

Business Leadership Network

COMMUNITY FORUM SUMMARY

December 14, 2017

OELWEIN



BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

The Business Leadership Network comprises Iowans who are leaders in business, educators, public health professionals, health care professionals, and community leaders who are interested in improving the health and well-being of their community through a mutually beneficial relationship with the College of Public Health (CPH). The Network is guided by a Business Leadership Network Steering Committee which serves in a primary advisory role.

MESSAGE FROM THE UI COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

In the fall 2017, the UI College of Public Health through its Business Leadership Network, continued to reach out to communities regarding local business and community public health issues. The Community Forum in Oelwein provided opportunities for area business, community, and public health leaders to discuss shared workplace issues, develop practical solutions, and determine potential areas to collaborate with the UI College of Public Health.

Additionally, the College is collaborating with Iowa communities through the Business Leadership Network Community Grant Project. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to community nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to foster collaboration to begin or strengthen partnerships among businesses and industry to address an identified public health issue and link with the UI College of Public Health. Six grants have been awarded for 2018 with projects in Atlantic, Fayette, Fort Madison, Davenport, Muscatine, and Waterloo.

The Community Forum, "Building a Healthy and Productive Workforce," in Oelwein was the 17th community gathering held by the College through the Business Leadership Network since 2012. The forum could not have come together to focus upon the issues important to Fayette county without the active participation and work to help frame and organize the event into a true community effort. Thanks go to Deb Howard at the Oelwein Chamber of Commerce for sponsoring and hosting the forum and to the following organizations for sponsoring the event: City of Oelwein, Fayette County Economic Development, Gunderson Palmer Community Health, Gunderson Palmer Lutheran Hospital, NE Iowa Community College, Mercy Hospital, Oelwein Public Schools, and Williams Wellness Center. We appreciate you working with the UI College of Public Health and the community to come together for this event. This summary provides a focus on key regional issues and a glimpse into the forum discussions.



Edith Parker

Professor and Head, Department of Community and Behavioral Health
University of Iowa College of Public Health

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

Public Health is the science and art of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention. Public health helps improve the health and wellbeing of people in local communities and often, while operating in the background, helps meet the public expectation for ensuring a quality of life – safe water, clean air, and protection from injury. The dramatic achievements of public health in the 20th and 21st centuries have improved our quality of life: an increase in life expectancy, safer workplaces, worldwide reduction in infant and child mortality, and the elimination or reduction of many communicable diseases.

WWW.PUBLIC-HEALTH.UIOWA.EDU/BLN

The Mission of the UI College of Public Health is to promote health and prevent injury and illness through commitment to education and training, excellence in research, innovation in policy development, and devotion to public health practice.

SUMMARY OF FORUM PANELS AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

CPH staff worked with interested members of the community in advance of the forum in planning and identifying issues most important to the community of Oelwein. After reviewing the challenges faced by employers and community health in Fayette County, the Committee chose a theme for the forum, "Building a Healthy and Productive Workforce." The forum was divided into three discussion topics focusing on the theme of a healthy workforce: Worker Wellness, Soft Skills Development and Worker Readiness, and Behavioral Health. A panel of experts from the community and the UI College of Public Health presented about each of the topics. Following the presentations forum attendees were invited to participate in one of the small groups organized under each topic for a more in-depth discussion of the issue.



PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Worker Wellness Panel

There is a plethora of data indicating that healthy workers are more productive and that worker wellness programs can reduce worker health risks, absenteeism, and health care costs. The Worker Wellness panelists highlighted several strategies that are low cost and require small amounts of employee time that employers can implement in the workplace to improve worker health and productivity.

Panelist Jessica Burkhart, Recreation and Wellness Facilitator at Williams Wellness Center, reviewed several programs their organization offers to employers to help get their employees moving. She indicated that stretching for a few minutes at the beginning of a shift could help to prevent injuries, especially to those workers on an assembly line or who are required to lift as a part of their jobs. Personal trainers from Williams have led classes at several area businesses to teach workers how to move to strengthen their bodies and prevent injury. Even modest increases in movement have benefited workers and improved health.

UI College of Public Health Assistant Professor, Barbara Baquero described how to create a culture of health within a community. As an organizer of a walking program in Ottumwa called Active Ottumwa, she emphasized the need for coalition building through cross sections of the community to reinforce workplace and community health together. Active Ottumwa's goal was to make walking an easier choice for community members by developing safe walking routes, establishing walking groups for all fitness levels, and incentives to get more people walking. They used volunteer activity leaders, health advisors, and frequent Facebook posts to keep people active and engaged in walking. To develop a culture of health, communities need to develop one message on health that everyone can share. She emphasized that the UI College of Public Health is an excellent source to assist with the promotion of wellness in the workplace and community at large.

April Brill from Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission shared materials showing how to get your community walking provided by Every Body Walk! (www.everybodywalk.org) She provided practical information to employers about how to start an employee wellness program. First, ask employees what they want in a wellness program, and design it accordingly. Employers should partner with their employees to work on healthier outcomes. Make the healthier choice the easier choice by making the healthier choice more accessible. This will lead to sustainable behavior changes. Brill shared some wellness initiatives that have been instituted at Upper Explorerland. They provide yearly physicals and bio screenings. A point system was initiated where workers receive points for healthy behaviors, and if they reach 100 points, they receive a bonus at the end of the year. They also had a successful 21-day walking challenge to ensure a more active workplace.

The final panelist for the Worker Wellness panel was Diane Rohlman, Associate Professor at the UI College of Public Health, who focused on keeping employees safe in the workplace. She reported that occupational fatality rates in Iowa are higher than the national average. Workers are aging, overweight, stressed, and can suffer from anxiety and depression, which can impact productivity and make working conditions less safe. She outlined ways that the UI College of Public Health is working with farmers, manufacturers, and employers to increase worker wellness and improve worker safety. Engaging workers in the process of developing a healthy workplace gives them an incentive to improve their health. She suggested recognizing "Wellness Champions" in the workplace as an incentive to better Health.

Soft Skills Development and Worker Readiness Panel

Empirical data indicates that some employers struggle to retain workers who may have the technical skills necessary for the job, but lack certain soft skills to be successful. Soft skills are the personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people and may include: consistently getting to work on time and ready to work, being able to work with people at any level in the company, dressing appropriately for a specific job, and being reliable at completing tasks.

Panelist Brenda Hackman, Workforce Advisor for IowaWorks, stressed that work-life balance is key to employee health. As a business service representative for several counties in northeast Iowa, she assists businesses and employees on developing a healthy work-life balance. With unemployment running at 1.5 percent, employers need to be proactive on what they offer to potential employees. Those businesses that have strong conflict management skills, offer flexibility for employees, create effective communication across all levels, and act quickly when problems arise are more likely to retain quality employees over time. She emphasized that employers need to be approachable, confident, and believable to ensure employee loyalty. These strategies are vital to the long-term success of businesses. Hackman suggested a workshop called "True Colors" to help define personality types in the workplace and offer strategies for employees to work with different personality types.

Panelist Wendy Mihm-Herold, Vice President of Business and Community Solutions at Northeast Iowa Community College began her remarks by asking the audience if they ever had a work experience that involved a horrible boss or co-worker. Almost every attendee raised their hands in response. She reported that the number one reason that people





leave employment is because of a conflict with a co-worker or employer. Employers can have competitive pay, excellent benefits, and an inspiring mission, but, ultimately, it is how employees are treated that really matters. She emphasized the importance of training supervisors to be effective supervisors. She encouraged business owners to pay attention to what their supervisors are doing. Employee turnover can often be traced to an ineffective supervisor. Supervisor training could include working with as many as five generations of employees from millennials to those ready to retire, in the same office. Mihm-Herold also encouraged businesses to be thinking about succession training to replace workers retiring, as she reported that 50 percent of workers will retire in the next ten years.

Behavioral Health Panel

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five Americans suffers from a mental illness. Employees with mental health problems have an impact on employers and businesses directly through increased absenteeism, negative impact on productivity and profits, as well as an increase in medical and health insurance costs. In addition, mental health issues impact employee morale adversely. Mental health problems combined with stressors in the workplace can be a contributing factor in long-term physical illness and can lead to burn-out and poor employee outcomes.

Panelist Amy Holst, Assistant Sector Coordinator at Keystone Area Education Agency, provided a link between the mental health of children and those of adults. Her organization is working with 23 school districts and 28 parochial schools to offer education on trauma and for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). ACEs are traumatic experiences suffered by children that can negatively impact their lives as they grow to adulthood. By identifying ACEs early, children can receive the mental health treatment they need to grow into healthy and productive adults. She indicated that Oelwein is working to become a trauma-sensitive school that recognizes and provides positive behavior supports to those students who need it.

Panelist Jill Kluesner is a national trainer and instructional design consultant focusing on mental health training. Realizing that there are limited resources for mental health in the workplace, she works with businesses to maximize the resources available. One approach is a Mental Health First Aid Training, an eight-hour training for businesses to increase mental health literacy and decrease the escalation of mental health incidents in the workplace. She indicated that most know how to deal with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or cancer, but not mental illness. There are 250 instructors in Iowa who have trained 25,000 Iowans on mental health first aid. She reported that there are seven instructors within a 50-mile radius of Oelwein and encouraged businesses to participate. For more information, go to: mentalhealthfirstaid.com.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Worker Wellness Discussion

The Worker Wellness Small Group discussed many ways to improve employee health in the workplace.

- » One company has regular trainings about once a week called “Tailgate Talks”, which are mandatory meetings for all employees at the start of the workday. Lasting 10-15 minutes, the talks focus on different issues that support employee health and help to prevent workplace injury. There are Tailgate Talks Tool Boxes available for businesses that review topics such as dehydration in the winter, fatigue, overheating, correct lifting procedures, and more. Videos and handouts for topics are also available.
- » Many companies in Oelwein also require physical assessments before an employee can be hired. Physical requirements are listed in the job description, and there is a specialized clinic at Mercy to provide the assessments. Maximum lifting and sled pushing and pulling are a couple of the assessments. New employees are assessed on the front end to reduce workers compensation claims and ensure that the employee has the physical capacity to do the job.
- » Diane Rohlman reported that OSHA has a consulting program to ensure new businesses that their facility is safe and that workers have the tools they need to perform their jobs without injury.
- » Worker wellness does not have to cost much money. Burkhart indicated that Williams Wellness Center can provide a personal trainer to get employees moving for \$30. Master trainers in each organization can be found and trained. There are many resources to support local wellness efforts, including video-led resources.
- » A vibrant worker wellness program could be used as an employee recruitment tool.
- » Employee incentives can be a helpful tool. Businesses need buy-in from supervisors to ensure implementation of a worker wellness program. Incentives could include:
 - Getting up from your desk and moving five minutes every hour.
 - Providing goals and incentives when employees reach their goals. Increased pay is not always the best incentive, so businesses must be creative with incentives.
 - Organize a winter marathon with raffle prizes.
 - Establish a walking program inside the business. Measure how many times around the office equals a mile and encourage employees to use it.
 - Give an extra 15 minutes for lunch if employees walk during that time.
 - Encourage wellness buddies to provide social and emotional support and enable sustainability.
 - Provide a weekly fruit tray to encourage healthy eating.





Soft Skills Development & Worker Readiness Discussion

Group participants discussed the need for businesses to assess their company culture and ask what attributes make a good company culture. Businesses should survey employees around communication, transparency, flexibility, and adaptability. Surveys often come with surprises, but also outline where there may be conflicts and allows employers to elicit solutions for problems that are found.

With half of employees retiring in 10 years, the need for adequate succession plans was also discussed. The plans should focus on how to transfer leadership, skills, and knowledge from those retiring to current employees. One suggestion was to get to know current employees better and empower them to do more. Encourage goal setting and review employee progress. Key leaders, both formally and informally should be identified, as well as identifying the specific skills and knowledge that must be retained for the business's continued success.

Employees are often evaluating companies as they are interviewing for jobs. A positive company culture is vital to a company's success. Most employees leave a company, not because of pay, but, rather, because of difficult relationships or a poor company culture.

Discussion focused on the importance of mentorships and Registered Apprenticeships. It was reported that the retention rate can be as high as 91 percent in apprenticeships if the employee feels that the employer invested in them. With 13,000 occupations in Iowa, the IowaWorks Earn and Learn program assists employees in registering for an apprenticeship. IowaWorks counselors are available to review employee skills and match them with potential apprenticeships.

IowaWorks has best practices for a healthy work environment posted on their website. Encouraging volunteerism, exercise, and team building activities can contribute to a positive company culture. Other suggestions include:

- » Have walking meetings to get more active and be productive.
- » Allow employees to be paid when volunteering.
- » Give employees their birthday off.
- » Set aside a special parking space as a reward to employee achievement.
- » Ask for positive/negative feedback when a project is complete.

Behavioral Health Discussion

The Behavioral Health small group discussed the mental health challenges in the workforce. Unlike traditional illnesses like cancer or diabetes, there is a significant stigma attached with mental illness, and there is a reluctance to discuss it in the workplace. There are seldom workplace policies in place with regard to mental health issues.

Lack of mental health beds is also a problem for the area. Officials at Mercy Hospital report that patients often come to the emergency room in mental health crisis; when there are no mental health beds available, the hospital must hold the patient in the ER. Open mental health beds or facilities offering the appropriate care are often unavailable or hours away from Oelwein. The group was disappointed about the lack of mental health resources in Iowa. Lack of services in the community means that those seeking services must go out of town, where the patient will be removed from family and community support.

It is difficult to identify mental health behaviors. Children with behavioral issues are perceived to have a mental illness, when often they have not been taught how to behave. Bad behavior does not necessarily mean a mental illness. Children with ADHD often need to move around, but are not given the opportunity in the classroom.

The group discussed Mental Health First Aid, which is an eight-hour course that teaches how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training teaches the skills needed to reach out, provide initial help, and support someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

Mental Health First Aid teaches a **Mental Health Action Plan called ALGEE:**

- A**ssess risk of suicide or harm
- L**isten nonjudgmentally
- G**ive reassurance and information
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

The training can be conducted individually or in a workplace setting. During a workplace training, the business's policies and procedures should be reviewed to see if there are opportunities for improvement. Workplace training can also be applied when at home or in the community to identify mental illness.

Because of the higher incidence of first responders committing suicide, OSHA requires all first responders to take a three-hour Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) course. Another example of being proactive is the "Handle with Care Program", where local law enforcement contacts a school when there has been a traumatic experience at home. School officials can then respond more quickly and appropriately if the child acts out in school.

Some employers have been responsive to minimizing stressors in the workplace. Hiring personal trainers to teach stretching or providing a room for employees to do yoga or take a nap are positive steps toward improved health. Employers who acknowledge good work and make their employees feel appreciated through potlucks or small appreciation gifts will help foster a positive work environment for employees and reduce stressors that may trigger a mental health crisis.



COMMUNITY PANELISTS



**April
Bril**



**Jessica
Burkhart**



**Brenda
Hackman**



**Amy
Holst**



**Deb
Howard**



**Jill
Kluesner**



**Dr. Wendy
Mihm-Herold**



**Peggy Lee
Sherrets**

April Bril – Safe Routes to School Associate, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

Jessica Burkhart – Recreation/Wellness Facilitator, Williams Wellness Center

Brenda Hackman – Workforce Advisor/Business Service Representative, IowaWorks

Amy Holst – Assistant Sector Coordinator, Keystone AEA

Deb Howard – Executive Director, Oelwein Chamber of Commerce and Area Development

Jill Kluesner – National Trainer and Instructional Design Consultant, Jill Kluesner Consulting

Dr. Wendy Mihm-Herold – Vice President of Business and Community Solutions, Northeast Iowa Community College

Peggy Lee Sherrets – Mayor of Oelwein

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACULTY – COMMUNITY FACILITATORS



**Edith
Parker**



**Barbara
Baquero**



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**Diane
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**Thomas
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**Tara
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Barbara Baquero - Assistant Professor, Department of Community and Behavioral Health

Rebecca Bucklin – Research Assistant, Department of Community and Behavioral Health

Vickie Miene – Interim Director, Institute of Public Health Research and Policy

Diane Rohlman – Associate Professor, Department of Occupational and Environmental Health

Thomas Vaughn – Associate Professor, Health Management & Policy

Tara McKee – Business Leadership Network Coordinator

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK STEERING COMMITTEE



Dan Anderson – Storm Lake;
Iowa Central Community
College Storm Lake Center
Director



Mona Everson – Webster
City; Founder and CEO of Life
and Health



A. Eric Neu – Carroll;
Attorney at Law for
Neu, Minnich, Comito
& Neu, P.C.



Jill Baze – Centerville;
Human Resources Manager
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Greg Fenton – Centerville;
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Realtor at Weber Real Estate



Rich Paulsen – Creston;
Publisher for Creston News
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Advertiser



Gerald Edgar – Garner;
Director of Hancock County
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Director of Employer
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Claudia Gates – Ottumwa;
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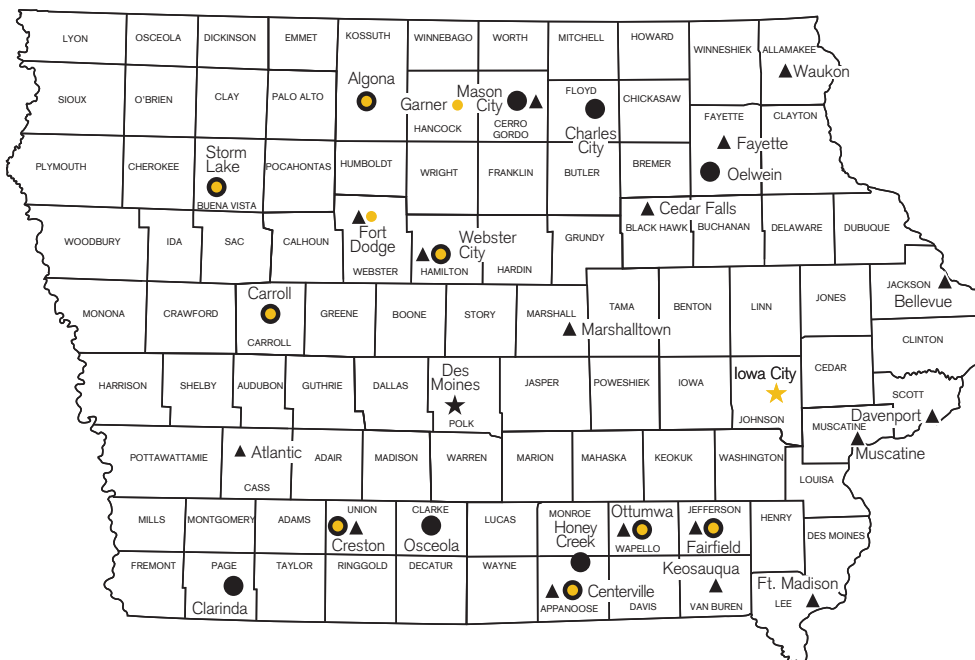


Maureen Elbert – Algona;
Executive Director of
Kossuth/Palo Alto County
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Michael Halley – Fairfield;
City Council Member and
Sales Representative for Ideal
Energy Solar

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK AREAS OF FOCUS



● Steering Committee Member ● Forum Location/Conversation Café ● Steering Committee Member and Forum Location ▲ Community Grant Locations



Business Leadership Network



**College of
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