

# 5 Steps to Creating a Healthier Community



(Family Features)

**O**besity, with corresponding ailments such as heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes, is a well-chronicled public health issue and has many communities looking for ways to positively impact their residents.

What can prove to have an enduring impact on improving community health is a broad coalition of stakeholders coming together to create a culture of wellness. For example, the City of West Chicago, with its Healthy West Chicago initiative, is a case study in how to galvanize a community toward collective better health. With these modifiable tips from Mayor Ruben Pineda, other communities can work to improve the health and quality of life for residents.

## Have a champion

Every major civic initiative needs someone to drive it, someone to assemble and activate the right roster of influencers, experts and activists. Progressive leaders concerned about community sustainability and resident health, such as city council members or those in influential positions within the community, make good candidates to spearhead the plan.

## Enlist partners

To improve nutrition and increase physical activity in the City of West Chicago, Mayor Pineda reached out to community leaders in local government, education, health care, social services, faith-based entities, businesses and non-profits to initiate partnerships and secure funding to create the Healthy West Chicago Action Plan, a multi-year guide for promoting better health in the community.

## Engage other community members

It is important to build awareness of your initiative and get buy-in from residents through consistent communication. One of the most important demographic segments to engage is children. Kids are open to change and are developing lifelong habits. They are also extremely influential with their parents, siblings and friends.

“The key to a sustainable, healthy future is to change the way the next generation thinks about nutrition and exercise,” Mayor Pineda said. “This makes the public school system critical to driving the behavioral changes that contribute to positive outcomes.”

## Measure and adjust

Once your community’s health initiative is in action, assess it annually against the overarching plan and add, eliminate or improve components to continue the momentum toward a healthy community for generations to come.

## Keep it fresh

A successful community-wide health initiative needs to continuously build on its momentum by adding new programs and participants. For example, Healthy West Chicago conducts sponsored activities such as free healthy cooking classes for students, a “Rethink Your Drink” campaign to educate community members about the harmful effects of consuming sugar-sweetened beverages, weekly community walks with the mayor and a community garden initiative, which promotes organic suburban agriculture and benefits both the environment and local families. In addition, providing ongoing updates about programs and offering online tools, such as activity trackers and interactive walking route maps, are ways to build interest and retain participants.



For more information about how to implement a health and wellness program in your city, contact Mayor Pineda’s office at (630) 293-2200 extension 135, or visit [healthywestchicago.com](http://healthywestchicago.com).

Photo of Mayor Pineda walking with students courtesy of Healthy West Chicago  
Photo of woman gardening courtesy of The GardenWorks Project

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Source: City of West Chicago

# Sweet Ways to Welcome Warmer Days

(Family Features)

Warmer, longer days are made for quality time with friends and family. There’s no better way to cap off an afternoon in the sun than a good meal followed by a great dessert. Plan to end your next gathering on a sweet note with these fruity desserts to conclude a day spent with loved ones.

Fruity treats are hard to resist, especially when paired with tasty, complementary flavors and textures. If you’re looking for a treat that travels a bit off the beaten path, this pie may be just the answer. A crushed pretzel crust and creamy peanut butter filling provide a salty, savory background for plump, sweet strawberries. Or serve up a taste of the tropics with a cream pie that celebrates a medley of textures and flavors from lively blueberries to toasted coconut.

When you make fruit the star of the dessert, there’s no question you need top-quality ingredients. Each of these desserts features Lucky Leaf Fruit Fillings, which are made from fresh fruit, contain no high-fructose corn syrup and are GMO-free, for a delicious dessert every time. With a variety of flavors to choose from, including apple, blueberry, cherry, peach and strawberry, there are plenty of convenient, versatile dessert options for any occasion.

Find more tasty treats for entertaining and beyond at [luckyleaf.com](http://luckyleaf.com).



## Strawberry Peanut Butter Pie

- 1 1/4 cups crushed pretzels
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 1/2 cups frozen whipped dessert topping, thawed
- 1 can (21 ounces) Lucky Leaf Premium Strawberry Fruit Filling and Topping

Combine pretzels and granulated sugar then stir in butter. Press crumb mixture onto bottom and sides of 10-inch pie plate. Cover and chill.

With electric mixer on medium speed, beat together peanut butter, cream cheese and powdered sugar. Fold in whipped dessert topping. Spoon 1/2 cup pie filling into crust-lined pie plate. Carefully spread peanut butter filling over top. Top with remaining pie filling. Cover and chill 2 hours before serving.

## Fluffy Blueberry Cream Pie with Toasted Coconut

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 2 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 can (21 ounces) Lucky Leaf Premium or Organic Blueberry Fruit Filling or Topping
- 1/2 cup toasted coconut flakes, plus additional for topping, if desired
- 1 graham cracker crust (9 inches)

In large bowl, beat together cream cheese, sugar and milk until creamy, about 1-2 minutes. Add whipped topping, pie filling and coconut; carefully fold together until no streaks remain.

Spoon filling mixture into graham cracker crust. Sprinkle top with additional coconut flakes, if desired. Cover and chill 2 hours, or until firm.



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Source: Lucky Leaf