

*“In all things
(good and bad)
there is
opportunity.”*

Proverb

Overall, the following represent the most significant strengths and areas for improvement in our community. Details are provided throughout the report.

The community has responded to the 2004 Community Focus Report. The community took the information provided in the 2004 report seriously and responded quickly. Several organizations, including the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Junior League of Springfield, and Community Partnership, have chosen to focus their initiatives on the red flags noted in last year’s report.

Many organizations in Springfield collaborate to benefit the community. This report provides numerous instances of organizations working together for the community. Examples: the Springfield-Greene County Park Board collaborates with the Springfield Public Schools to provide recreational opportunities for school children, the Community Partnership established a Continuum of Care Committee to meet a variety of housing needs especially for the homeless, and 67 organizations have joined the Ozarks Regional Economic Partnership to collaborate in regional economic planning.

The Springfield-Greene County economic boom fuels the economic growth for the entire state. The regional economy cultivates a strong small business climate that serves as the impetus for the area’s economic vitality. The presence of strong education and health sectors and a relatively low cost of living support the area’s favorable business environment.

The community has a rich variety of medical and health care programs and facilities. Two major hospital systems, St. John’s Health System and CoxHealth, provide comprehensive care to the entire southwest Missouri region. The Jordan Valley Community Health Center, opened in 2002, offers primary medical and dental care to Greene County residents. Missouri State University’s Ozarks Public Health Institute collaborates with various organizations to provide education, training, public service and research programs pertaining to public health issues.

The community is well served by several institutions of higher education. The complete range of educational options, from technical education through doctoral work, is available at Ozarks Technical Community College, Drury University, Evangel University, and Missouri State University. The presence of these institutions touches every aspect of the community but particularly benefits the public schools with everything from teacher pre-service opportunities through professional development for experienced teachers.

Too many children suffer from the effects of poverty.

The statistics are alarming; the number of children growing up in poverty is increasing. The menacing availability of methamphetamines contributes to poverty and breakdowns in the public order, but other contributing factors include the area’s relatively low wage rate.



Too many children and adults lack access to medical, dental, and mental health care.

Despite the presence in the area of excellent medical care resources, many individuals cannot afford these services. Recent cuts in state spending for medical and social services are likely to exacerbate this problem of access.

Methamphetamine traffic touches all areas of community life.

Southwest Missouri has the bleak distinction of being a meth center for the United States. Meth production is dangerous for the children who live where it is produced and for the officials charged with enforcing anti-drug laws. A new law requiring pseudoephedrine medications (ingredients of meth) to be available only behind the counter in pharmacies will likely reduce meth production.

Funding for public education has increasingly been shifted from state to local responsibility.

Over the last decade, the burden of financing public schools has been increasingly borne by local districts, with the percentage contributed by the state falling as the local percentage has risen. Recent legislation has changed the state funding formula, but several local districts have continued their legal challenge of the formula as inadequate. Local public school per-pupil expenditures and teacher salaries lag far behind the state average, impairing the districts’ abilities to serve the growing numbers of at-risk children.