

# TWPs pumped about health initiative

## Could mean cash if followed correctly

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spaces for all residents.

Crosby Township Community Coordinator Kim Downey said Crosby is on board and a resolution has been adopted.

"We know that we want to make it a more healthy community, and give our residents more opportunity to make healthy choices," said Downey.

The program is attractive because it will open doors and is easily implemented. With funding, Crosby could add signs to its walking trail, or pursue larger projects including adding more exercise stations at the community center, or even start a community garden, she said.

"A community like Crosby Township or really any of our communities can expect assistance from one of our public health educators to start to work through the process of getting the team established, doing various health assessments, and review the health data that's specific to their community," said HCPH Health, Promotion & Education Director Rebecca Stowe.

HCPH representatives are engaging in conversations with officials from all 44 political jurisdictions in the county, and seeing results, she said.

"We're out in the community doing what we can ... taking a proactive approach to get our faces out there, to work hand-in-hand in collaboration with communities to make a change," said Stowe.

Mike Samet, of the HCPH, pinpointed the issues. Hamilton County residents smoke too much, many are overweight, and many don't exercise.

We Thrive, an initiative sweeping across the county, is projected by the Hamilton County Public Health Department to create healthier living

"We're sedentary, we've got too much diabetes ... and we've got to make changes," he said.

Changes, however, can't be made through preaching or legislation. HCPH has taken a hands-on, cooperative approach, and, unlike any other health department, Hamilton County is working directly with communities, said Samet.

HCPH received a couple of grants in 2009 from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention intended to combat poor physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco use and exposure. These grants gave rise to the We Thrive brand, said Stowe.

## Join the effort

Now, HCPH is asking communities to join the effort. When a jurisdiction completes all necessary steps to join We Thrive, HCPH assists the community by aligning it with professionals, resources, grants and funding, she said.

To cut the mustard, a We Thrive resolution of commitment to make the community healthier must be adopted. The community then must form a We Thrive team consisting of one council member or trustee, an administrator, and at least two residents.

"We also invite them to participate in our We Thrive community learning collaborative, where they can share ideas and resources," said Stowe.

The final requirement is to choose at least one of the four pathways the HCPH has created: chronic disease, emergency preparedness, environmental health, or communicable disease.

By April's end, HCPH had held meetings with 33 of its 44 political jurisdictions, and nearly all 33 are interested in the program, said Stowe.

Whitewater Township Trustee Lawanda Corman said she is enthusiastic about the program's prospects.

"There's advantages to you knowing about your community. I'm sure there's going to be plusses to it. There has to be," she said.

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Through the program, Whitewater will have access to community health demographics, and will be able to acquire resources to combat the issues, said Corman.

"I'm excited to get something started down this end. ... We want to do something, we want to get something going," she said.

Stowe said the program's promise of financial assistance is real. "What we're seeing with a lot of the funds across the country is collaboration, and having groups in place that have reviewed their data. They've done assessment, they have created plans of action. And so we're trying to prepare our communities for potential funding," she said.

HCPH can help communities properly fill

out grant applications and disperse funding from grants, she added.

Samet explained HCPH acts as training wheels to cities, townships and villages so they eventually can function with new, stronger, and more health-oriented mindsets.

"We're helping communities develop policies to make changes, to apply for grant funding, to become educated, learning how to work with our data. ... We're going down to their neighborhoods to see what maladies, what diseases are prevalent there," he said.