



**Active Living La Crescent's 2013  
Final Report  
August 2013**

**In 2007, a small group of committed citizens from the La Crescent community organized to pursue a grant opportunity with Blue Cross Blue Shield Prevention Minnesota (BCBS). The purpose of the grant was to improve La Crescent’s walkability and bikeability and increase physical activity. The group, Active Living La Crescent (ALL) was a partner program of La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership (HCP). Active Living La Crescent’s Mission was to make physical activity a routine part of daily lives through collaborative planning, community action and policy advocacy. In August of 2008, a five-year contract was secured with BCBS. From 2007 to July 2013, Active Living La Crescent proved to be successful in generating policy, systems, and environmental change thus creating a more livable and safe community where all members can move about more freely on bike and on foot.**

The following is a broad overview of some of Active Living La Crescents many accomplishments. For detailed description of projects and accomplishments, please refer to the monthly reports.

## **2008- 2013**

### **Key Features of Active Living’s work: Project Successes and Accomplishments**

#### **➤ Policy Changes:**

- **I-90 corridor** will have accommodations made to install bike and pedestrian lanes for future generations.
  - ❖ Successful advocacy resulted in unprecedented orders by the Federal Highway Administration in which MnDOT was ordered by the Federal Highway Administration to go back and ‘do their work’: to re-examine bicycle Pedestrian Accommodation on the I 90 Dresbach Bridge to include public engagement, engineering studies and analysis of alternatives. Our consulting counsel states it best in her July 28, 2011 letter, “Congratulations on what was clearly a very well executed meeting with FHWA-MN. The odds of an advocacy group successfully delaying an EA, and thus delaying construction of a several million dollar project, are very low. It is very fun to be a part of your efforts, and I look very forward to what comes next. -Cari Anne Renlund”
  - ❖ One year later, MnDOT, with concurrence of WisDOT, decided to include provisions in the replacement Dresbach I-90 that will make it possible to construct a future suspended bike and pedestrian trail over the Mississippi River. This decision is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan and is supported by elected officials of all the regional communities and the Active Living Working Group.

- The City's updated **Bike and Pedestrian plan** was adopted March 2013.
  - A new and revised **Park and Recreation plan** was approved February 2013.
  - La Crescent's **Zoning and Ordinance plan** was revised to support Active Living principles, May 2010.
  - **Twilight District Zoning Plan** was developed and adopted by council which includes a boardwalk, canoe/kayak launches, a fishing pier, and connections to the central business district and regional bike routes.
  - **A complete streets policy** was unanimously adopted 3/11/13 and incorporated into the Bike/Pedestrian plan.
  - Crucifixion Elementary school adopted **bike and pedestrian policy** to increase awareness and safety.
  - **Trailhead plan** was determined and encompasses all bike trails leading into and through the community.
  - The School district adopted **k-12 PE standards and minimum weekly physical activity policy**.
  - **Bike Safety Training** is incorporated into the phy ed curriculum in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> on a bi-annual basis.
  - All students' grades 3 through 12 will receive **hands- on safe cycling skills**: 42 bikes at the Middle/High school and 15 bikes at the elementary school.
  - **A Lifelong Fitness class** was adopted and incorporated into the High schools elective classes, 2010.
  - A high school **Bicycle Maintenance class** was approved and implemented and is on its forth semester.
  - Elementary school '**Inside- Recess**' policy amended to incorporate physical activity.
  - **Old Highway 61 trail reconstruction plan** to begin in 2015 that includes maintenance agreements with our partners - Houston County, Winona County, and the City of La Crescent.
  - **Highway 16 on road signage** project in which due to topographic restraints the Root River Trail will connect to Houston by a on-road trail.
  - Guided the **Mississippi River Trail (MRT)** system in and throughout our community.
  - September 2009 the Park and Recreation Commission and City Council adopted the **Eagle bluff trail plan**.
- **System & Program Enhancements:**
- Annual **Youth Triathlon** was developed and adopted by the City Recreation department; it is on its 5th annual race for youth in our community. Proceeds go towards supporting underprivileged families with pool and summer recreation passes.

- Annual Spring **Bike Fest** was developed and adopted by the elementary physical education and guidance counseling departments; it is on its 5<sup>th</sup> year of educating our youth and families on safe cycling skills, bike licensing, helmet sales, and providing bikes safety inspections.
- **The Bike Blender**, has been incorporated into the elementary schools Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) in which classes will utilize the Bike Blender as a positive reward system.
- **Bike Safety Bags** have been incorporated into the Guidance and physical education curriculum.
- On **Google Maps**, all trails, walking paths and areas to be physically active within our community are registered.
- **Historic Walking Trails** were created that link 25 historical features in our community.
- Crucifixion Elementary school adopted the **Brain Booster** program (5 minute developmental activity breaks) into their daily curriculum.
- **Wellness Expo** was developed and is held annually during testing week that incorporates educational and experiential physical activities for all middle school students.
- Middle School **5k Fit for Life Fun Run** is held annually, the last day of school, in which all middle schoolers (over 400 students) complete a 5K; the first year the students raised over \$4000 that was used towards the purchase of lifelong fitness equipment, bicycles, and health initiatives.
- **The Bike Shoppe**, a community based recycle a bicycle program whose goal is to provide opportunities for the community to grow through bicycles by developing bike maintenance skills and increasing the number of safe bikes out on the streets and was developed and has successfully been in operation since 2009.
- **Active transportation** to school **doubled** during the 4 years of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programming from 10% to 19.8%. This suggest that the SRTS programming made a significant impact on the normal active transportation behavior of our students.
  - ❖ Since 2009, the La Crescent Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program provided organization and promotion of events, education to students, parents, and community members on the importance and need of physical activity, and increase the amount of students safely walking and biking to school.
  - ❖ A major component of the Safe Routes to School Program is promoting walking and biking to school through monthly school-wide Walk and Bike to School Days and weekly Walking School Buses in the Elementary

Schools and Walk-N-Roll Fridays in the Middle School. In 2009, there were 2 or 3 events planned throughout the school-year; in 2013 there were regular weekly and monthly Walk and Bike to School Days and Walking School Buses.

- Since 2009, the Safe Route to School program logged over **12,000 trips to school**. A “trip” was counted when a student walked, biked (or used other wheels, i.e. skateboard, scooter etc.) to school during an event.
- The **Safe Routes to School** program was ranked most important to health versus all other programming in the 2013 Active Living La Crescent Survey that examined changes in residents’ knowledge and behaviors. 77% of the people surveyed reported that Safe Routes to School is very important to the health of the community.
- La Crescent schools earned **regional Golden Shoe & Silver Spoke awards, six times**, by having the best participation, out of 17 other schools, for walking and biking to school.
- Walk and Roll Fridays has been run and operated by the Middle School student Council for 4 years
- The **High school leadership** class chaperoned weekly walking school busses in four locations; they made 970 trips and walked over 749 miles.
- **Brain Booster Program** was designed in collaboration with La Crosse Safe Routes Coordinators incorporating physical activity breaks in the middle and elementary school classrooms.
- **Safe Routes to School manual** was created and distributed to all area schools for continued programming.
- **Crucifixion Elementary** school has incorporated sustainable Safe Routes to School programming into their entire school year, this includes walking school buses, themed incentive, and educational programs.
- **Sustainable funding** was developed in partnership with the Run to the Edge Race to support Lifelong Fitness and active curriculum in the schools.

➤ **Environmental Changes:**

- Over 40 **community bike racks** installed throughout the central business district, schools, and at all major parks in the community.
- **City Beautification program**, in partnership with Mn DOT, has created a plaza area, revived the city entrances, highway corridor and improved pedestrian scaping to enhance the safety, esthetics, and connectivity for pedestrians.
  - ❖ 2009 planted 74 trees in the plaza area across from the South side Kwik Trip. .
  - ❖ 2010 planted 200 trees and 75 shrubs along south Chestnut Street and the circular bike path.

- ❖ 2011 planted 225 Maple and Oak trees and bushes along 14/61 highway in front of the Car Wash and Denny's Auto area and restoration work was done on the hill by the main street ramp.
  - ❖ 2012 planted 1300 perennial flowers and grasses to improve pedestrian-scaping across from south side Kwik Trip Plaza area.
  - ❖ 2013 planted 225 trees and shrubs north end of town along highway 14/61 and Main Street entrance development.
- Multiple **benches, signs, and overlooks** have been constructed on the Eagle bluff trails.
  - **Street signs** were installed at 6 major intersections to decrease traffic speed and alert drivers of pedestrians in the community.
  - One mile of **bike lane and sharrows** were added (South 14<sup>th</sup> street).
  - **Center stripes** were added onto two roads & intersections to decrease speed and increase safety.
  - **Snowshoes**, 32 pairs, were purchased as part of the Lifelong Fitness Coalition that are utilized by the schools, Boys and Girls Club and available for community rental for a nominal fee.
  - **Tennis racquets**, 10 adult and 12 youth racquets & balls, are available for check out at the community pool.
  - Twenty seven **bike racks** installed at Middle and High School campuses, which included installation of concrete pads to aid maintenance and snow removal.
  - **Peaceful Playground** equipment/paintings and programming were adopted and incorporated into the elementary school recess.
  - **Framed pedestrian and bicycle plan maps** are displayed in Council chambers to keep plans alive and active.
  - Permanent **fine art photo's** depicting students using active transportation have been hung in two of the elementary schools; they reveal reinforcing information to continue building healthy active lifestyles. The elementary school playground has been remodeled to utilize The Peaceful Playground programming that enhances the playground experience engaging kids in more physical activity.
  - Twelve additional **bike parking** spaces was added in front of community businesses per request.
  - Referendum was passed for 2.8 million and the **new City pool** was constructed and opened June, 2012; attendance tripled from past years.
  - Six **signs** installed at trail heads: Eagle Bluff, Vetsch, and Wagon Wheel Trail.
  - Twenty-two **signs** installed at most community parks.
  - ...**miles of trail** developed on Eagle Bluff.

One of the key features of any community health initiative is forming partnerships. Creating partnerships has been a central theme and goal since the inception of Active Living La Crescent and it is the single most important contributing factor to all of the

accomplishments listed above. In the fall of 2008 when the group of folks interested in 'Active Living' first sat around the table and began visioning the possibilities that could occur in our community our relationships were new; some knew no one at the table. I am happy to say that over the years not only has the understanding and beliefs of Active living deepened but so too has our relationships. Little did any of us know that we would be on a first name basis with the Minnesota & Wisconsin Department's of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and many other governmental and community agencies. A simple 'Thank you' seems so small compared to all that has been accomplished. I am honored to be a part of such a wonderful dynamic and important movement. I truly believe that the partnerships that have been formed will have a lasting impact in continuing the mission of Active Living and HCP "...creating the healthiest community anywhere!"

In health and happiness,

Sue Howe  
Program Director, (past)  
Active Living La Crescent