

## 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 focuses 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 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 determine the focus and help direct community engagement in getting healthy as a community.

Health district staff members lend experience and help guide the teams of local partners 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 im-



THANKS TO ANDERSON TOWNSHIP

**Anderson's outdoor Farmers' Market reopens May 23 at Anderson Center Station.**

plementing sustainable health-promoting initiatives.

In addition to community-based programs, 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 both church members and the public. The CCHG developed a tool kit for faith-based 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 when they are at school. These early-adopting districts included Cincinnati, Deer Park, Finneytown, Lockland, Loveland, Madeira, Princeton, Reading, Sycamore, Southwest and Three Rivers. Ultimately, all 22 Hamilton

# WeThrive

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County districts adopted competitive foods policies, reaching 105,000 students in Hamilton County.

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

## Anderson Township

Anderson Township began its affiliation with WeThrive at the urging of Trustee Josh Gerth and quickly formed two committees, Anderson Township Planner Tom Caruso said. One was a committee of residents in the township. The second was a subcommittee of the transportation advisory committee.

The first committee, he said, considered how

## 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](http://watchusthrive.org).

Anderson could be involved. It looked at health assessments, side-

walks and health fairs, for examples.

The subcommittee focused on sidewalks, safe streets to school and other healthy community issues relating to transportation.

The township is developing its action plan for WeThrive.

"I think a lot of what WeThrive is trying to get communities to do, we're already doing," Caruso said. The township has the Anderson Trails, safe routes to school, a Farmer's Market, and works with Mercy Hospital in terms of health assessments.

"So a lot of things other communities have not been doing we have been doing for a lot of years," he said. "We felt it would be a good combination with the health department and Anderson Township."