



SAN DIEGO COUNTY
**CHILDHOOD
OBESITY
INITIATIVE**

Working Together to Shape a Healthy Future

icansandiego.org

Faith Communities as Community Space

Resources for Faith Communities

Most would agree that physical activity is good for your health; however, most adults and children alike do not receive enough physical activity. Why not? Research has shown that our surroundings at home, school, work and in the community affect what we eat, how we eat, our level of physical activity and our overall quality of life. When the opportunities to eat healthy and be physically active are simply not available it can be difficult to make the right choice. Our environment makes a big difference!

Faith communities can help make the healthy choice the easy choice in their community. Faith communities can open their doors and yards to their neighborhood to create more opportunities for children and families to eat healthy and be physically active.

Opportunities for faith communities to share their space:

- Unlock a gate to a grassy field or playground after hours for children and families to be active.
- Turn the lights on during the early evening, so neighbors can utilize basketball courts or parking lots for games.
- Partner with community organizations to offer classes on nutrition, active living, etc.
- Build a community garden onsite and share plots of land with the community to grow fresh foods.
- Share kitchen space for cooking classes.

Can you think of any other recreational opportunities your faith community could make available to the larger community? (Basketball court, volleyball court, park, gymnasium, etc.)

Children and families are more likely to be active if parks, playgrounds, recreation centers and green spaces are near their home and open for use. Same goes for the location of grocery stores, produce stands and community gardens. If all of these things are closer to home, families are more likely to eat fresh fruits and vegetables and be physically active daily.

When communities work together to share resources and make opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity more readily available, they can rest assured that they are helping:

- Create life-long healthy habits
- Reduce & prevent childhood obesity
- Contribute to children's organizational & social skills
- Promote positive self-esteem
- Promote excellence & higher grade achievement in school
- Prevent illness & disease later on in life
- Create a friendlier more inviting community

Faith communities can provide families, children and the larger community with the resources they need to make simple changes in their daily routine. Just one small healthy change in activity goes a long way to ensure the overall health of the community. That's a reason to start today!

Source: Committee on Environmental Health. (2009). The built environment: designing communities to promote physical activity in children. *Pediatrics*, 123 (6), 1591-1598. Prevention Institute and the Berkeley Media Studies Group. (2009). Joint use resources- joint use 101. Retrieved September 16, 2009 from <http://www.jointuse.org/resources/joint-use-101/>

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