



# Polk County Health Department Annual Report 2011/2012



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Creating the conditions for all people to live healthy lives by engaging residents, reducing health disparities, and attending to the health needs of our most vulnerable families.

The following pages of this Annual Report will provide you with the highlights of our work over the last year. None of this would have happened without the extraordinary contribution and dedication of our professional staff and volunteers.

As the efforts to implement Health Care Reform continue, many questions remain unanswered. Some of what we do may change. But, our primary role - to create the conditions that allow people to live *healthy* lives - will remain the same.

The research on the social determinants of health has, and will continue, to guide how we make this happen. According to the research, access to clinical care and services contributes no more than 10-20% of our health outcomes. Our health is primarily a reflection of the behavior and choices we make. And these choices are made in the context of our social, political and physical environments.

Or as the Blue Zones Project suggests, “by optimizing our environments - those settings where we live, work and play, which influence our behavior - we can make the healthy choice the easy choice so that we naturally adopt healthy behaviors.” And that is where we will focus our energies.

How are we, as a community, doing? In 1996, the General Accounting Office reported that if communities were going to choose a single indicator to measure community health it should be “lives lost to premature mortality”. The 2012 Community Health rankings reported 6,258 lives lost to premature mortality in Polk County in 2011. This was down from 6,322 in 2011, but remained above the state and national averages.

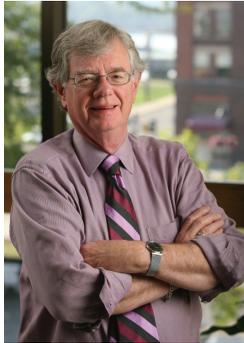
We can, and must, do better. Starting now.

Sincerely, Rick Kozin, Director



**from the director**

# board of supervisors



E.J. Giovannetti

Angela Connolly



Tom Hockensmith



John Mauro

Robert Brownell



## **Current Board of Health Advisory Committee**

Tom Newton, Director of Network Engagement at Wellmark Blue Cross & Blue Shield

Dr. John Olds, Medical Advisor to the Iowa Board of Medicine and Des Moines Metropolitan Area Team Physician for Hospice of Central Iowa

Reylon Meeks, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Blank Children's Hospital and Pleasant Hill Fire Chief

Dr. Donald Anderson, general surgery private practice

Bobretta Brewton, consultant

**Many diseases are impacted by the choices that we make every day. In fact, up to 50% of our health is determined by our behaviors. At the Polk County Health Department we help teach people how to make healthy choices.**

*“I love getting to know the participants in our diabetes education program. There are moments when I can see the lightbulb go on when they realize that they can control their health. By the end of the class they are all best friends!”*

*- Ana Coppola*

*Multi-cultural outreach coordinator and diabetes instructor*

**health behaviors**

# health behaviors

***DIABETES:*** Last year we taught 30 people in English and Spanish about how nutrition, physical activity, proper medication and glucose testing can help them manage their diabetes and avoid complications. 71% of participants have shown the ability to manage their condition and after the class have reduced their A1C by an average of 1.0.

***CHRONIC DISEASES:*** People who suffer from chronic diseases, such as arthritis, heart disease, fibromyalgia, and others have to deal with pain, depression, fatigue, stress and frustration. Our Better Choices, Better Health workshop is a six-week interactive workshop that helps people deal with these issues by teaching them how to use healthy eating, exercise and communication with healthcare providers to reach their disease management goals. Last year 64 people reported an average of 17.3% increase in their confidence to manage their chronic disease.

***HEALTHY CHILDREN:*** Through our Well Baby and Well Child visits we have helped ensure that 341 kids are healthy and reaching their developmental milestones. Taking your baby to their scheduled doctor's visit can impact a child for the rest of their life by catching disease or developmental issues early.

***DENTAL:*** 98 people received dental screenings at our clinic and learned about how to take better care of their teeth and mouth.

**Injuries can happen to anyone. We give people tools and strategies to reduce their risk of injury.**

**FALLS:** Falls are the leading cause of injury death in Iowa among older adults. A Matter of Balance is an eight session class that has helped 182 people reduce their fear of falling and increase their levels of physical activity. 75% of participants have reduced their fear of falling and 75% of participants have made changes to their home that make it safer and reduces their risk of falls.

**SUICIDE:** The Polk County Health Department convenes 154 community partners in the Polk County Suicide Prevention Coalition to help reduce suicide and self-harm in our community and build resiliency in kids. Suicide is the number one cause of death in children and the second leading cause of death in teenagers.

**LEAD POISONING:** Lead poisoning can cause irreversible brain damage in young kids. Lead based paint in homes older than 1978 is the most common cause of lead poisoning. This year our lead home repair program helped 51 families remove lead hazards in their home and is teaching the community how to safely do home repairs themselves. The only way to know if a child has been lead poisoned is by doing a blood test at ages 1 and 2. We tested 247 kids.

**WELL WORKPLACE:** Our Community Transformation Grant has helped 11 businesses adopt employee wellness initiatives and healthy vending options; increase referrals to medical homes; introduce healthy concession items at a local movie theater; and assess interest in Complete Street policies in Polk County.

## **injuries & healthy environment**

# injuries & healthy environment

*“The lead paint in our home was a danger to my kids. Because of the Polk County Health Department the hazards were repaired. My kids are not at-risk for lead poisoning now and my home looks beautiful.”*

*- Lead home repair participant*

**The environment we live in can have a large impact on our health so we help families identify and fix hazards in their environment.**

**The Polk County  
Health  
Department  
tracks and  
investigates  
diseases in the  
county to help  
stop the spread  
of diseases.**

*“Sixty schools in Polk County report daily the number of students and staff that are out sick. We use this surveillance to stay one step ahead of possible outbreaks by following up with schools that report over 10% absent on one day and help them implement strategies that reduce the spread of illness in their schools.”*

*- Kari Lebeda-Townsend  
Disease Prevention Supervisor*

**epidemics & disease**

# epidemics & disease

***SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES:*** Our team of Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Investigators help identify individuals who may have been exposed to a STD and encourage them to visit our clinic for confidential testing, treatment and counseling. Last year they investigated 2,977 cases of gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV and chlamydia.

***BREAST CANCER:*** Our Iowa Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program helped provide free cancer screening tests, such as mammograms and pap tests, to 2,147 women.

***COLORECTAL CANCER:*** All adults over 50 should be tested for colorectal cancer and adults over 40 who have a family history of colorectal cancer should also be tested. We provided tests to 57 people.

***COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:*** Our team of Communicable Disease nurses investigated two cases of Legionella, two cases of Meningitis, three food borne outbreaks, four Malaria cases, six Lyme disease cases, seven Shigella cases, 23 E-Coli cases, 59 Salmonella cases, 80 Cryptosporidium cases, 117 Hepatitis cases, and 139 pertussis cases that had 5,071 close contact follow-ups.

***IMMUNIZATIONS:*** The Polk County Health Department's clinic provides a wide range of immunizations. We administered 4,164 immunizations to 1,757 kids 0-18 that will help them avoid many dangerous childhood diseases. Adults received 1,647 booster immunizations that will help them avoid getting sick and passing disease to others, and we gave 3,987 travel immunizations. During the fall and winter we held 125 community flu vaccination clinics in addition to our daily walk-in flu clinic, giving a total of 12,120 vaccinations.

**Public health helps create the conditions in which people can be healthy by providing leadership, education, and better health systems.**

***PLANNING:*** The Health Planning and Education Team identifies community priorities, participates in community partnerships, and helps shape the public dialogue about health, to ensure that health is viewed as a community issue, not just an individual issue.

\* Key Community partnerships include: Polk County Suicide Coalition, Polk County Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition, United Way Health Cabinet, Project LAUNCH Community Council, National Children's Study, State of Iowa Prevention and Chronic Care Management Advisory Council, Partnership for a Healthy Johnston

***OUTREACH and MEDIA:*** During the last year our health education team has attended 52 community events where we provided the public with information about a number of public health issues as well as the services that the Polk County Health Department can provide. We sent out 44 press releases, did 75 TV, radio and newspaper interviews, and wrote 19 articles to help the public learn more about public health issues.

***HEALTHY POLK:*** Healthy Polk 2020 is a movement of individuals, businesses, and community organizations focused on improving the quality of life and health status of people in the community. Work plans have been identified for three of the priorities and there have been 12 stakeholder gatherings to work on and develop these plans.

**public health infrastructure**

# preparedness & response

***EXTREME HEAT:*** We continuously monitor the weather during the summer months to determine when an overnight cooling center needs to be opened. In the summer of 2012 we opened an overnight cooling center for a total of 26 days that served 219 people.

***HAZARD VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT:*** In coordination with Polk County Emergency Management we conducted a hazard risk assessment to identify the most likely and most destructive events that could occur in Polk County. Experts and stakeholders from eleven disciplines evaluated potential hazards, such as flooding, terrorism and disease outbreaks based on the likelihood of an event occurring and the potential destruction and health consequences a given event might cause. Thirty-six potential hazards were identified for Polk County and will help us better plan for possible public health threats and disasters. The most likely and most destructive hazards identified were tornadoes, terrorism, flooding, winter storms/power outages, human disease, drought/climate change, and animal disease.

**Disasters can occur at any time and being prepared can be the difference between life and death at times.**



★ HEALTH DEPARTMENT ★

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