

## SUMMARY

Bike Ajo has created a sustainable bicycling hub that educates, trains, provides resources, and builds health-based partnerships with the Ajo community. The primary health focus of Bike Ajo is to connect bicycling with diabetes and chronic disease prevention efforts. The asset-based coalition is led by community health workers and Ajo residents and includes the following partner agencies: Desert Senita Community Health Center; University of Arizona Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health; Pima County Department of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Program; Ajo Unified School District; Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center; Ajo Chamber of Commerce; Pima County Parks & Recreation; International Sonoran Desert Institute and The University of Arizona Department of Mexican American Studies.



## CHALLENGE

There is a great need for increased access to safe opportunities for physical activity, chronic disease prevention interventions, as well as innovative economic drivers. There are high rates of diabetes and chronic disease in Ajo. Desert Senita reports that more than 15% of their patients have been diagnosed with diabetes. That number is much higher than the 9 percent prevalence rate for the state of Arizona (Desert Senita Community Health Center, 2016). Recent studies

found that 71.4 percent of families in Ajo were living below the federal poverty line and there was a 15.1 percent unemployment rate, significantly higher than other areas within Pima County. Nearly half of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, a group that continues to experience significant chronic disease disparities. Data from the Ajo Unified School District shows that each grade had an obesity rate of at least 32 percent, with sixth grade reaching an alarming 57 percent (Lerman, Spock, & Walsh, 2011).

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

To learn more about Plan4Health check out the project website ([www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us)) and join the national conversation by using and following #plan4health.

*"The 6th grade students are loving the Middle School Bike Program! They have love getting on the bikes, and are asking several questions related to safe riding, repairs, laws, and diabetes."*

*- Lily Williams  
CHW Desert Senita Community  
Health Center*

## Contact

### Martha Monroy

University of Arizona Mel and Enid  
Zuckerman Colle  
1295 N. Martin Ave  
Tucson, AZ 85724

## SOLUTION

Bike Ajo Coalition is striving to promote biking, increase opportunities for physical activity, and develop corresponding diabetes prevention education and resources. The coalition has established a community cycling center by building upon existing projects in Tucson. Bike Ajo addresses barriers to biking including economic and safety concerns. The bicycling center provides extensive resources to the community including 50 bicycles, increased access to free helmets, and tools for bicycle maintenance and repair. A community bicycling and public health assessment serves as a blueprint for the project. Two other community assessments are in process focusing on Safe Routes to School and diabetes prevention. There are more than 130 small towns in Arizona with populations between 1,000 and 6,000 residents; the coalition's work will result in a replicable model for similar communities interested in embracing cycling for health promotion, recreation, and as an economic driver.

## RESULTS

Bike Ajo has accomplished a great deal including the quick off of a middle school bicycling program, a high school health careers club with a focus on bicycling for health. Coalition members have created digital stories highlighting the history of Ajo and Bike Ajo. The stories are used to raise awareness and engage additional community members. Community cycling activities have included a bike and hike event the result of a collaboration with Organ Pipe National monument, numerous bike safety classes and community rides. The coalition developed a training focused on diabetes prevention and management training through bicycling. The Red Riders from the American Diabetes Association participated in the training. Results of the project focusing on the community-clinic partnership were presented at the Northwest Regional Primary Care Association's Western Forum for Migrant and Community Health.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Led by community health workers (CHWs), the asset-based coalition is rooted in strong multi-sector partnerships between community members, community based organizations, public health professionals and planners to create sustained policy, community and institutional culture change addressing the relevant social determinants of health. The sustainability plan focuses on diverse membership and shared resources; creation of policies within community organizations; creation of a bike for health culture; diversified funding, expansion of the CHW component. Bike Ajo builds on existing community assets. Many of the components will be sustained through ongoing Ajo Unified School district will sustain the middle school program and health careers club through ongoing partnerships with the Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center and Pima County Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. The adult bike center will be sustained through a partnership between Desert Senita Community Health Center and Pima County Bike and Pedestrian Program and Pima County Parks and Recreation.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this success story do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the CDC or imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Learn more about Plan4Health and the National Implementation and Dissemination for Chronic Disease Prevention project at [www.cdc.gov/communityhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).