



Hamilton County, OH

▲ Community Example from Chapter 2 of “Lessons for Leaders:”
Lessons in Communication

Community Background

When Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) was named as the lead agency for the Hamilton County *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) initiative, it already had major funding to implement sustainable healthy eating and physical activity strategies that addressed environmental, policy and systems influences, as well as social determinants of health. In addition to the HKHC funding, HCPH and key partners had funding from Communities Putting Prevention to Work, Strategic Alliance for Health and Pioneering Healthier Communities. It didn't take the agency long to realize it needed a well-coordinated effort to reframe issues and strategies, as well as to manage the work and resources for maximum impact given their large and diverse target area. Hamilton County is mainly comprised of urban communities and is home to 48 distinct political jurisdictions.

Community Action

To help partners and stakeholders at all levels reset the frame of community health, they created WeTHRIVE!. As a countywide initiative that works with community partners, schools, businesses, churches, elected officials and residents, WeTHRIVE! addresses obesity and chronic disease through strategies that increase access to affordable, healthy food and beverage choices; safe, affordable places for physical activity; and tobacco-free communities. WeTHRIVE! provided an umbrella under which various partners and stakeholders could easily see their role in the healthy community initiatives and engage in efforts utilizing more sustainable environmental, policy and systems strategies in the county.

Early in the launch of WeTHRIVE!, HCPH and the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati partnered to host a legislative luncheon under the theme “WeTHRIVE! Community Wellness in Action.” The luncheon served as a forum for local, state and federal legislators, along with leaders from various local sectors, including government, planning, transportation, recreation, education, business and community-based organizations and members. Sixty-five people attended the event, which included a call to action issued by Ohio Senator Eric Kearney. He urged his peers and the community to join the WeTHRIVE! movement. After the We THRIVE! legislative luncheon, partners conducted follow-up activities reaching approximately 500 stakeholders to increase engagement and community capacity across Hamilton County.

Since its launch, WeTHRIVE! has grown into what the partnership now calls a “social movement” as a result of complementary framing and engagement strategies. A multi-pronged social marketing campaign (www.watchusthrive.org) increased awareness about the issues, and communities across the county formed local wellness teams with representation from elected officials, community leaders and residents to champion the WeTHRIVE! initiative and healthy community changes. These wellness teams adopted the WeTHRIVE! Community Wellness Resolution and were so effective that HCPH plans to work with them to establish teams in all of the county's jurisdictions to work on important community health issues.