



Kim Chelf, health educator for the Hamilton County Health District, presents a WeThrive sign to Mount Healthy Mayor Joseph Roetting. Eagle Scout Vincent Petrocelli built the raised beds in the garden.

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# 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 countywide 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



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More than 100 people turned out for the Colerain Community for Health Awareness group's panel discussion on heroin and painkiller addiction. This group is one way the WeThrive partnership is working in Colerain Township.

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 implementing 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, South-

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# Thrive

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west and Three Rivers. Ultimately, all 22 Hamilton County districts adopted competitive foods policies, reaching 105,000 students in Hamilton County.

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

## Forest Park

In Forest Park, Fire Lt. Jermaine Hill is the biggest cheerleader.

The fire department is engaged in the WeThrive program. Hill's activities work toward health, he's active in local fire and injury prevention and has created innovative public education programs in which community members regularly participate.

One example is a free diabetes screening program in conjunction with the YMCA that happened in February.

"We have programs that encourage our residents to live healthier lives," he said. "We want to keep offering them."

Forest Park City Council officially became a WeThrive community in October 2014, when Forest Park City Council adopted the WeThrive overall and community health resolutions, solidifying the city's commitment to achieve a healthy community.

Team Members included Hill, Patricia Bacchus, Councilwoman Sheila Cottle, Recreation Coordinator Taffy Jackson, Fire Chief Alfie Jones, Rosalind Moore, Bettye Morgan, Sandy Sanders, Human Resources Director Tye Smith, Janet Steele, James Ward, and Katrina Wyche.

The team selected the Community Healthy pathway, and Hill says the WeThrive initiative fits well with other programs in which he is interested, such as the Firefighter Fitness Challenge with students from the Winton Woods City School District.

Hamilton County assigned a team of epidemiologists to study Forest Park's health data to determine its biggest areas of concern. On April 22, the data was shared with members of the community in the Forest Park Council Chambers.

If you are interested in learning more about the study or contributing to the WeThrive Forest Park group, please contact Hill at 513-595-5291 or visit [www.watchusthrive.org](http://www.watchusthrive.org).

A number of Forest Park childcare facilities have also participated in the The WeThrive Child Care Initiative, making food healthier and exercise for youngsters at the facilities. They include Future Leaders Learning Center, Sharon Hill Preschool and Day Care, KinderCare 271, Agape Children Learning Center, Gentle Lamb's Daycare Center, Ivy's Creative Angels Academy - Forest Park and Youthland Academy-Forest Park.

On the WeThrive website, Youthland Academy-Forest Park Director Nikita Hammons says obesity statistics that she learned about from WeThrive are heartbreaking and it's important to promote positive health and positive behaviors so children can live longer and healthier lives than their parents.

## Mount Healthy

Eating healthy and getting exercise are two ways the Mount Healthy WeThrive partnership hopes to see community residents live up to the city's name in coming months.

Monica Lubiani, administrative assistant for Mount Healthy and the team leader for the city's WeThrive activities, says her team has been meeting to plan action steps for healthy living in Mount Healthy. The city adopted its WeThrive resolution in May, 2014.

The city has started a community garden, where residents can grow fresh produce, thanks to help from Eagle Scout Vincent Petrocelli, whose Eagle Scout project built the raised beds used in the Mount Healthy Community Garden. A rain barrel was installed to help with watering and a portion of the produce grown in the garden will go to the Mount Healthy Food Alliance.

WeThrive Mount Healthy is bringing free Yoga and Zumba classes to the Mount Healthy Municipal Park Stage and Community Room, 1541 Hill Ave on Wednesday evenings this summer. The next Yoga class is set for 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 17. Zumba classes will be at 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 24, and Wednesday July 1. Dress comfortably and bring water. Yoga is outside at the City Park Stage, 1541 Hill Ave. Please bring yoga mat and a beach towel. In the event of rain, it will be inside at the community room at the same address. Zumba will be in the community room.

Lubiani says walking is also great exercise. The city's WeThrive walking club is trying to get on its feet. The club meets Thursday nights at 6 p.m. The group wants to plan themed walks throughout the city and will be passing out fliers related to chronic disease prevention and healthy living at businesses and organizations throughout the city.

The Mount Healthy WeThrive team is also working to develop a Youth Athletic Association and a Farmers Market to take off in 2016.

To learn more about Mount Healthy WeThrive, visit [www.watchusthrive.org/mthealthy](http://www.watchusthrive.org/mthealthy).

Lubiani says the WeThrive Team meets monthly at 6 p.m. on the second Monday of the month at Mount Healthy City Hall, second floor small conference room, 7700 Perry Street.

WeThrive Mount Healthy is in need of donations and volunteers of ev-

ery kind for the various programs. Email Lubiani at [mlubi@mthealthy.org](mailto:mlubi@mthealthy.org) with questions about how to get engaged with Mount Healthy's WeThrive group or call her at 513-931-8840, ext. 127.

## North College Hill

North College Hill was an early adopter for WeThrive, and was one of the initial WeThrive communities in 2011. The city was awarded a WeThrive Community Wellness Mini-Grant in November 2011 and adopted the WeTHRIVE! Chronic Disease Resolution in December 2011.

WeThrive Team Members include Kathy Howard, Sheryl Long, Maureen Mason and Kimberly Stewart and the area of focus chosen by the city is Chronic Disease.

The North College Hill WeThrive team has implemented an Action Plan that carries out their vision for a walkable community. The team identified three sidewalk routes connecting to important parts of the city, such as the elementary, middle and high schools and the business district. The idea is to encourage residents to walk to these places, where they would normally drive.

Routes were mapped. Each path begins and ends at the City Center, where a new sign shows a map of the routes.

Routes were marked. The 1-, 2- and 3-mile paths are marked with blue NCH Moves footprints.

Routes were improved. The project involved more than 1,700 square feet of sidewalk improvements, such as adding small bumps to the concrete at curb cuts to prevent slipping and to make the paths more accessible.

Routes were shared. The city secured a unique shared-use agreement that allows public use of an existing path in a resident's backyard that connects residential areas to the business district.

## Springfield Township

Kimberlee Flamm, Projects, Events & Communications Coordinator for Springfield Township, said her community has received information about WeThrive, but it hasn't been a priority to pursue the program at this time.

"ArtsConnect has kept us really busy," she said. "And while we are interested in WeThrive, we honestly haven't had the time to get a team organized. I expect we will eventually become involved."