

Health district wants residents to thrive

Community Press Staff Report

A long and healthy life.

That's the goal of the Hamilton County Public Health District's WeThrive project.

WeThrive is a county-wide movement that builds teams of community partners, including schools, businesses, churches, elected officials and residents working together to make healthy living easier.

The movement focuses on increasing access to healthy eating and physical activity, while decreasing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. WeThrive is about making lasting changes that keep communities healthy for generations.

Hamilton County Public Health Commissioner Tim Ingram says the program is a game-changer for his department.

"Instead of the health department telling everyone how to live healthy lives, WeThrive fo-

VIEWPOINTS

Tim Ingram talks about WeThrive, page A6.

cuses on changing social norms by creating policy, systems and environmental changes with the goal of making healthy living easier," he said. "Our teams work directly with community leaders in Hamilton County to engage in healthier practices and incorporate change at the community level."

Each community team works at its own pace and implements the changes necessary to achieve healthier goals, while Hamilton County Public Health staff members conduct community health assessments, which gather community-level health data. The community health assessment is a check up of sorts. What are the challenges and trends? The assessments determine those answers and the information is meant to help



KURT BACKSCHEIDER/THE COMMUNITY PRESS

The Village of Addyston installed outdoor exercise equipment next to the municipal building as part of its WeThrive program. The village also created a five-loop urban trail system, marked with color-coded signs and mileage markers, covering 12 miles of sidewalks throughout the community.

guide the communities as they decide what healthy living will look like for them.

Based on the data collected by health department staff,

communities can choose one of four pathways: chronic disease, environmental health, community health, and emergency preparedness. Those pathways de-

THEY THRIVE

Communities participating in WeThrive!

Addyston
Amberley Village
Anderson Township
Arlington Heights
Colerain Township
Crosby Township
Evendale
Fairfax
Forest Park
Lincoln Heights
Lockland
Montgomery
Mount Healthy
North Bend
North College Hill
Reading
Saint Bernard
Silverton
Woodlawn

For more information, go to watchusthrive.org.

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Thrive

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termine the focus and help direct community engagement in getting healthy as a community.

Health district staff members help guide the teams through the process of adopting wellness resolutions and selecting a pathway based on the health assessment information. Then the groups develop action plans, and begin implementing sustainable initiatives.

The health department is extending the reach of WeThrive through child care facilities, faith-based organizations, and schools.

The WeThrive Child Care Initiative focuses on enhancing nutrition and physical activity in child care settings by encouraging increased access to healthier foods and beverages, limited screen time and increased active play.

The WeThrive Faith-based Initiative and the Center for Closing the Health Gap addressed barriers to exercise for people who may not have access to facilities by helping faith-based organizations create physical activity ministries and programs that are open to

church members and the public. The CCHG developed a tool kit for organizations interested in creating similar programs.

The WeThrive School-based Initiative partnered with the Nutrition Council and initially helped 11 school districts adopt the new state nutrition standards early, making it easier for more than 61,000 students in Hamilton County to make healthy choices at school. These districts included Cincinnati, Deer Park, Finneytown, Lockland, Loveland, Madeira, Princeton, Reading, Sycamore, Southwest and Three Rivers. Ultimately, all 22 Hamilton County districts adopted competitive foods policies, reaching 105,000 students.

Here's how local communities are engaged in the WeThrive program.

Addyston

The village was awarded a WeThrive mini-grant in November 2011 and adopted the WeThrive Community Wellness Resolution in February 2012.

The village created Walk and Roll Addyston, a five-loop urban trail system covering 12 miles of sidewalks. The paths are all wheelchair and stroller accessible, and each

loop is marked with color-coded signs and mileage markers.

The village also added outdoor exercise equipment and a bicycle rack in front of the municipal building, and, through an agreement with Addyston Baptist Church, provides weekly van transportation to the grocery store for senior citizens and other residents who cannot drive.

The village sponsors a seasonal farmer's market at Jeff's Drive Thru.

"Occasionally, out of all the meetings, seminars and training sessions, you find a gem," Addyston Mayor Dan Pillow said. "For Addyston, this gem is WeThrive."

North Bend

The village of North Bend was awarded a WeThrive community grant in July 2013 and officially amended the village charter to establish a permanent WeThrive Wellness Committee in September 2013.

The team members are Patty Hartoin, Margaret Knapp, Deputy Clerk Marilyn Kramer, Deb Lindeman, Jeanne Mooney, Councilwoman Fran Romweber, Tia Ruehlmann, Mayor Doug Sammons, Lisa Sammons and Maintenance Supervisor Rick Schultz.

The health assessment highlighted the fact the village had no designated green space where families can be active.

The village used its \$6,420 WeThrive grant to build a park for North Bend residents, and fellow WeThrive community Montgomery donated its old playground structure to the village in the spring of 2014. The Lowe's and Home Depot stores in Western Hills donated picnic tables, landscaping and brick pavers for the new park.