



# Preventing Cancer at the Ballpark: Minor League Baseball & Local Cancer Organizations ‘Team-Up’ Against Skin Cancer

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Iowa Cancer Consortium, Iowa Cubs, & the Iowa Department of Public Health



## INTRODUCTION

Each year, 3.5 million skin cancers are diagnosed in the United States - more than all other cancers combined<sup>1</sup>. Between 1975-2006, the rate of new melanoma cases in Iowa has nearly tripled<sup>7</sup>. A contributing factor to these high rates is that over 90% of Iowans identify as white, placing their lifetime risk of developing skin cancer 23 times higher than their African American counterparts<sup>1</sup>. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates over 980 Iowans will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2013<sup>1</sup>.

Sun-safe practices over the lifespan can decrease a person's risk for developing skin cancer. Consequently, a recent survey found 43.6% of white adults in Iowa reported having at least one sunburn in the past year<sup>3</sup>, placing them at a higher risk for developing skin cancer during their lifetime. To prevent skin cancer, ACS recommends the following<sup>2</sup>:

- Limit or avoid sun exposure during the midday hours (10am-4pm).
- Wear a hat that shades the face, neck, and ears.
- Wear sunglasses to protect the eyes.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15+.
- Avoid indoor tanning booths and sunlamps.
- Emphasize sunburn protection with children; as severe sunburns in childhood greatly increase the risk of melanoma later in life.

To encourage sun-safe behaviors among Americans, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Guide to Community Preventive Services recommends both educational and policy-level approaches in recreation and tourism settings to prevent skin cancer among Americans including the provision of sunscreen, point-of-purchase prompts, and role-modeling<sup>4</sup>.

## IOWA CANCER CONSORTIUM

The Iowa Cancer Consortium was formed in 2001 to coordinate the efforts of those fighting cancer in Iowa. The ICC's vision is *working together to conquer cancer* and our mission is to “reduce cancer incidence and mortality in Iowa through collaborative efforts that provide services and programs directed toward comprehensive cancer prevention and control.”

The ICC's role is to bring together individuals invested in cancer control to foster statewide collaboration. The ICC works to engage communities and individuals in the cancer control planning efforts, recommend priorities and develop strategies for comprehensive cancer control, and assure financial resources are available to support Iowa's 2012-2017 Iowa Cancer Plan.



## INSPIRATION

The inspiration for this project came in 2011 after listening to a Research to Reality Cyber-Seminar, from the National Cancer Institute, about implementing research-tested sun-safety interventions in a variety of outdoor recreational settings through partnership. The seminar highlighted the work of Dr. Dave Buller from Klein Buendel, Dr. Vernon Sandok and Ms. Lois Rendina from the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida who shared how they engaged ski resorts, a professional baseball team (the Tampa Bay Rays), and local beaches in sun-safety initiatives.



## OVERVIEW

In 2012, the Iowa Cancer Consortium engaged partners from multiple sectors to provide sunscreen and coordinated sun-safe messages to Iowa's Minor League Baseball (MiLB) teams including:

- ✱ Burlington Bees | Burlington, IA
- ✱ Cedar Rapids KERNELS | Cedar Rapids, IA
- ✱ Clinton LumberKings | Clinton, IA
- ✱ Iowa Cubs | Des Moines, IA
- ✱ Quad Cities Riverbandits | Davenport, IA
- ✱ \*Omaha Stormchasers | Omaha, NE



Other state partners include the Iowa Department of Public Health's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, and cancer centers including:

- ✱ Genesis Health System | Davenport, IA
- ✱ Hall-Perrine Cancer Center | Cedar Rapids, IA
- ✱ Helen G. Nassif Community Cancer Center | Cedar Rapids, IA
- ✱ John Stoddard Cancer Center | Des Moines, IA
- ✱ Medical Associates | Clinton, IA
- ✱ Mercy Cancer Center | Des Moines, IA
- ✱ Mercy Medical Center | Clinton, IA
- ✱ \*Alegent Health | Omaha, NE



## OBJECTIVES

1. Provide sunscreen for spectators at five MiLB stadiums in Iowa during the 2012 baseball season.
2. Connect MiLB teams with their local cancer centers and encourage them to work together to provide sun-safety messaging and education to spectators throughout the season.
3. Provide technical support and coordinated messaging to all partners involved with the project.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

**Technical Support & Communication** - The Iowa Cancer Consortium coordinated planning meetings between MiLB teams, cancer centers, and other partners throughout the duration of the project planning period which included team managers, stadium operations staff, health educators and cancer center outreach coordinators. To promote the project, a coordinated press-release was submitted to state media outlets by the Iowa Cancer Consortium in coordination with partners to promote the availability of sunscreen at the ballparks during season.

### Sunscreen

The Community Guide to Preventive Services<sup>4</sup> notes that evidence-based interventions to promote sun-safety behaviors include point-of-purchase prompts and role-modeling. As part of this evidence-based strategy, The Iowa Department of Public Health's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program purchased 48 gallons of SPF 30 sunscreen and lip balm that was distributed between the five Iowa teams (see below).



Photo: Photo of sunscreen gallons when they arrived by the KERNELS.



Photo: A 'no-drip' sunscreen holder created by Alegent.



Photo: Fan comfort station created by the I-Cubs with water and sunscreen.

The teams were responsible for placing the sunscreen and metal sunscreen holders in an appropriate location within their ballpark that would be easily accessible for spectators. All teams created a sunscreen station(s) along the main concourse of their stadiums for visibility and easy access. A few General Managers were concerned about the potential for the sunscreen creating a mess in the concourse, and were able to come up with creative solutions to solve the dilemma including an adapted sunscreen holder and putting the sunscreen pump over a table. A handful of teams placed a sunscreen pumping station in the employee break room which were heavily utilized by grounds staff and parking attendants.

### Community Connections

Cancer centers interested in promoting sun-safety awareness were asked to communicate directly with their local MiLB team to outline a plan for education, promotional giveaways, and advertising based on their centers goals and budget. Two cancer centers produced a series of commercials and radio spots featuring a local dermatologist or health provider to share their tips for staying safe in the sun which would air during afternoon games on the big-screen in centerfield (see photos below).



Photo: A snapshot of the I-Cubs stadium, Principal Park, during an afternoon baseball game.



Photo: A screenshot from a sun-safe promotional video created by the I-Cubs and Mercy Cancer Center showing Cubbie Bear, a father, and son applying sunscreen before a game.

Other promotional activities included lip balm/sunscreen giveaways and educational events specifically for children to teach them about being sun-safe using UV bead bracelets that change color in the sun.

## RESULTS

Over 48 gallons of sunscreen were distributed to the five MiLB teams in Iowa during the 2012 season. A post-season teleconference was scheduled with members of the planning team. The MiLB teams indicated that they received positive feedback from their fans about the availability of sunscreen and sun-safe messages. Below are quotes from a few members on the planning committee who participated in the project:

- “Fans liked that we were thinking about them, and we enjoyed the positive feedback from the fans” - Clinton LumberKings
- “I had a note from a fan a couple of days ago, thanking one of my part-time employees for directing her to the sunscreen on the concourse rather than having to buy it in the store” - Iowa Cubs
- “Love this. Thanks for the press release and coverage” - Cedar Rapids KERNELS
- “. . . Thanks for letting us be part of this” - Quad Cities River Bandits



Photo: A staff member from Genesis Health System hands out sun-safety information to children attending a game in Spring 2012.



Photo: Melissa O'Brien (Outrun the Rays), Jake Samo (I-Cubs), Jeff Tilley (I-Cubs), and Rachel Schramm (Iowa Cancer Consortium) pose for a photo after presenting information about the sun-safety project at the 2012 Iowa Cancer Summit in Des Moines, IA.

## DISCUSSION

This project is an example of a successful health initiative involving organizations from multiple sectors to inspire systems and environmental change. All partners have agreed to work together to provide sunscreen and educational messages during the 2013 season and are currently in the planning process.

The described interventions could be easily adapted for interested states and MiLB teams for sun-safety initiatives at the ballpark or for other outdoor recreational events including pools, zoos, little league baseball parks, and other outdoor events in the future.

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