



April is Public Health Month 2013

Public Health Month is a national observance highlighting public health practices and achievements. For Springfield, this month-long celebration draws attention to the cooperative efforts of local institutions, organizations and communities working to address our public health challenges by coordinating events that showcase local efforts.

Prevention is the strategy seen as most progressive in moving us toward a state of wellness. Increasing the focus on prevention will improve our quality of life and prosperity. Seven out of 10 deaths among Americans each year are from chronic diseases (such as cancer and heart disease), and almost one out of every two adults has at least one chronic illness, many of which are preventable. Racial and ethnic minority communities experience higher rates of obesity, cancer, diabetes and AIDS. Today, almost one in every three children is overweight or obese which predisposes them to chronic disease and the numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities.

According to the County Health Rankings, 2012 health indicators, Hampden County ranks near the bottom. Out of a fifteen point scale, indicators for mortality and morbidity 11-14; tobacco user 8-10; diet and exercise 11-15; sexual activity, clinical care, access to care 11-15; quality of care 8-10 and all other measured factors were 11-14.

Focusing on preventing diseases and illness before they occur will create healthier homes, workplaces, schools and communities so that people can live long, productive lives thus reducing health care and disability.

Springfield's institutions, organizations and citizen advocates are committed to making positive changes in the social and economic disparities in the community. Some examples are: physical/built environment, access to care, diet and exercise and sexual health in the neighborhoods.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) seeks a National Prevention Strategy which includes public and private partners to help Americans stay healthy and fit. The ACA envisions a health care system focus is not on sickness and disease on wellness and prevention. This graph speaks to the elements making up a prevention focused program.

TABLE 1. THRIVE community health factors

PLACE	
	1. What's Sold & How It's Promoted is characterized by the availability and promotion of safe, healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate products and services (e.g. food, books and school supplies, sports equipment, arts and crafts supplies, and other recreational items) and the limited promotion and availability, or lack, of potentially harmful products and services (e.g. tobacco, firearms, alcohol, and other drugs).
	2. Look, Feel & Safety is characterized by a well-maintained, appealing, clean, and culturally relevant visual and auditory environment; and actual and perceived safety.
	3. Parks & Open Space is characterized by safe, clean, accessible parks; parks that appeal to interests and activities of all age groups; green space; outdoor space that is accessible to the community, natural/open space that is preserved through the planning process.
	4. Getting Around is characterized by availability of safe, reliable, accessible, and affordable methods for moving people around. This includes public transit, walking, and biking.
	5. Housing is characterized by the availability of safe and affordable housing to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries.
	6. Air, Water & Soil is characterized by safe and non-toxic water, soil, indoor and outdoor air, and building materials. Community design should help conserve resources, minimize waste, and promote a healthy environment.
	7. Arts & Culture is characterized by a variety of opportunities within the community for cultural and creative expression and participation through the arts.
EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY	
	8. Racial Justice is policies and organizational practices in the community that foster equitable opportunities and services for all. It is evident in positive relations between people of different races and ethnic backgrounds.
	9. Jobs & Local Ownership is characterized by local ownership of assets, including homes and businesses, access to investment opportunities, job availability, and the ability to make a living wage.
	10. Education is characterized by high quality and available education and literacy development for all ages.
PEOPLE	
	11. Social Networks & Trust is characterized by strong social ties among all people in the community – regardless of their role. These relationships are ideally built upon mutual obligations, opportunities to exchange information, and the ability to enforce standards and administer sanctions.
	12. Participation and Willingness to Act for the Common Good is characterized by local leadership, involvement in community or social organizations, participation in the political process, and a willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good of the community.
	13. Norms/ Costumbres are characterized by community standards of behavior that suggest and define what the community sees as acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Taken from Prevention Institute, February 2011
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