

# 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.



Ingram

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

## 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).

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

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# Program

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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 local communities are engaged in the county's WeThrive program.

## Addyston

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

With support from the county program the village created Walk and Roll Addyston, a five-loop urban trail system covering 12 miles of sidewalks throughout the village. 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 as well.

"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."

He said when you look around and see that many children and adults in our nation are out of shape you realize we have to re-think

what we teach our children and communities about health and wellness.

"We need to make the healthy choice the natural choice," he said. "In Addyston, we are determined to continue to work to make our community a healthier, thus a better place to live. We urge all to join the WeThrive movement."

## 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 village's WeThrive 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.

In developing North Bend's WeThrive action plan, the community health assessment highlighted the fact the village had no designated green space where families can be physically 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 also donated picnic tables, landscaping and brick pavers for the new park.

North Bend celebrated the opening of its Presidential Community Park in June 2014.



KURT BACKSCHEIDER/THE COMMUNITY PRESS

The Village of North Bend developed Presidential Community Park next to the municipal building thanks in part to the grant it received from the WeThrive program. Prior to its involvement with WeThrive, the village had no designated park space where families could be physically active.