



Business Leadership Network

IMPROVING EMPLOYEE AND FAMILY HEALTH

Community Forum Summary

May 7, 2019

CENTERVILLE



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 University of Iowa College of Public Health. 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

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 during spring 2019. The community forum in Centerville provided opportunities for area business, community, and public health leaders to discuss shared workplace and family health 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. Seven grants have been awarded for 2019 with projects in Davenport, Elgin, Fort Dodge, Fort Madison, Mason City, Muscatine, and Sioux City. The next round of funding is expected in fall 2019.

The forum in Centerville was the 22nd community gathering, and the second in Centerville, held by the College through the Business Leadership Network since 2013. The forum could not have come together without the active participation, guidance, and work to help frame and organize the event into a true community effort. A special thanks to Kristopher Laurson at Appanoose County Department of Public Health, Taren Whisler at MercyOne Centerville Medical Center, and Molly Revers at Rathbun Lake Area YMCA. This summary provides a glimpse into the day's discussions.



Edith Parker

Dean

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.

IMPROVING EMPLOYEE AND FAMILY HEALTH

The purpose of the community forum was to bring together public health, local businesses, and community organizations to discuss how to improve employee and family health. The forum was jointly sponsored by the UI College of Public Health's Business Leadership Network, Appanoose County Public Health, Appanoose Economic Development Corporation, Centerville-Rathbun Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, MercyOne Centerville, and Rathbun Lake Area YMCA.

Iowa is currently ranked the 4th highest in obesity for adults and 13th highest for kids ages 10-17. The next generation of kids face a shorter lifespan due to unhealthy life styles. A panel was convened to discuss ways to improve nutrition and increase physical activity for children and adults in the workplace.

Panelist **Kristopher Laurson**, Administrator for Appanoose County Department of Public Health, remarked that Appanoose County is ranked #99 out of 99 Iowa counties as least healthy in the state. Recently, MercyOne Centerville and Appanoose County Public Health conducted a community survey and held a town hall meeting to find that residents believe the following are the top health related issues in the county:

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|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health | 5. Parenting Education |
| 2. Poverty | 6. Drugs |
| 3. Obesity | 7. School Programming |
| 4. Community Knowledge of Healthcare Services | 8. Poor Community Perception |

Community knowledge of healthcare services and poor community perception stood out to Laurson. Even for a small rural community, he feels there are a lot of services available to citizens, though some people have less opportunities for healthy choices and access to a healthy lifestyle. He stated that improving community health will take partnerships between public health and health care, business, education, government, and community members, all working towards the same goals.

Taren Whisler, RN, is Employee Health and Health Promotions Manager at MercyOne Centerville Medical Center, and President of Appanoose County Wellness Coalition. She focuses on educating employees on mental and emotional health as well as physical health topics like nutrition and exercise. Whisler organizes various wellness activities for employees and also works to educate the community on being healthy. Many activities focus on youth, to encourage starting healthy habits at a young age.

The wellness program at MercyOne offers employees and their spouse the opportunity to earn up to \$450/year for participating in simple wellness activities. If any businesses in the Centerville area are looking to start a wellness program for their employees, Whisler said she can work to help tailor a program that is specific to their workplace. There is also a new weight loss program available to community members at MercyOne Clinic. People can meet with a registered dietician at no charge.





Molly Revers, CEO and Membership Director of Rathbun Lake Area YMCA, described her organization's three areas of focus: youth development, social responsibility, and healthy living. The goal is to get kids used to being active early so they will continue to be active as adults. Youth sports programs are offered for kids starting at age 3 years and swim lessons starting at age 6 months. Many events are offered to engage families in healthy activities like a recent free event that offered rappelling and kayaking in the pool. Need based financial aid is available for all programs and memberships so anyone can participate.

A corporate YMCA membership program is available to any Appanoose County business that has at least 5 employees and participates in payroll deduction. Businesses may pay for full or partial membership for employees at a discounted rate. Studies have shown that when employees participate in physical activity, they feel better and are more productive. Sick leave, injuries, and workers comp health costs are reduced.

Diane Rohlman is Associate Professor of Occupational & Environmental Health at the UI College of Public Health, and Director of the UI Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest, which has resources on safety and health for small employers. Some of the free online resources include short videos to help employers improve health, safety, and well-being in the workplace: www.HealthierWorkforceCenter.org.

There are ways to organize the workplace to improve health, such as creating a culture with top management demonstrating healthy behaviors. An attendee asked for advice on motivating employees who aren't interested in participating in wellness activities. Rohlman suggested looking at the workplace policy. For example, how is the lunch break set-up? Is the break long enough, is there a refrigerator to store food, and a microwave to heat it up? Ask employees what they want and what barriers they may face to participating in activities.

Mental health is of particular concern in farming and construction industries. On June 10th the UI College of Public Health is offering an agricultural safety and health course, and some fee waivers are available: <https://gpcah.public-health.uiowa.edu/education/ag-safety-and-health-course>.

Vickie Miene is Interim Director of the Institute of Public Health Research and Policy at the UI College of Public Health. She is also Director of the Iowa Healthy LifeStars program, which teaches kids how to eat healthy, how to stay active, and how to set personal goals. The college has received funding from the Stead Family Foundation to implement this program across the state and would be looking for a partner in Centerville. The program is free to communities. www.public-health.uiowa.edu/healthy-lifestars

The program is a 36 lesson flexible curriculum taught to children ages 6-12 years. The format involves a 10-15 minute lesson and then 30-45 minutes of fun games and activities that do not require costly sports equipment.

Miene explained that the college would train coaches to lead the program in Centerville and would also provide support. In other program sites, University of Iowa students have served as coaches and in Centerville, Indian Hills Community College may be a potential partner. The program could take place in a before/after school program, summer camp, or within any group working with children. Coaches undergo one hour of online training that can be taken in increments. Program implementation can happen very quickly.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Improving Child Health

- » A discussion on the Healthy LifeStars program led several group members to express interest in bringing the program to Centerville and working across groups to promote it across the community. A school principal expressed interest in implementing the program within the PE curriculum. The principal also shared their success of getting kids to choose more fruits and vegetables during school lunch. They noticed an improvement in the amount of food kids were consuming after switching the schedule to include recess before lunch so kids were focusing on eating rather than hurrying to go to the playground. The YMCA also suggested that the program would work well as an afterschool offering at their facility.
- » The UI College of Public Health is piloting a project in Newton, IA that is focusing on nutrition. Research has shown that youth are returning to school heavier after the summer break. The project involves UI and Grinnell College students, partnering with Hy-Vee and community members, to work with a summer-school food program to educate children on fruits and vegetables. The program will also provide healthy, inexpensive meals delivered to families. They are also working on an app that uses pictures to measure healthiness of a person's diet.
- » The group also discussed mental health. The community has mental health resources but is lacking in local awareness. There is a need for further mental health support in schools. Some school staff have participated in mental health first aid training and another session is scheduled for June.
- » Having a booklet of resources available to the community would be helpful as parents often discover a problem, but do not know where to turn to for assistance. Group members expressed interest in starting to meet monthly to create a user-friendly digital guide of resources for Appanoose County that can be easily updated.
- » The Iowa Department of Public Health's First Five program has services that are offered locally, such as speech therapy and physical therapy. The program supports health providers in the earlier detection of social-emotional and developmental delays and family risk-related factors in children from birth to 5 years and coordinates referrals, interventions and follow-up.

Improving Community and Workplace Health

- » The discussion focused on what works in the workplace to encourage healthy habits among employees. Businesses could start with surveying employees and find out what they want. Employers must also evaluate any programs they initiate to find out what works and what doesn't. Data from evaluations and surveys can also help convince administrators to fund health and wellness initiatives. If resources for health and wellness programs are scarce, start small and think creatively.



- » Offer healthy options for food and snacks. One company offers “Watermelon Wednesdays” where company leaders deliver servings of fresh watermelon to employees as an afternoon snack. Another company offers free YMCA memberships and has seen many employees taking advantage of the opportunity.
- » Many potential employees are looking not just at salary, but is this a healthy place to work and does it encourage work/life balance? By creating a healthy culture, businesses can make their workplaces more attractive to potential employees.
- » Needs of employees can also vary by shift and the demographic make-up of workers. For example, 3rd shift workers are more likely to be young unmarried males who may have different health needs than 1st shift workers. Employers should ensure that all shift workers have the same opportunities to participate in wellness programs.
- » One way to encourage participation is to find wellness ambassadors or peer leaders. Employees will often follow the lead of their co-workers rather than listening to mandates from leadership. Some successful programs are more like social time where workers can spend time with their peers away from work, at the gym, or on an evening walk.
- » Companies could offer incentives for participating in wellness activities such as a point system that would translate to 30 minutes of paid time off.
- » Employers should think about providing both indoor and outdoor exercise options so weather is not a concern. Employers could mark out indoor routes that indicate a distance completed by walking so many laps. Other solutions to get people moving could be as simple as moving the printer farther away.
- » Sleep is something that is often overlooked as part of employee health and wellness programs but can be a huge factor in how workers feel and how they function during the day.

CENTERVILLE COMMUNITY FORUM SPONSORED BY



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"Improving the Health of Appanoose County"



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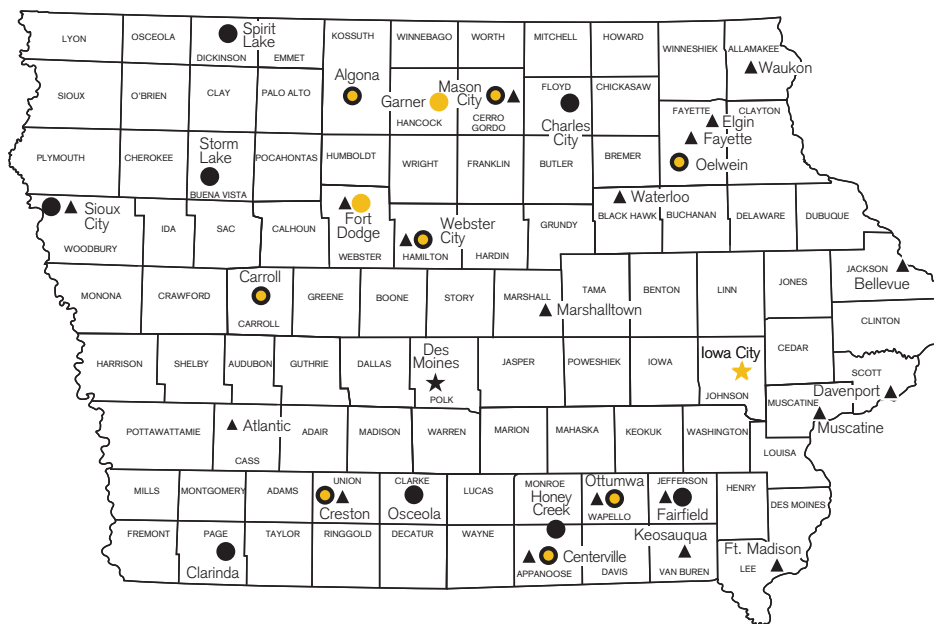


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BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK AREAS OF FOCUS



● Steering Committee Member ● Forum Location ● Steering Committee Member and Forum Location ▲ Community Grant Locations



Business Leadership Network



**College of
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