



healthy  
northland  
STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

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## Safe Routes to School in Esko: A Collaborative Commitment to Active Living



Providing kids with a safe, convenient, and fun way to bike and walk to school is a vital safety measure with far-reaching benefits to a community's health and wellbeing. Safe Routes to School can reduce the risk of pedestrian injury by 44 percent. It can also alleviate vehicle congestion and improve air quality. And it helps foster an active lifestyle for kids—students who start walking or biking to school get an average of 47 more minutes of physical activity per week.



That's why Emily Morrison, Carlton County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) Coordinator, is collaborating with Esko Public Schools and the county's engineering department to implement a Safe Routes to School Design Assistance grant.

*Full Story: Esko Safe Routes to School*

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## The Health Equity Minute Root Causes of Obesity

Weight can be a difficult topic to address, because no two bodies are alike, and there are many ways to be healthy. But we all agree that children and their families should have access to the nutritious food they need to thrive.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, people affected by weight increases may experience effects from a combination of factors related to society, environment, and genetics. These factors are beyond a child or their family's ability to control, and societal and environmental influences are often based on race, class, and zip code. It is important to recognize that health concerns about weight and wellness do not affect all groups of people equally.

In the United States, some neighborhoods have many places to get nutritious food, while others have no place to buy fresh, affordable produce. These neighborhoods are sometimes called “food deserts.” Most food deserts are located in low-income areas. (Source: [United States Department of Agriculture](#)) People living in these areas often have to rely on fast or heavily processed foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients. (Source: [Feed the Children](#))

Everyone should have access to the food they need to achieve their best health. The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) collaborates with community partners to make changes that result in nutritious foods being more available and affordable. Learn more by checking out [MN Eats on the SHIP Storyboard](#).



## Community Leadership Team Member Spotlight: **Cook County Commissioner Deb White**

*The Healthy Northland Community Leadership Team (CLT) is made up of representatives from across the region who work with us to advise activities related to active living, healthy eating, commercial tobacco free spaces, and wellbeing in the 7-county region. Consider learning more or joining by filling out this [Community Leadership Team interest form!](#)*

After more than 40 years of service to her community, Cook County Commissioner Deb White will tell you that it all boils down to relationships. Nowhere is that sentiment clearer than in the work she’s engaged in with the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. “Cook County residents across the border have a lot to offer the rest of us,” Commissioner White said, referring to the Grand Portage Reservation, which shares geography with her district.

She has been building relationships with band leaders and members for decades, since working for Grand Portage in their education department as a tutor, counselor, and advocate for students



and parents.



During her tenure on the Cook County School Board, White prioritized facilitating a healthy, supportive environment in which representatives from the Grand Portage Band could be at the table with school administration, participating in decisions that affected students and families. That collaboration led to the introduction of a state-approved American history curriculum that emphasizes the viewpoints of Native American communities, as well as an Ojibwe language program that all students in grades 6-8 participate in and can elect to continue through high school.

Now a member of the Cook County Board, Commissioner White applies her relationships-based approach to a variety of issues including aging, transportation, and mental health. In Cook County, she says, “the community works to take care of one another,” and she sees value in systems and services that ensure everyone has what they need to be healthy and thrive. We’re grateful for the time and energy she gives to Healthy Northland’s Community Leadership Team!

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## A Blast from the Past

Take a look at this SHIP Story from 2015, highlighting a success of lactation work in Carlton County.

*Full Story: Published in the Pine Journal, November 2015*

Then, check it out! The Minnesota State Legislature has changed lactation laws in 2022 and 2023 to better support mothers and babies:

- [Breastfeeding Information for Workplaces | MN Dept. of Health](#)
- [Pregnant workers and new parents | Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry](#)



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## Events & Resources

**Interested in SHIP partners in the Northeast?**  
[Check out the SHIP Storyboard.](#)

## MN MOVES

- Apply now for a [Funding Opportunity from the USDOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#). This funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent deaths and serious injuries on our nation's roadways. All applications must be received by August 29, 2024. For more information, please visit the [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) website](#).
- Check out the [Learn to Ride Teaching Guide | Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota](#)
- Sign up for [MnDOT Safe Routes to School email list](#) for updates on funding opportunities and more.

## MN EATS

- Are you coming to the Northland Food Forum on March 22? [RSVP for the Northland Regional Food Network Forum](#)
- Did you know? Wasted food represents a \$473 billion economic loss and contributes to 2% of the total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, one in eight Americans struggles to put enough food on the table. That's why efforts like preventing and reducing wasted food can have a huge social, economic, and environmental impact! [Apply now for grants from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) for projects that support prevention of wasted food and food rescue across the state.

## MN BREATHE

- April 24, 2024: [Register for the Public Health Law Center's Commercial Tobacco Regulations Series: Legal Landscape of Flavored Tobacco Products](#)
- [School Resource Packet - Vape Prevention Policy, Vape Detector FAQ, and more](#)
- Check out the [Don't Blow It Toolkit - Stories and Prevention tools from the Northeast](#)

## MN WELL-BEING

- [Grant Application Guide for Rural Communities](#)
- [Local Climate Action Grant](#): \$2.3 million is available to help communities take climate action! Our Local Climate Action Program will fund projects that keep our homes safe and loved ones healthy. Nonprofits, local governments, and educational institutions should apply by April 30.
- The [Local Infrastructure Hub](#), a national program to connect cities and towns with resources and expert advice to access federal infrastructure funding, offers pro bono resources and [bootcamps for local officials](#) from communities with populations of 150,000 or fewer residents.



*The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) is a grant that focuses on active living, commercial tobacco free living, healthy eating, and wellbeing. Healthy Northland is a cohort of public health representatives, community leaders, and partners who leverage SHIP funding to improve the health of residents in the 7 counties of Northeast Minnesota. Learn more at [www.healthynorthland.org](http://www.healthynorthland.org).*

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Community Health Board | 404 West Superior Street, Suite 250, Duluth, MN 55802

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