

# 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



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Libby Harrison, project manager for the Cincinnati Exchange Project trains Colerain Township Public Safety Director Dan Meloy in the use of Narcan, the trade name for naloxone, which can be used to counter opioid overdose. Colerain Township's WeThrive group is focusing on battling heroin and opioid addiction in the community.

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 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, Southwest 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

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# Thrive

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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 We Thrive 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 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.