Firm scours up students

Higher Ed Growth links schools with potential enrollees

By Georgann Yara
Special for The ABG | azcentral.com

When Frank Healy and his friends yearned to start their own company, they found themselves, in a matter of speaking, headed back to school.

But instead of getting stuck with homework and exams, this educational path involved helping higher learning institutions entice prospective students.

And what started as a small venture among longtime pals has turned into a booming full-service marketing business that uses technology, consulting and various other methods to help post-secondary educational institutions boost enrollment and retention.

When Healy and his business partners launched Higher Ed Growth in 2007, it attracted five clients in the first six months, Healy said. Currently, the Tempe-based company has more than 300 clients and connects them with tens of thousands of students. Over the last year, Higher Ed Growth has experienced 300 percent growth.

“We show the schools what tactically works best for them,” said Healy, the president and CEO of Higher Ed. “It’s really more of a helpful tool.”

Healy and his founding partners, chief operating officer Eric Flottmann and chief technology officer Adam Carl-

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Cities beginning to fit health into planning

By Andrew Knochel
Cronkite News Service

While recovering from knee surgery in 2012, David Bickford began using a bike lane along Central Avenue each workday as part of a 5-mile trip to the light rail, which he rides to work in Tempe.

Although good for his knees, biking safely has benefited his health in other ways.

“Every workday I’m guaranteed 10 miles of bike riding,” Bickford said. “That has helped me rehab my knee, and it’s also helped me maintain weight and eat whatever I want, mostly.”

To Cynthia Melde, nutrition and physical-activity manager for the Arizona Department of Health Services, it’s an example of how changes as simple as a bike lane or as complex as light rail can help people make exercise part of their daily lives.

“We have to create those communities that make that healthy choice the easy choice,” she said. “It’s going to take a lot of redesigning the way that we grow and the way that we redevelop.”

Many Arizona cities’ general plans reflect that residents value outdoor recreation, but experts and health advocates say just having parks, bike paths, hiking trails and soccer fields isn’t enough to encourage people to be physically active every day. They say people need opportunities to be more active in daily life — for instance walking to work or school.

Will Humble, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services, said general plans can help create those opportunities.

“That’s probably the most under-recognized leverage point in terms of community design, to make communities more walkable, bikable, helping people to make healthier choices,” he said.

A Cronkite News Service review of general plans for the 16 cities beginning to fit health into planning

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**ARIZONA BUSINESS GAZETTE**

**FROM THE COVER**

“...thing.”

light rail, biking, that type of the center core; they like to use public transportation.

being able to walk and bike for preferences away from homes responds to a shift in residents’

Tracy Stevens said the city re-

Plan in 2012, Planning Director approved an updated General

context of daily life. A General

ents are campus-based and re-

said his city has similar goals as general plan by 2015.

“It’s really a shift in the way

nomic-status neighborhood and is wealthy or poor.

design makes a difference in

health behavior, especially

walking, on preventing chronic
diseases. He said neighborhood
design makes a difference in how many people walk regardless of whether a neighborhood is wealthy or poor.

“If you’re in a low-socioeco-

municity-status neighborhood and you have a highly walkable neighborhood, you’re more like-

ly to walk than if you live in a low-walkable neighborhood,” Adams said.

The difference between a neighborhood considered to have high walkability vs. low walkability is about 35 minutes of walking a week, he said, adding that the time translates to more than a quarter of recommended weekly physical activity.

“So that’s a pretty big chunk that you’re chipping away at that people don’t have to go to the gym for, just by where they live,” Adams said.

David Dube, a policy consultant for the Maricopa County Department of Public Health, said getting people to use public transit pays health benefits. Thirty percent of adult users get their recommended 30 minutes of exercise a day simply walking or biking to or from a transit stop.

“That absolutely works,” he said. “You don’t need to have people going to a gym. You don’t have to have exercise clubs or everything. All you have to do is get them to work.”

Dube said the same holds true for children heading to and from school, adding that local governments can encourage walking and biking by providing sidewalks and creating safer ways to cross streets, among other steps. In the 1960s, 85 percent of children who lived within a mile of their schools walked or biked, compared with 15 percent today, he said.