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# An Opportunity Like No Other



**M**ore than two years ago the residents of Del Norte County and its Adjacent Tribal Lands began a journey to create a stronger community where children are healthy, safe and ready to learn. During a year-long planning phase as part of The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative business leaders, organizations, neighborhood groups and individuals shared their concerns and hopes for our community. Informed by the community's voice, a group of stakeholders worked diligently to develop a Community Plan that provides a roadmap of what we need to accomplish in order to have a healthier community. The plan included our core belief that our children should dream about their futures – and those dreams

should be framed by family, health, safety, economic security, education and hope. Teams of residents and organizations fueled by common interests and passions have been working hard since we finished the Community Plan. These teams have identified issues and created their own solutions to secure early wins in decreasing childhood obesity and youth violence, and increasing school attendance and access to preventative health care. There are many successes to celebrate! A dental van now serves all students; community gardens exist; a new preschool opened; school meals are improving and now include salad bars; more kids are drinking water instead of soda; and resident leaders have formally organized to improve their

communities in Smith River, Klamath, at Sunset High School and on the Yurok reservation. More than 500 business leaders, teachers, residents and parents engaged in a conversation that resulted in the Del Norte Unified School District adopting a new model of education last month. The Building Healthy Communities initiative is an opportunity like no other that we have seen before in this community. Through this work we will ultimately change the way all of us think about and support health in our community. Good health doesn't begin in a doctor's office; health happens where we live, work and play together. By building resident power to affect change, growing youth leaders, working better collaboratively, and leveraging more resources we will

truly change the systems and policies that impact our community's health. Look for an article every-other Saturday in the Del Norte Triplicate to learn more about the work that is happening and how you can be involved as we build a healthier community. Please join us for the Building Healthy Communities Community Collaborative meeting on Wednesday, May 23rd at 5:15 pm at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Come and see the debut of youth-created movies about the work, the unveiling of community health indicators, hear about community success stories and become involved. Food and childcare will be provided. For more information, please call 707-465-1238 or find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/bhcdnatl](http://www.facebook.com/bhcdnatl).

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