.
- Balance food intake with physical activity.
- Add finely chopped vegetables to favorite recipes.
- Choose whole grain bread for sandwiches.
- Offer alternative desserts, such as fruit bars, ginger snaps, graham crackers, low-fat pudding, and yogurt.
- At fast food restaurants, order a small, plain hamburger (no cheese), grilled chicken or lean roast beef sandwich, and baked potato instead of french fries.

### Special Tips for Kids

One in five children over the age of 6 is considered overweight. Overweight and obesity acquired in childhood may persist into adulthood and increase the risk of disease later in life. Children today are consuming excessive amounts of saturated fat, total fat, and calories from fast foods and snacks and are not getting enough physical activity. Additional heart-healthy advice for parents and kids includes:

- Cut back on high-fat foods by offering more fruits or vegetables as snacks.
- Offer low-fat milk and juice instead of soft drinks.

### Special Tips for Seniors

It is important for seniors to follow a heart-healthy eating plan because the risk of heart disease increases with age. A heart-healthy eating plan, along with medications if needed, can help control risk factors like high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. Maintaining a healthy body weight by consuming nutritious foods and being physically active is also important for older individuals.

## Resources



The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) publishes a variety of educational materials for adults, children, and adolescents on ways to follow a heart-healthy eating plan and help control high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and overweight. Check out materials available from the NHLBI catalog, and in particular the Web page "Aim For A Healthy Weight" at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov). The Web page provides information for patients and the public, and guides individuals to determine their weight and risk status and to choose lifestyle changes for losing weight. It includes a chart on diseases associated with obesity, menus and recipes, shopping lists and ideas, an interactive menu planner, and a guide to physical activity.

*Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, May 2000, Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Dietary Guidelines include the Food Guide Pyramid to help with healthy food choices and daily servings or portion sizes. Further information can be found at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's nutrition Web site, [www.usda.gov/cnpp](http://www.usda.gov/cnpp). Also, check out the USDA's Web site for kids, [www.usda.gov/news/usdakids/index.html](http://www.usda.gov/news/usdakids/index.html).

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Community Mobilization Guide is organized according to the 5Ps that make up the Hearts N' Parks project. Each section contains basic information, as well as suggested steps and actions to be taken.

- **1st P—People:** Identification of targeted groups for participation in Hearts N' Parks
- **2nd P—Programs:** Techniques for creating and delivering heart-healthy activities and alternatives to participants
- **3rd P—Public Visibility:** Techniques to raise the level of awareness of Hearts N' Parks and its messages, as well as tools and strategies for reaching targeted groups and working with the media
- **4th P—Partnering:** Methods to make the most of existing community resources to extend the reach of Hearts N' Parks
- **5th P—Performance Measures:** Tracking sheets, surveys, and directions for data analysis to document the results of your Hearts N' Parks efforts.

At the end of each of the five P sections you will find a **Countdown Checklist** to help you implement your Hearts N' Parks effort. The activities and actions are:

- **Getting Started**—Things you need to do initially.
- **Moving Forward**—Actions to take as you proceed.
- **Keeping the Beat**—Ways to extend Hearts N' Parks programs and practices.

The final section, **Celebrating and Sharing**, provides postprogram guidance.

If you find that you have specific questions about Hearts N' Parks that are not addressed in this guide, you may contact the NRPA by telephone at (800) 649-3042, or by e-mail at [programs@nrpa.org](mailto:programs@nrpa.org). You may also contact NHLBI at (301) 592-8573, or by e-mail at [NHLBIinfo@rover.nhlbi.nih.gov](mailto:NHLBIinfo@rover.nhlbi.nih.gov).

# Information spots

Within each section you will find subsections that can assist you as you implement Hearts N' Parks. They include:



**SOS: Signs of Success**—Examples of successful programs or strategies related to implementation of Hearts N' Parks projects or related activities.

**Do You Know?**—Additional information or insight into a particular topic or area.



**Resources**—Refers you to specific resources at the end of the section or within the guide.

**Rx: Resource Examples**—Excerpts from some of the resources available either within the guide or by ordering, or accessing the Web sites of the NHLBI and the NRPA.



**Focused Facts**—Facts or statistics that you may wish to refer.

**FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)**—At the end of each section.



# SOS

*Signs of Success*

## ARLINGTON COUNTY SLOGAN

### Hearts N' Parks—Mobilizing the Vision

"Your Community, USA, Is the Healthiest and Happiest Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play."  
(See pages 57,60, and 61 for details)



### HOW TO SIGN UP FOR HEARTS N' PARKS

Please complete and send in the registration form on the following page.

Also, consider using the Hearts N' Parks pledge on page 16, or the slogan from Arlington County, VA as a promotional item to spark interest. Make it into a large poster for display or reproduce it on colorful paper and pass it out as a flyer to potential Hearts N' Parks participants.

# Welcome

## TO HEARTS N' PARKS

The NHLBI and the NRPA are pleased that you have decided to become a Hearts N' Parks community. To become officially designated as a Hearts N' Parks community, please complete and mail, fax, or e-mail this form to:

National Recreation and Park Association  
22377 Belmont Ridge Road, Ashburn, VA 20148  
Fax: (703) 729-4753; E-mail: [programs@nrpa.org](mailto:programs@nrpa.org)



Name of City/Town/County: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Agency/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Population of Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Please identify those aspects of Hearts N' Parks that you would like to consider pursuing. Feel free to check all.

- Yes, we'd like to consider all 5Ps of Hearts N' Parks.**
- People**—Yes, we would like to extend our impact upon people's health and well-being.
- Programs**—Yes, we would like to incorporate heart-healthy information and activities into our existing programs.
- Public Visibility**—Yes, we would like to share information about the benefits of physical activity and heart-healthy behavior with our residents and the media.
- Partnering**—Yes, we would like to use community contacts to pull together resources to enhance health.
- Performance Indicators**—Yes, we would be interested in demonstrating the impact of our programs and services on health.

TAKE THE

Hearts N' Parks

# Pledge

I/We pledge to adopt **at least three** of the following heart-healthy habits during the Hearts N' Parks Program:

  **Lunch lightly!** Pack or buy a low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol lunch. Try a veggie sandwich with low-fat cheese, hummus, or a fresh green salad.

**Take a commercial break!** Work on your flexibility during television commercials three times a week. Hold each stretch for at least 10 seconds, working up to 30 seconds in a slow, controlled manner—no bouncing!

**Stock the snack cupboard!** Buy heart-healthy snacks, such as pretzels, graham crackers, mini carrots, whole wheat crackers, fresh fruit, and low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

**Jump to it!** Improve your muscular endurance by jumping rope three times a week. How long can you go?

**Shop savvy!** Read labels before buying food to make healthy choices at the grocery store. Watch the calorie, fat, saturated fat, and sodium content.

**Tip the scale!** Test your muscular strength by getting into a push-up position and pressing your hands down on a bathroom scale to see how high you can make it go.

**Go green!** Try a new green vegetable. Eat a green vegetable every day!



**Get your heart pumping!** Take a family walk, go dancing, rake leaves, or work in the garden.

**Be on the alert for mega-portions.** Learn what one serving or portion of each type of food looks like.

**Pass on the salt!** Try a new spice or seasoning when cooking and leave the salt in the shaker.

**Have fun!** Have a heart-healthy cookout and invite your friends.



Please complete and place in a visible area, such as a bulletin board for all to see!

Visit the NHLBI Web site at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)



# Frequently Asked Questions



## 1 What qualifications do I need to be a Hearts N' Parks Coordinator?

If you are enthusiastic, motivated, resourceful, and a good role model, you are qualified to do the job. You don't need a special degree or certificate, and you don't need to be a nutrition or fitness expert. Successful Hearts N' Parks coordinators have ranged from people who had little or no prior experience in heart-healthy behavior or were new to the community service field to individuals who have extensive backgrounds in health and wellness or experience in community service.

## 2 What are risk factors and how do they fit together with respect to cardiovascular disease?

Risk factors are the conditions or behavior that increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. They include high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, overweight, obesity, diabetes, smoking, and physical inactivity. However, these factors do not exist exclusive of one another. In fact, each factor poses a greater risk when it exists alongside the others. For example, if you smoke and have high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol, you're eight times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than someone with no risk factors. Moreover, having one of the risk factors can make you more likely to have others. Physical inactivity, for example, can contribute to overweight or obesity, which in turn may lead to diabetes.

