



# Empower more people to take responsibility for maintaining their health

## Issue Brief

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## Positive Impact of Maintaining Health

Maintaining healthy lives is one of the most important things that people can do. Studies show that when people are healthy they tend to be happier.

According to the study Economic and Health determinants of Happiness, Self-described "healthy" people are 20 percent happier than average, while "unhealthy" people are 8.25 percent less happy.

Being healthy has many benefits that go beyond happiness. People who maintain their health have been shown to be less likely to have chronic diseases such as Diabetes and Heart Disease.

People who maintain their health have also been shown to live longer more productive lives.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle will:

- Increase happiness
- Reduce chance of chronic disease
- Provide more life opportunities
- Reduce Anxiety and Stress

***"Living healthy is different for everyone so approachable programs that motivate people and get them excited about healthy living are important."***

*-Del Konopka, RN, MS, Education Coordinator, Mercy Medical Center Accountable Care Organization*



## Impact of Health Neglect

People who neglect to take care of their health often experience a wide range of health problems. Studies show that decrease in healthy living has been associated to increase in chronic disease.

According to the CDC 133 million Americans live with at least one chronic condition. These chronic conditions account for 75 % of federal health care spending. Recent Gallup Health Studies have shown that adults

that classified themselves as leading healthy lives had 37 % lower disease burden costs than those who classified themselves as unhealthy. The annual difference between the two was \$1,834.

According to Iowa's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 18.7 % of people stated that their health was excellent, 37.3 % of people said their health was very good, 32.4% regarded their health as just good and 11.5 percent rated their health as poor.

**Adults whose Health was "struggling" or "suffering" were 64 % more likely than adults with "thriving" Health to have one or more new chronic conditions diagnosed in the past year -**

**Gallup Health Poll**

## Healthy Polk's Planning Initiative

Healthy Polk is a movement of individuals, businesses and community organizations focused on improving the quality of life and health status of people who live, work and play in Polk County.

In developing the Healthy Polk 2020 community health plan, input was collected from over 2,300 community members through community conversations, an online survey and phone interviews. The process was finalized in February 2009 when 150 Polk County residents attended a Healthy Polk Community Caucus and chose 10 health priorities for our community. (The full list of priorities is available at [www.healthypolk.org](http://www.healthypolk.org)).

8 Empower more people to take responsibility for maintaining their health.

## Healthy Polk Health Empowerment Planning Experts

Seventeen health experts, identified by their peers, gathered three times over two months, beginning June 6, 2011. The experts included:

- **Brian Bickel**, Powell Chemical Dependency Center, University of Iowa School of Social Work
- **Del Konopka**, Mercy Clinics' Education Coordinator
- **Dorenda Walters**, Director of Human Resources & Business Strategy, Des Moines Water Works
- **Ed Barnes**, Executive Director, Willkie House
- **Franny Medeiros**, Polk County Health Department
- **Jacquie Easley McGhee**, Director, Community and Diversity Services, Mercy Medical Center
- **Sharon Miller**, Director of Education, Planned Parenthood of the Heartland
- **Teresa Bomhoff**, 2011 Iowa Mental Health Planning Council Chair
- **Tim O'Neil**, Director of Employee Health, Meredith
- **Julie Hibben**, Iowa Department of Health
- **Karen Stiles**, Des Moines Area Community College Business Resources
- **Linda Lemons**, Private consultant, retired from Broadlawns, works with AMOS
- **Marcia Roth**, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Grand View University
- **Paula Secker**, Shakti Yoga Shop
- **Rebecca Lang**, Professor of Health and Physical Education, Grand View University
- **Rhonda Chittenden**, Executive Director, Eyes Open Iowa
- **Troy Vincent**, President, Live Healthy America

*"People need to come together to make this happen. We need to package our message and take an in-your-face approach. We need to make being healthy the cool and in-thing to do and work together to gain momentum for social support of healthy living in this community."*

*-Dorenda Walters, Retired Director of Human Resources and Business Strategy at Des Moines Water Works*

## Community Gaps

**Gap 1:** *People feel overwhelmed when they think about health.*

**Gap 2:** *People don't understand the integrated dimensions of health.*

**Gap 3:** *Resources for all dimensions of health are inadequate.*

**Gap 4:** *Neighborhoods and communities are not empowered to support and promote health*

Experts identified that there are several distinct gaps that exist in the community that keep people from maintaining their health. The lack of understanding as to what health is and how to remain healthy are believed to play major roles in unhealthy behavior. Experts believe a lack of social support for healthy living is a barrier that many people find extremely hard to overcome. Lack of community resources that encompass the full spectrum of health further add to reasons why people are not empowered to maintain their health. Once the experts had identified the gaps they proposed a set of initiatives to address these gaps.

**What would it look Like?**

**-People would encourage friends and family to live healthy lifestyles**

**-Healthy living would be the default choice**

**-People would enjoy discussing their health and do so more often in their communities**



## What the experts say this priority means

Beginning with the work and the leadership of the Polk County Health Department this expert team envisions a ripple effect throughout Healthy Polk 2020 and the Polk County community. In the next eight years, this team has set a goal to see 10 % (42,000) Polk County citizens take steps to enhance their health. In order for this goal to become a reality there must be a shift from a health message that is often overwhelming, guilt and shame ridden, and focused on weight reduction and exercise, to a message of empowerment focusing on a holistic view of health.

The following are categories of community assets the experts believed are essential to empowering people to maintain their health:

- Culture
- Lifelong learning
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Safety
- Sexuality
- Spiritual health

***“The lack of social support in the family and community is a major barrier to people maintaining their own health.”***

***-Dorenda Walters, Retired Director of Human Resources and Business Strategy at Des Moines Water Works***

## Community Assets

Ankeny Art Center	Des Moines University	Iowa Sports Foundation
Blank Children's Hospital	DMARC	Mercy Hospital
Blue Zones Project	Chrysalis Foundation	Naturally Slim
Broadlawns Medical Center	Community Foundation of Greater	Polk County Health Services
Des Moines Public Libraries	Des Moines	Primary Health Care, Inc.
Dowling High School	Employee and Family Resources	Steps to Wellness, A Guide to
Employee Wellness Program	Meredith Corporation	Implementing Physical Activity
Evelyn Davis Learning Academy	Free Clinics of Iowa	Employee and Family Resources
Friends of the Des Moines	Habitat for Humanity	Eyes Open Iowa
Botanical Center	Interfaith Hospitality Network	Family to Family
Head Start	Iowa Healthiest State Initiative	Grandview University
HyVee Inc.	Iowa Department of Human Rights	Harmony Yoga + Wellness
Live Healthy America	Iowa Dept. of Public Health	Health Literacy Iowa
Mercy College of Health	Telligen (formerly Iowa Foundation	Hope Ministries
Sciences	of Medical Care)	I'll Make Me a World
Mercy Hospital	Iowa Homeless Youth Center	IDPH contractors for substance
Meredith Publishing	Mercy Clinics	abuse
Mid-Iowa Health Foundation	Mid-Iowa Health Foundation	InnerProsperity.com
Neighborhood Associations	NAMI	Iowa Acupuncture Clinic
Neighborhood Finance	Pleasant Hill Parks and Recreation	Iowa Chapter of American Heart
Corporation	Polk Co. legislators	Association
Polk County Extension Services	Primary Health Care, Inc.	Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Sixth Avenue Corridor	Salvation Army	Johnston Public Schools
United Way of Central Iowa	United Way	Community Education
Community Impact Health	Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield	La Clinica
Cabinet Well Workplace	Wellmark Foundation	LGBT Center of Central Iowa
University Wellness Program	Youth Emergency Services and	Lutheran Social Services
Women's Wellness programs	Shelter (YESS)	Islamic Center of Des Moines
YMCA	African American Leadership	North Polk Community Schools
YMCA of Greater Des Moines	Forum	Partnership for Better Health
Healthy Living Center	Better Choices, Better Health	Passageway Clubhouse
Altoona Campus	Center for Advocacy & Outreach,	Powell Chemical dependency
AMOS—A Mid-Iowa Organizing	Blank Children's Hospital	center
Strategy	Central Place	Shakti Yoga Shop
Ankeny School District	Corinthian Baptist Church	STD Outreach programs/clinic
Art teachers	Des Moines Health Center,	U of Iowa School of Social Work
Better Choices, Better Health	Diabetic Clinic	Universal Unitarian Church
Children and Family Urban	Dr. Raygene Curry	University of Iowa School of Social
Ministries (CFUM)	Eyerly Ball	Work
Common Thread	Family Health Center, Broadlawns	Urbandale Community Schools
Community Adolescent	Hospital	VisionWholistic.com
Pregnancy Prevention	Holmes Murphy	Visiting Nurse Services
subcontractors	Hospice of Central Iowa	Well Community Committee
Des Moines Art Center	IDPH contractors for substance	Wellness Council of Iowa
Des Moines Meditation Group	abuse	West Des Moines Community
Des Moines Parks and Rec	Iowa Acupuncture Clinic	Schools
Des Moines Pastoral Counseling	Iowa Hospice	Young Moms Program (YWRC)
Center	Iowa Hospital Association	Youth Ministries

## Empowering People to maintain their Health Priorities Timeline for 2012-2013

Thirty-one individuals participated in the community gathering. After a short get-acquainted period, the stakeholders were led through a process to prioritize the proposed initiatives. After thoughtful discussion it was decided that 2 initiatives would be advanced.

### Projects Launched

*1) Develop a set of materials, including bullet points, and an elevator speech, so that champions can easily talk about this priority of Healthy Polk 2020, including the holistic nature of health.*

*2) Work with churches, workplaces, local ethnic grocery stores, and health facilities. Provide incentives for them to develop and promote in-person and on-line ways for members to stay connected and share information and support.*

## Empowering People to maintain their Health Priorities Timeline for 2012- 2020



**Develop a community culture that supports people in developing positive attitudes about maintaining and improving all aspects of health**

**Optimize and increase resources for all dimensions of health, and ensure that such resources are equitably distributed and available.**

**Develop a comprehensive and intensive campaign to educate and promote the concepts of health enhancement.**

**Work with neighborhoods and communities to establish networks that support and promote the overall health of their citizens.**

# SAVE THE DATE

*Please join us for the next Re-Gathering  
of the Stakeholders in Empowering  
people to take responsibility for  
maintaining their health!*

**November 3 at 8:00 AM**

**River Place, 2309 Euclid Ave, Room 1A**

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## **Reference Sources for Issue Brief**

### **Centers for Disease Control**

<http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/chronic.htm>

### **Iowa Department of Health**

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/brfss/common/pdf/2010BRFSSAnnual.pdf>

### **Gallup Health Poll Study**

<http://www.fightchronicdisease.org/node/322>

### **Health Happiness Research**

Teng, G. (2011). Economic and health determinants of happiness. eprint arXiv:1112.5802, 1(1), 1-25. Retrieved from

**Healthy Polk 2020 Process Outcome Report**

***Work toward advancing this Healthy  
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**Healthy Polk 2020**

[www.healthypolk.org](http://www.healthypolk.org)

***JOIN THE MOVEMENT!***

**For More Information**

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