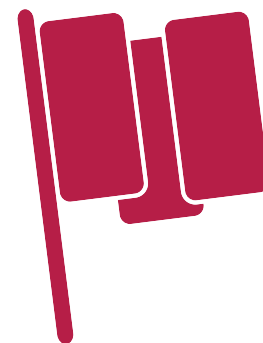


Blue Ribbon & Red Flag Themes



As discussed in the first Community Focus report, the goal of this project is to assess the overall conditions that deserve recognition and attention in Springfield and Greene County. During the construction of this report, several areas repeatedly emerged representing consistent strengths (blue ribbons) as well as challenges (red flags) facing our community.

As you read this year's report, you will notice recurring themes within the 11 sections. Overall, the following topics emerged as the blue ribbon and red flag themes in the 2013 Community Focus report.

BLUE RIBBON THEMES

Collaboration

- Entities and facilities worked together to maximize shared resources and reduce duplication efforts
- New partnerships built and existing partnerships strengthened to improve the common good
- Individuals and groups organized to address emerging challenges together
- Spirit of collaboration used to address long-range issues strategically

Community Engagement

- Efforts made to try to diversify community opinions
- Local willingness to address issues through increased public funding
- Community Focus report continued to track community issues
- Cross-sector support provided to address issues

Innovation and Leadership

- Higher education resources committed to improve public issues through innovative endeavors
- Resources committed to leadership development
- Community leaders willing to initiate new programs to improve quality of life
- State and national recognition for successful programs

RED FLAG THEMES

Poverty

- All facets of community impacted by poverty
- Growing concern of poverty levels in Springfield and Greene County
- Continued concern for acute impact of poverty on children
- Less citizen participation as poverty levels increased
- Effect of poverty on economic development

Insufficient Funding

- Uncertainty due to policy, regulation, and aging infrastructure
- Needs remained high while funding did not rebound accordingly
- Concern for potential threshold in tax ballot initiatives
- Resources required to combat substance abuse and related problems competed for funding demands
- Collaboration efforts impacted by federal, state, and local budget reductions

Concerns for Children and Youth

- Despite attention in the past, child abuse and neglect rates continued to increase
- Continued concerns for childhood obesity
- Notable increase in youth living in poverty and homelessness
- Greene County had unacceptably high rate of child abuse and neglect in the state
- Significant impact of child abuse and neglect on personal and community well-being such as education, unemployment, homelessness, and health

Lack of Investment in Prevention Efforts

- Despite ominous early trends in community health, early childhood, education, natural environment, and public order and safety, funding for prevention efforts remained scarce