

# Celebrate National Health and Fitness Month in May!



## Kick off and support an **active commuting program** in your worksite

Walking or biking to work is a great way for your employees to fit some physical activity into a busy schedule. Besides saving on fuel costs and the impact a motorized vehicle can have on the environment, creating a habit of active commuting boosts fitness and has an impact on preventable diseases like heart disease.

■ One study of 2,364 working adults showed that individuals who walked or biked to work on a consistent basis reaped significant health benefits, such as reduced stress and lower blood pressure, and were less likely to be obese. The study found that male commuters had reduced blood pressure, insulin and triglyceride levels.

■ A review of eight studies found a significant reduction in the risk of heart disease among active commuters, particularly females.

As an employer, you can reap the benefits of an active commuting workforce. Active commuters on average use fewer sick days and report feeling less stressed than those employees who drive to work daily.

If you have employees who don't live in your area, find a place away from your worksite that will allow them to park and walk to work at least part of the way.



### As an employer, here are some ways you can support active commuting:

- Offer **bike racks** in prominent locations for employees who ride their bike to work.
- Have key stakeholders in your workplace **endorse active commuting** by doing so themselves, or putting their support in writing.
- **Post bicycle safety laws** in your break room.
- **Provide an incentive** for employees who ride their bike or walk to work.
- **Hold a break-and-learn session** about the benefits of active commuting and how to overcome barriers.
- **Post the benefits** of active commuting in your break room or on your Intranet.
- **Build a buddy program.** Ask employees to post if they active commute and see if they can find someone to commute with them.

### Sample active commuting incentive ideas:

- **Tie a coupon for a healthy snack** to the handlebars of the bike riders.
- **Challenge another organization** to see how many active commuters you can recruit. The organization with the highest percentage of commuters wins.
- **Provide an incentive** for employees who active commute to work 10 times a month. Give each employee a card and have them write the dates of their active commutes on the card. Once they have 10 dates filled in, provide them with a small incentive, such as a healthful snack or a coupon for a smoothie at a local vendor.
- **Host a lunchtime ride or walk led by key stakeholders** in your organization or your wellness committee to kick off your active commuting season. Give a **free lunch** to those who participate.

Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a collaborative partnership of Allina Health, the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation and the community of New Ulm.