



Healthy Living

A healthy and safe community is the goal of every locality, and the fast-paced, technologically-rapt world we live in makes healthy living all-at-once easier, yet more challenging. While programs and products exist to help us get healthy and be safe (there's an app for that!), balancing busy schedules at work, school and home make it even more difficult to find the time to take time, whether it is for ourselves, our families, or our communities.

Our Health Today

Our lifestyles today are characterized by eating unhealthy food and physical inactivity.¹ Food choices at home or at school may not be what they should, and in many localities having a safe place to play or engage in physical activity is limited.



Figure 1. Little League Baseball at Blue Omohundro Park (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Every day, news reports tell us about the obesity epidemic that exists in our country and the impact it is having on our long-term health.

Nationally, obesity rates have doubled in the last 35 years; the average American today is more than 24 pounds heavier than in 1960.² Of even greater concern is the fact that childhood obesity rates in the United States have increased four-fold since the 1970's; today nearly one in three children age 2-19 are overweight or obese.³

For Virginia, the Centers for Disease Control reports that the percent of adults that are obese (body-mass index greater than or equal to 30) increased from less than 10% in 1990 to between 25%-29% in 2010.⁴ Approximately 14.3% of children age 10-17 were reported to be obese in 2011, up from 13.8% in 2004.⁵

The long-term health implications from obesity are daunting. For adults in Virginia, diabetes related to obesity increased from 5% in 1990 to 9.7% in 2014; hypertension related to obesity increased from 19.6% in 1990 to 32.5% in 2013.⁶ Unless the obesity epidemic in children is effectively reversed, "children today are likely to become the first generation of Americans who live sicker and die younger than their parents' generation."⁷

What Can We Do?

Raising awareness of the problem and providing alternatives for solutions is a comprehensive way to begin addressing the problems of childhood and adult obesity. Initiatives are in place, nationally and at the state level, to inform and guide citizens toward a healthier lifestyle.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/causes.html>, 2015.

² <http://stateofobesity.org/obesity-rates-trends-overview>, 2015.

³ www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org, 2015.

⁴ www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org, 2015.

⁵ <http://stateofobesity.org/states/va>, 2015.

⁶ <http://stateofobesity.org/states/va>, 2015.

⁷ <http://www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org/learn-the-facts/obesity-by-the-numbers>, 2015.



National Initiatives

First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative, [Let's Move!](#), is a national program designed to raise awareness about childhood obesity and ways for children and their families to get healthy. [Let's Move](#) has also partnered with the National League of Cities to create the [Let's Move Cities, Towns and Counties](#) (LMCTC) program that sets forth goals for eliminating childhood obesity in localities all across the nation. To date, more than 500 cities, towns and counties have become members of LMCTC by pledging to meet five goals that will help localities promote healthy eating and active living for healthier communities. The five goals in the program are:



Goal I: Start Early, Start Smart

To provide children with a healthier start, local elected officials commit to helping early care and education program providers incorporate best practices for nutrition, physical activity and screen time into their programs.

Goal II: My Plate, Your Place

To empower parents and caregivers, local elected officials commit to prominently displaying MyPlate in all municipally- or county-owned or operated venues that offer or sell food/beverages.

Goal III: Smart Servings for Students

To provide healthy food to children and youth, local elected officials commit to expanding access to meal programs before, during and after the school day, and/or over the summer months.

Goal IV: Model Food Service

To improve access to healthy, affordable foods, local elected officials commit to implementing healthy and sustainable food service guidelines that are aligned with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in all municipally or county owned or operated venues that offer or sell food/beverages.

Goal V: Active Kids at Play

To increase physical activity, local elected officials commit to mapping local play spaces, completing a needs assessment, developing an action plan and launching a minimum of three proven policies, programs or initiatives aimed at increasing access to play.

Localities participating in the LMCTC program may earn bronze, silver or gold medals for achieving milestones in each goal. Additionally, localities participating in the program benefit by:

- Receiving national recognition when they achieve LMCTC goals.
- Gaining access to technical assistance from experts.
- Having a variety of opportunities to learn what works at the local level.
- Sharing success stories and discussing challenges with peers in other communities.
- Participating in a national movement to build healthy communities for a healthy future.⁸

⁸ <http://www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org/get-started>, 2015



Virginia Initiatives

The Virginia Department of Health offers information on strategies and programs for achieving healthy living through its [Office of Family Health Services](#). The office's division of Prevention and Health Promotion offers a wide variety of information pertaining to healthy living. Specifically, the Healthy Eating and Active Living program is designed to prevent obesity and other chronic illnesses by providing Virginia residents with the information, tools and resources that promote healthy eating and proper nutrition, as well as active lifestyles and behaviors. The office's 9-5-2-1-0® program was designed to make it easier to remember five basic habits that embody healthy living: Each day – get 9 hours of sleep; eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables; limit television to 2 hours; get 1 hour of exercise; drink 0 sodas.⁹



Local Initiatives



Figure 2. Swimming at Dix Memorial Pool (Staff photo, 2012)

While there are no specific organized initiatives in town related to healthy living, there is evidence of people wanting to get healthy. Most mornings and evenings town residents, as well as people who drive in from outside of town just to exercise, can be seen walking or running through town--the most popular route seems to be Main Street, West Gordon Avenue and High Street, also known as “the loop”, where wider streets and sidewalks afford a safer walk.

Children play at the playground at Verling Park or at Gordon Barbour Elementary School. During the summer, children walk or bike to Dix Memorial Pool to spend the day, or play baseball and softball at Blue Omohundro Park.

The Orange County Parks & Recreation Department offers youth athletic programs in soccer, football, wrestling, basketball and baseball, all of which practice in Gordonsville. Both the VFW just outside of Gordonsville and Gordon Barbour Elementary School provide fields and facilities for these teams to practice and play games.

Gordonsville is well-positioned to undertake local initiatives that inform and encourage residents to lead healthier lives through better eating habits and more physical activity. Our strong church community, active civic groups, and the presence of a local elementary school will make it easier to develop and implement programs and activities in this regard.

A Safe Community is a Healthy Community

In addition to informing and encouraging residents to be healthy through better eating habits and physical activity, raising public awareness about making our community safe is equally important for creating a healthy community. While Gordonsville is a small town, threats to public safety still

⁹ <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OFHS/prevention/health/>; 2015.



exist. Vigilance on the streets, as well as in the home, is important. Opportunities exist in town for public safety officials to reach out to the community about ways to make our town safer.

Cops for Kids Day

Each year, as time and funding permit, the Gordonsville Police Department sponsors Cops for Kids Day, a community outreach festival that emphasizes the importance of personal and community safety for kids and gives them a chance to meet the law enforcement officers in their community. In addition, participants get to play games and engage in activities where they learn about fire safety, bicycle safety, gun safety, bullying and stranger danger. McGruff the Crime Dog, Smokey the Bear, and Eddie Eagle (gun safety) make appearances at the event when they are available.



Figure 2. Children participating in Cops for Kids Day (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Gordonsville Street Festival

The Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary holds their annual street festival on the first Saturday in October. The event provides a great opportunity for the local fire company to educate residents and visitors about the importance of fire safety. Kids can take a tour of a fire truck and get valuable information about what they can do to make their homes fire-safe.

Safe Streets

Gordonsville is only a square mile in size, making it relatively easy for people to walk most places in town. There are many areas, however, where sidewalks and adequate lighting do not exist, discouraging pedestrians from walking instead of driving where they need to go in town. An inventory of street lighting is in place, and the police department routinely monitors areas that are poorly lighted and responds to reports about lights that are out. Efforts should be made to install lighting in those areas of town where street lights are minimal or non-existent.

Community Meetings and Survey Responses

During the community meetings held in the fall of 2011, the following issues related to healthy living were identified by meeting participants:

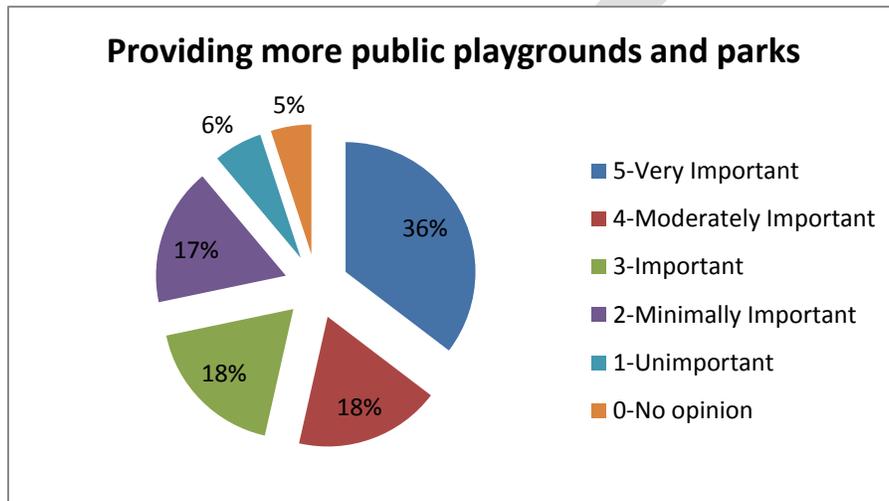
- Need a playground and recreation for older children such as a basketball court
- Need to update the play equipment at Verling Park
- Need to work with owners of vacant properties to find available park land
- Develop a link to regional trail network (equestrian)
- Set aside park land in new development
- Offer Mommy & Me swim lessons
- Create a park at Meadow Run
- Develop a walking/hiking (multi-use) trail in town and link neighborhoods
- Promote the development of a community center that provides programs for all age groups
- Develop a community garden where residents may grow and harvest their own fruits, vegetables and flowers
- Partner with churches in town for community event space (Boys & Girls club, etc.)



Developing a multi-use trail in the town to link neighborhoods is an idea that was mentioned at each of the community meetings.

In the community survey that was mailed out in the fall of 2011, residents were asked to rate both the current provision of recreational facilities within the town and the importance of providing more public playgrounds and parks.

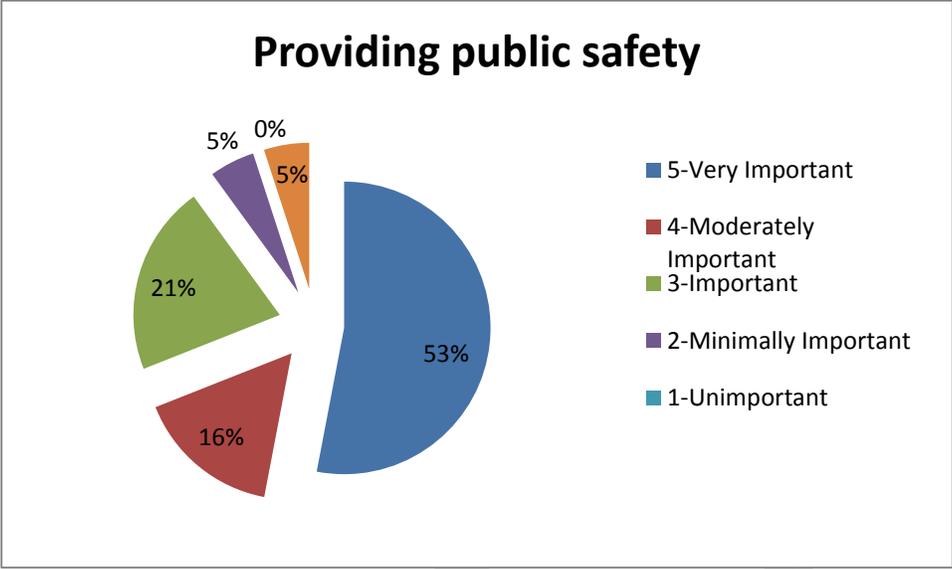
The chart below shows that nearly three-quarters of survey respondents stated that providing more public playgrounds and parks is important, moderately important or very important. Only 6% of survey respondents indicated that the provision of public playgrounds and parks is unimportant.



Community meeting participants also discussed what should be done in order to make Gordonsville a safer community. Specifically, they noted the following:

- Update the 911 system to ensure correct addresses for timely, accurate response
- Bring back Police Department bike patrol/community policing
- Create higher wages for police officers
- Put brighter lights on emergency vehicles
- Make public safety a priority

In the community survey that was distributed in the fall of 2011, residents were asked to rate the provision of public safety. The following chart illustrates the responses to this issue:



Healthy Living Goal

To create a healthy and safe community that fosters good living for generations to come.

Objective A. To provide opportunities for residents to learn about and engage in activities and lifestyles that promote healthy living.	
A1.	<i>Participate in the Let’s Move! Cities, Towns and Counties initiative to learn ways to promote healthy living in town.</i>
A2.	<i>Create a “Healthy Living Gordonville” committee comprised of local school, civic and church group representatives to develop and implement healthy living programs for the community.</i>
A3.	<i>Work with the Orange County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service to develop and host a series of classes geared toward healthy living, including meal planning, food shopping, exercising, etc.</i>
A3.	<i>Encourage the development of a community garden where residents may grow and harvest their own fruits, vegetables and flowers.</i>
A4.	<i>Develop varying aquatics programs for all ages at Dix Memorial Pool.</i>
A5.	<i>Coordinate the development of a mini-triathlon to be held in the town.</i>
Objective B. To encourage the development of family-oriented recreational/fitness facilities.	
B1.	<i>Identify properties in town or in proximity to town that may be utilized for recreational space, specifically in the southeastern and southwestern quadrants of town where such areas do not currently exist.</i>
B2.	<i>Require new developments to set aside and develop a minimum of 25% of usable land area for passive and active recreational uses.</i>



B3.	Seek funding for trail development through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Recreational Trails Program.
B4.	Partner with the Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission to seek grant funding for the development of recreational facilities within the town.
B5.	Replace Dix Memorial Pool with a competition ready facility that may be enclosed to provide year-round aquatics programs for residents of the town and surrounding communities.
B6.	Encourage the development of a multi-use trail in town to link neighborhoods.
B7.	Work with Orange County to develop a multi-use trail to link the town to Montpelier.
Objective C. To develop activities and programs that promote public safety within the town.	
C1.	Work with residents to establish neighborhood watch programs in their neighborhoods.
C2.	Encourage the police department to conduct personal safety and awareness classes for all ages.
C3.	Work with the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company to develop and implement a semi-annual fire safety program (tied to the change from/to Daylight Saving Time) to be presented at schools and at local festivals such as the Fried Chicken Festival and the Gordonsville Street Festival.
C4.	Work with the Public Works department to develop a lighting plan for the installation of street lights where needed in all neighborhoods.
C5.	Develop a plan for sidewalk construction to ensure safe pedestrian access in all areas of town.