In 2003 Isanti County was one of only 25 communities in the United States to receive the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant Active Living by Design. This $200,000 was to be used over a period of 5 years and dedicated to promote active living. Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routine in order to accumulate at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Of the many reasons Isanti County was chosen, one of them was because of the great partnership formed to facilitate this grant. Leading the effort was John Sullivan, City Planner of Cambridge and Bill Carlson Bike/Walk trail advocate and Planning Commissioner. Another reason Isanti County was such a good candidate for this grant was the political support from Congressman Oberstar’s office, local senator and representative support as well as our city mayors, city councils and county commissioners.

**How it began**

**Where are we now?**

After the original 5 year grant, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation generously awarded sustainability money in the amount of $45,000 for up to 18 months to continue the work of helping the community be more physically active and looking for ways to sustain the Active Living movement. This grant will end on March 1, 2010.

Isanti County Active Living will continue to move forward with our Active Living efforts. One of the ways we will do this is through the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). Isanti County Public Health and Mille Lacs County Public Health were awarded $525,000 to help Minnesotans live longer, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic disease. They will do several “interventions” to combat obesity including physical activity and worksite wellness. They will fund our Active Living by Design program for another 17 months and have hired Lisa Perlick to continue the active living movement. Our second measure of sustainability is through Cambridge Medical Center whose mission is to increase physical activity in the community by 10% by 2015 based on the survey we provided in 2008.

**Where are we going?**

The Cambridge-Isanti Bike Walk trail started over 20 years ago with several school children that thought it would be a great idea to have a safe trail to be able to walk or bike to school. They raised a little over $1,000 to be used for this trail. This money was put into an account with Isanti County as the fiscal agent. This money sat for many years and these children who are out of college now will see the end results in 2010. Over the years the prices have gone up, the route has changed but the original intent was still there. The Cambridge-Isanti Bike/Walk trail committee has worked on bringing this idea to a reality since 1999. They have written grants and held fund-raisers to provide the funding necessary to pave the trail, buy easements and mitigate wetlands. There is federal money and state bonding money. With a little luck on our side this trail should break ground in May 2010!
In our first year we had planned to change all of Isanti County but we realized that a year isn’t really that long. Planning for 6 events, numerous resolutions and ordinances and several grant applications later we learned to fine tune our work plan and find our target audience. We accomplished a lot in that first year and set the groundwork for the following 5 years.

**Year One Highlights**
- Created safe walking maps for each city
- Interpretive signage for the Spirit River Nature Area paid in part for by the Blandin Foundation grant.
- Input into Heritage Greens development
- Pedometer program
- Partnering with the Minnesota Department of Healthy, we sent out a survey to assess barriers to active living in Isanti County.
- Bike/Walk Trail Committee makes some progress with landowners for Bike/Walk trail easements
- Isanti County Active Living hosted three walkable workshops, one in Braham, Cambridge and Isanti

**Year Two Accomplishments**
- The survey from year one was followed up by two psychologists conducting focus groups to pin point barriers to active living
- Published walking routes in the Chamber of Commerce map of the county
- Lois Tur een started a Prime Time Walkers club
- That met once a week at the Cambridge Lutheran Church to encourage walking on a daily basis
- Successful events including the Rum River Bicycle Classic, Isanti Jubilee Run/Walk and the Rum River Ramble
- Report on Isanti County Active Living year one progress published by Active Communities / Transportation (ACT) Research Group. Headed up by Kevin J. Krizek, director Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and funded by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota

**EVENTS**

**The Rum River Bicycle Classic** was the revival of an old ride held in Isanti County. We had over 220 riders and raised approximately $5,000 for the Cambridge-Isanti Bike/Walk Trail.

Partnering with the City of Isanti we helped them organize the Isanti Jubilee Run/Walk in July. This event brought over 100 community members to enjoy the safe places in the city to walk, run or push a stroller.

Congressman Oberstar and Nick Sausen rode the course together.

This is an ad in the STAR to let people know what our grant was all about.

**So many good intentions**

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Year Two
- Created a communications plan focusing on parents of school aged children.
- Braham opened Central Ave. East to create continuity in the trail. Additionally, they took steps to create a safe walking route on Elmhurst Ave. by first filling in the culvert and then striped the road in order to slow down traffic.
- The City of Cambridge completed a study for the bike/walk crossing of the Rum River over the 2nd Ave.
- We were unable to secure Federal money for our Bike/Walk Trail. Even though this was a big blow at the time we used what we learned to secure funding in the future years.

Year Three Events
- In the City of Isanti, a stoplight was installed for a safe pedestrian crossing of County Road 5 and 23
- Isanti added an outdoor hockey rink in their park
- Additionally, Isanti put in a trail from South Brookview to County Road 5 along County Road 23
- In Braham, a local developer used his own funds to build a trail to connect the developments of Horseshoe II and IV
- Braham recruited children to use Isanti County Active Living’s hopscotch stencil and paint hopscotch in the park
- Walking route signage for the Evergreen, Fern and Walk Downtown loops
- The City of Cambridge completed North Main Street with sidewalks on both sides of the street, traffic calming medians, striped a bike lane on both sides of the street as well as put in lighting and streetscaping
- Braham raised money to build a skateboard park for kids
Year 4 Work

- Partnering with Cambridge Medical Center, we hosted a successful Walk to School Day in Cambridge
- Safe walking route created in Braham along Elmhurst Avenue
- Part of Cambridge’s reconstruction project on 2nd & Buchanan included sidewalks, lighting and streetscaping
- Leadership award presented to Bill Carlson by Active Living by Design
- $2,500 from Allina’s Healthy Community Award
- Bill Carlson received the leadership award from the Minnesota Department of Public Health
- Isanti completed its preliminary design for a pedestrian bridge over highway 65
- Working with the Center for Rural Design, the Master Plan for Active Living was

Year 5 Advances

- Received $686,000 from Congressman Oberstar’s Transportation Bill
- South Main Street reconstruction with sidewalks, walking signs and lighting
- Walking loop signs in Cambridge, Prime Time Walkers loop, Historic Overlook loop
- Bev Ceagleske continued to pursue funding for walking loop signage in Braham which resulted in the Grasshopper Pie loop, Mile High Lemon Meringue Pie loop and Pie Art squared loop
- The cities of Cambridge, Isanti and Isanti Township have committed to the maintenance of the bike/walk trail for the next 20 years and have passed resolutions supporting this commitment
- Additionally, Bev worked to get a “master” sign done that would list all the routes in town and this new sign is in downtown Braham
- Cambridge and Isanti received sesquicentennial grants and did interpretive signs
Year 5

- Successful Rum River Bicycle Classic which raised over $20,000 over all 5 years
- Isanti Jubilee Run/Walk had over 100 participants each year
- Faithfully Fit Walking group
- Walking maps created for all three cities
- Received $45,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and $5,000 from the Initiative Foundation to fund a Sustainability program to sustain the active living initiatives in this area

Survey

The Isanti County Active Living project conducted a baseline survey of Isanti County adult residents between February and March of 2005. The survey was mailed to a random sample of Isanti County households. One adult in each selected household was randomly assigned to fill out the survey. The results of the survey are representative of all adult Isanti County residents. In August and September of 2008, Isanti County Active Living project repeated this survey using the same methodology for survey administration.

There was a statistically significant increase between 2005 and 2008 in the percentage of Isanti County adults who reported doing moderate exercise (moderate activities for 30 minutes or more three or more times per week).

In contrast, there was no change in the percentage of Minnesota adults as a whole who reported doing comparable amounts of moderate exercise between 2005 and 2007 (the most recently available statewide data). The figures for moderate exercise for Isanti County adults are statistically higher than those for Minnesota adults for both time periods.

The following are the three key findings:

- **Cost has moved to third in the top barriers to physical activity.** The top barriers are lack of time due to work or school obligations, lack of time due to family obligations, cost, and lack of self-discipline/willpower.

Special thanks to the Minnesota Department of Health for partial funding of this survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Moderate Exercise Three or More Times per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005 Isanti County</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Isanti County, 2007 MN</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 Minnesota</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Minnesota</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can now reach us at:

Isanti County Government Center
Public Health Department
555 18th Ave S
Cambridge, MN 55008
763-689-8282
We want to thank all of our Partners who helped us achieve everything we have done for more than 6 years! There is no way to change a community with just one or two people and all this change could not have happened without so much help from YOU! We appreciate all the great ideas and hard work you all have put towards making this community a place to walk or bike safely. You have waited patiently for the Cambridge-Isanti Bike/Walk trail to be funded and have supported our efforts to create a place for the community to be active and healthy!

With our sincere gratitude,

Bill Carlson
Lisa Perlick
**Walk the Town: Braham**

- **Cherry Pie Loop**
  - Long: 2 miles
  - Short: 1 mile

- **Blueberry Pie Loop**
  - 0.75 miles

- **All American Apple Pie Loop**
  - 0.75 miles

- **Grasshopper Pie Loop**
  - 1.8 miles

- **Mile High Lemon Meringue Loop**
  - 1 mile

- **π A(r)² Loop**
  - 2.2 miles