

Stevens County Community Conversation
June 17, 2013

From your perspective, what are the key elements that contribute to an individual's ability to be healthy? Of those elements, which would you consider to be strengths in this community and which are factors that need to be strengthened in order for individuals to be healthier?

Economics:

- Financial instability and poverty in Stevens County
- Need money to buy good food (fresh vs canned), physical activity, and medical care expenses (high deductibles)
- Too expensive to make healthy choices

Job/employment:

- Low unemployment in Stevens County; many want ads in newspaper
- Generally high per capita income
- Difficult to find meaningful employment
- Young people not moving back to community
- Many jobs do not include health insurance

Education and Knowledge:

- Knowledge of resources (students do not use county website for information)
- Knowledge of good nutrition

Availability of (Access to) Resources:

- Good backpack program for school-aged kids
- Fitness opportunities (Fitness Center and SNAP Fitness in Morris)
- Stevens County lacks sufficient housing for aging (assisted living) and working population housing
- Insufficient services for the aging population
- Shortage of daycare
- Caregivers are undervalued and underpaid; significant turnover in caregiver staff
- Access to resources stronger for Morris residents than surrounding communities

Good mental health:

- Mental health resources are generally lacking in Morris; need more school-based resources *** Major issue **
- No child psychiatry
- Outpatient chemical health available but limited

Good nutrition:

- Good quality food (Morris is known for promoting local foods)
- Farmer's Markets; can use EBT cards
- Community meal (healthy) is held monthly
- Food drop during summer months

Personal motivation:

- Making healthy choices is the key (alcohol, food, and exercise)
- Getting preventive health care promotes better health

Multiple/complex issues:

- Certain segment of population has multi-generational issues
- Busy schedules/family demands prevent parents from caring for themselves

Genetics:

- What can you do? Special testing cost-prohibitive

Language barriers:

- Communication barriers between Hispanic population and the rest of the community

Community characteristics:

- “insider vs outsider” Are you “from” here?
- Isolation a concern for some...need people checking on one another
- Few opportunities for young people; young farmers cannot afford to buy land and begin farming. This results in empty store fronts on main street
- Limited bike paths; no outdoor pool

Medical care:

- Access to medical care: can be long time before open appointments
- Health insurance expensive
- Health insurance needs to incent people to be healthy
- Medical care and medications are unaffordable

Strengths in Stevens County:

- Opportunities for physical activity:
 - Regional Fitness Center and SNAP Fitness
- Smallness of community
 - People more willing, able to talk with one another
- Community services
 - Good service providers
 - Excellent first responders
 - Good access to medical care

Needs Improvement in Stevens County:

- Services for the aging population:
 - Assisted Living
- Shortage of day care
- Financial barriers:
 - Doctors and medications unaffordable
 - Medical care, glasses expensive
 - High deductible insurance policies limit access

- Housing:
 - Assisted living for the aging
 - Housing for the working population
- Employment:
 - Jobs with health insurance
 - Young people not moving back to community
- Access to services:
 - Only 1 full service grocery store in Stevens County
 - Need more sidewalks and bike paths
 - Some bike paths but concerns about bike safety
 - Need more opportunities for physical activity in winter

What motivates people to choose healthy habits and lifestyles? What keeps people from adopting healthier habits and lifestyles?

Motivates

- Group activities:
 - Worksite health promotion programs
 - Wellness challenges at school
 - Group fitness activities
 - Silver Sneakers program
 - Senior exercise programs
- Individual motivators:
 - Love of gardening provides exercise and healthy food
 - Individual priorities; “you have to want it”
 - Desire to be healthy in old age; quality of life
 - Desire to look good and live longer
 - Becomes “good addiction”; likes the way you feel and look
- Health diagnosis – bad health outcome; A medical crisis
 - Diagnosis requires changes in behavior
- Knowledge and education
 - Education about healthy behaviors
- Influence of others:
 - Seeing someone else make a positive change
 - Role models in the community and in the family
 - Parents are key to positive influence on kids
 - Influence of friends and family (can also prevent)
 - Hanging around people that are motivated
- Adequate time; less scheduled lives
- Proximity to RFC

- Money motivates (carrot and stick concept)

Prevents

- Family history, genetic disposition
 - Evolutionary – we are wired to conserve energy; requires too much will power to overcome
- Financial limitations:
 - Monetary and physical access to fitness opportunities and fresh food;
 - Cost of RFC
 - Limited income has many impacts
- Opportunities for physical activity
 - Limited hours, esp in the summer
 - Limited bike paths
 - No outdoor pool
 - Not all streets have sidewalks
- Lack of knowledge about healthy habits
- Individual priorities and choices
 - Lack of commitment to make a change; Avoidance (not a priority yet)
 - Too much eating out vs traditional family meals at home
 - Lack of time for self care and family care
 - Just not enough hours in the day
- Work schedules
 - Demanding jobs that expect/require longer work days
- Lives are too packed and scheduled
- Technology:
 - Too much screen time; too many planned activities and not enough unstructured time
- Cultural barriers
 - Men don't want to go to doctor; Perceived as “strong and tough”
- Winters are too long and cold
- Health conditions:
 - Mental health and depression
 - Health care system set up to treat, not to prevent
 - Stigma associated with admitting a mental health problem/diagnosis
- Influence of friends and family (can also be a motivator)
 - Lack of family legacy
 - Lack of family role models

- Parents just not being parents
- Absence of community leaders or champions; need role models

If we could look ahead a few years from now, what would you see to be the greatest health risks or conditions that would impact Stevens County?

Obesity (2)

- Childhood obesity – trends do not look good

Heart disease:

- Cardiovascular

Mental health issues ****Repeatedly identified as significant issue****

- Lack of mental health services and resources
- Increase in mental health issues
- Broken homes
- Negative social influences
- Lack of insurance to treat
- Must travel for services
- Unserved mental health needs

Lack of physical activity:

- Long cold winters
- Young people sedentary as a result of technology

Social changes:

- Negative consequence of TV/Games/Internet
- Social isolation
- Lack of interpersonal interaction
- Isolated and inactive
- Decline of a strong, civilized social structure
- Neighborhoods no longer considered safe for children to go out and play
- No opportunities to attract young people

Family structure:

- Impact of having no parent in home
- Kids primarily indoors rather than outdoors
- Children raised by day care providers

Poverty:

- Lack of financial means to be healthy
- Healthy food options unaffordable
- No or very limited savings for future

Aging demographics:

- Lack of adequate facilities
- Services close to where people live

Housing issues:

- Lack of housing for elderly
- Older housing stock prevents aging in place

Access to care:

- Lack of preventive care
- Fear loss of small town clinic
- Loss of population leads to loss of services
- Inability to get fresh food resulting in poorer diet

Increasing cultural barriers:

- Some cultural conflict within the community

Ah Ha's or Take Aways from conversation:

- *Increased awareness of the time constraints of young parents*
- *Increased awareness that access to healthy foods limited by cost*
- *Many generational concerns such as influence of digital age on ability to get out, reduced physical activity associated with growth in technology, social isolation issues arise from lack of interaction with others*
- *Parental responsibility or lack thereof associated with many of the concerns*
- *Concerns about increased rate of violence*
- *Suggest using same methodology to promote increased physical activity as what was used to reduce tobacco use*