



## **PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS 2008**

*Building on the Foundation for a Healthier Marin*

2008 Community Needs Assessment and Plan

# Executive Summary

*Pathways to Progress 2008: Building on the Foundation for a Healthier Marin* presents the progress of the four lifestyle indicators and their collaboratives—high-risk alcohol use, tobacco use, unhealthy food choices and physical inactivity—chosen by hundreds of Marin leaders. If addressed “upstream” and earlier in life with policies, programs and organizational practices, we may prevent or delay the occurrence of the leading causes of death in Marin from cancer, heart disease, stroke, as well as chronic illnesses like diabetes and respiratory illness.

## **High-Risk Alcohol Use**

In Marin, high-risk alcohol use is a major concern, with the percent of binge drinking reported by 11th graders at approximately 16 times the Healthy People 2010 Goal. One-in-three 9th graders and more than half of 11th graders report they use alcohol. Patterns of drinking among Marin youth are changing – more young women report binge drinking than their male counterparts. More than three quarters of adults in Marin report using alcohol, and 18% report binge drinking. Given that research shows that adults are the primary source of alcohol for youth, and that adult modeling plays a significant role in establishing and supporting community values and norms, it is important to target all age groups when addressing high-risk alcohol use.

## **Tobacco Use**

Remarkable progress has been made. Marin County has more than met the Healthy People 2010 Goal in reducing the rate of 9th graders and adults who smoke, and is exceedingly close to the goal for 11th graders. Work remains in eliminating the illegal sale of cigarettes to minors and increasing tobacco education in the health care setting.

## **Unhealthy Food Choices and Physical Inactivity**

The rate of youth and adults who are overweight or at risk for being overweight in Marin is two and three times higher than the Healthy People 2010 Goal. While the rate of physical activity and the consumption of fruits and vegetables in Marin are close to the 2007 target, a greater challenge is ahead with the new and very ambitious Healthy People 2010 Goals.

## **Our Continued Commitment**

The results of studying the lifestyle indicators dictate continued collaboration in prevention to reduce the incidence and delay the onset of the leading causes of death. There is energy and enthusiasm for the work ahead, including further identification of health disparities in affected populations. Marin can be encouraged by the 50-member strong community collaborative leveraging their work in nutrition and physical activity, the tremendous momentum of alcohol policy initiatives, the success of the tobacco champions toward the 2010 goals, and that the rate of heart disease in Marin is significantly lower than the state and national figures.

This important work will be strengthened as the partnership grows. The vision is that the Healthy Marin Partnership will one day embody the entire community. It will take this collective effort to meet the 2010 goals, reduce or delay the onset of the prevalent diseases in Marin, and disprove the U.S. Surgeon General, who predicts nationally that due to chronic illnesses related to poor eating habits and physical inactivity, this may be the “first generation of children whose life expectancies will be lower than those of their parents.”

The efforts of the collaboratives are comprehensive and coordinated, and go beyond the individual to a community focus. Each collaborative is committed to strengthening the community environment and culture wherein an individual, when faced with a personal decision, will make the healthier choice. This is our ongoing call to action . . . through community engagement and compassionate leadership, we will keep building on the foundation for a healthier Marin.