



COUNTY OF POLK
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Polk County Health Department News Release

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Polk County Health Department to Host Unveiling of Inspirational Artwork by Local Artist

On May 17th, from 5-8pm the Polk County Health Department is hosting a reception to unveil the first of six paintings to be completed over the next two years. “Bike Club” is a 6' x 11', oil on canvas painting by local artist, Dick Shook, of a group of cyclists making their way along a rural bike path. The series of paintings is intended to motivate visitors to be more physically active.

Shook said that the project was conceived following a visit with his wife to the clinic for a flu shot. He told his wife, “this place needs artwork.” Then he began to work through what kind of art that would be. “We spend an enormous amount of time waiting and it seemed to me we could improve on that time by using art to do more than merely decorate the walls.”

Working with Polk County Health Department director, Rick Kozin, Shook developed a series of concepts that would invite people to make healthy lifestyle choices. Kozin reported, “We know from the research that clinical medical services (seeing a doctor) is not the main factor in what makes us healthy or not. Having a supportive community environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice is much more important. With this art our waiting room becomes a supportive environment and not just a waiting room.” According to Kozin, more than 20,000 people visit the Health Department each year.

Among the paintings to be completed are images of skipping rope, strolling, yoga, swimming and playground activities, overall about 210 square feet of canvas. Shook said, “What I’ve wanted to do is to show how various kinds of simple and accessible activities can enrich our lives and encourage a habit of regular, enjoyable, exercise.”

One of the early sponsors of the wellness-oriented public art is the UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Iowa. “We are supporting this project because this inspirational artwork depicts healthy lifestyles that can motivate people to live healthier lives – not only when they visit the Polk County Health Department but also in their everyday lives and in their communities,” said Nancy Lind, executive director for UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Iowa.

The Metro Arts Alliance is receiving funds in behalf of Dick Shook's Art Initiative. Donations can be made online through a link at www.dickshook.com or www.metroarts.org. The May 17th event will include a raffle of a custom bicycle donated by Ichi Bike, 311 East Walnut, Des Moines; a canvas print of “Bike Club”; and a \$150 gift certificate from Scheels All Sports and Scheels Hardware.