



Shaping Active, Healthy Communities Workshops in Action



CLASP funding enabled the Heart and Stroke Foundation to develop a **workshop guidebook** and related outreach materials for its **Shaping Active, Healthy Communities Toolkit**. These resources provides an overview of the linkages between the built environment and health, as well as suggestions of actions Canadians can take to help create communities that are built to make "healthy choices, easy choices" for all. The workshop guidebook aims to assist Heart and Stroke Foundation staff and volunteers--and any Canadians--in mobilizing colleagues, friends, neighbours and community stakeholders to bring a health voice to the land use planning table. Below, we provide a snapshot of the *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* workshop in action!

SUCCESS STORY : Parry Sound's Active Transportation Committee

▶ In Parry Sound, Ontario, Heart and Stroke Foundation staff, **Sam AbiSaab**, learned that a small group of citizens had formed an **Active Transportation Committee** to advocate for the provision of **Active Transportation corridors** to a new school. Here, **Sam** saw an opportunity to use the Heart and Stroke Foundation *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* workshop to bring these efforts to a next level of impact. And, he was right.



Fall 2010, Sam and the Parry Sound Active Transportation Committee organized a *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* workshop. Physicians, politicians, and local residents attended, including many new faces. Workshop volunteer Joel Kirk says, "The Heart and Stroke Foundation workshop really helped define what the issues are in Parry Sound, and to present active transportation as a solution to the concerns of various groups in the community."

As a result of the workshop, Parry Sound now has an Active Transportation Committee with expanded membership and mandate extending well beyond the initial school-based advocacy initiative. The Committee has broadened and sharpened its strategy, received a Heart and Stroke Foundation Spark advocacy grant, and launched an Active Transportation Master Plan campaign. Their goal is for the West Parry Sound area to adopt a comprehensive approach to active transportation promotion—one that takes into account the broader needs of the community and is adopted by area municipalities.

This work started with the development of an Active Community Charter for Parry Sound which has been endorsed by 35 individuals and organizations including the Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Parry Sound Business Association, the Rotary Club of Parry Sound, and the Parry Sound Medical Society. "This workshop raised the profile of active transportation in the community," says Joel Kirk. "It enabled and inspired us to aim bigger."



The Parry Sound Active Transportation Committee



SUCCESS STORY : Nova Scotia's Impactful Heart & Stroke Walkabout

▶ In Nova Scotia, Heart and Stroke Foundation staff, Christina MacLeod used the *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* workshop to build on the work currently underway through the Nova Scotia Foundation's signature walking program – *Heart&Stroke Walkabout*.

"Walkabout is a program with many components and its goal is to create a province-wide culture of walking. But, because walking is so influenced by government policy – at all levels – it's important to talk about how everything comes together and to show, visually, what a walkable community can look like. That's a large part of what the workshop has enabled us to do and it's made a significant impact."

So far, adds MacLeod, a total of three workshops have been delivered in three months and more are planned. "We have been getting a number of requests for more workshops and have also been asked to deliver close to twenty presentations on the topic. I guess word of our efforts is spreading because we've also been invited to be a partner in a coalition of organizations who are developing a response to the upcoming five-year regional planning review within the Halifax Regional Municipality. We're having success in terms of community reach, creating partnerships, and making a difference for participants."

One participant who would agree with that assessment is Halifax resident, Laena Garrison. For Garrison, the workshop's impact has been both personal and professional.

"I've worked with organizations in the past who have understood the link between health and community design. It's important to me professionally, and as a Nova Scotia resident, to live in an environment that supports options for physical activity," says Garrison. "The Heart and Stroke Foundation has done a great job in spreading the word about the role we all play in creating built environments that support healthy lifestyles. It's not a simple matter of just getting off the couch and heading outside," adds the 37-year old, who also points out that the workshop's design and accessibility is of equal importance to the message it provides. "Anyone can deliver *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* and it's relevant in any community, so the workshop has the potential to make a really big impact."

Impact is exactly the term that Christina MacLeod says applies to the results of the workshops delivered to date.

"As a result of our *Shaping Active, Health Communities* Workshop and the link to Walkabout, we were able to generate momentum leading to the proclamation of June as Active Transportation Month by the Nova Scotia Government. In addition, Walkabout and its partners were provided with funding to support local active transportation events and awareness campaigns throughout June."

"That's not all," adds MacLeod with a smile.

"In June, the Government of Nova Scotia will be announcing legislation focused on the one metre rule for bicyclists. The one-metre rule means that drivers must give one metre of space between the car and the cyclist they are passing. This is the first of its kind in Canada."

MacLeod insists that *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* has become a valued resource for non-governmental groups, physical activity and active transportation advocates as well as provincial and municipal politicians and policy makers in Nova Scotia. "It's had a tremendous impact and we've only just begun."



"It's had a tremendous impact and we've only just begun."

Christina MacLeod

SUCCESS STORY : Kerry Hamilton Makes a Difference by Connecting with City Councilors

▶ **Back to Ontario, Heart and Stroke Foundation volunteer and Queen's University Masters student, Kerry Hamilton downloaded the *Shaping Active, Healthy Communities* materials and organized a workshop, May 2011, for the County of Lanark just West of Ottawa. The event attracted 35 participants including six councilors, four planners, public health staff and other key community stakeholders in the area.**

As a result of the workshop, Kerry was invited to present to the Carleton Place Town Council on July 7, 2011. During her 45-minute presentation, she proposed that Council includes a Healthy Communities section in the 2012 municipal budget, as well as establish a rails-to-trails network connecting the three area townships together.

Carleton Place Mayor and all Councilors were in favour. Councilors committed to report their ideas and next steps to a municipal staff member, who will estimate costs and include them in the 2012 budget to be discussed fall/winter 2011. More importantly, all Councilors agreed that they wanted to create policy and action around building a "Healthy, Active" Carleton Place, and have proposed some innovative small and long term steps to make this a reality. "Carleton Place is definitely a success story," say Kerry Hamilton. "The Shaping Active Healthy Communities toolkit and workshop templates made it possible for me to make a tangible difference in my community. I look forward to reporting on future wins."



July 14, 2011 Canadian Gazette article featuring Kerry Hamilton's presentation.



Photo: www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden



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