

Introduction



A great opportunity lies before us as we present the inaugural *Community Focus: A Report for Springfield and Greene County*. We as a community will be taking a close look at ourselves. We will see many of our successes and positive attributes, but

we also will see many of our challenges. Through collaboration and mobilization of resources we can shape our community into one that serves all its citizens and continues to make Springfield a great place to live and work.

The idea for the “Community Focus” evolved over the past two years. It began with a Community Foundation of the Ozarks’ Needs Assessment Committee initiative. Representatives from Community Foundation of the Ozarks, United Way, Junior League of Springfield, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Southwest Missouri State University, Drury University, Springfield-Greene County Library District, Springfield/Greene County Health Department, Every Kid Counts, and the News-Leader discussed ways of communicating community needs in an ongoing and meaningful manner. Simultaneously, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2003 leadership trip to Lexington, Kentucky, learned of the Lexington Livability Report, an effort to assess strengths and weaknesses in that community.

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the Needs Assessment Committee decided to join forces to produce our “Community Focus: A Report for Springfield and Greene County.” In addition, the Springfield-Greene County Library District has produced www.SpringfieldCommunityFocus.org, a website dedicated to needs-based data collection. It is my hope that both the report and the website will provide researchers, grantseekers, grantmakers, and community leaders with valuable information now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Maura Taylor, Chair
Community Focus Steering Committee



The *Community Focus: A Report for Springfield and Greene County* is an attempt to view our community through a variety of lenses and assess its overall strengths and weaknesses. Many people worked hard to prepare a report that is thorough and

meaningful. Numerous organizations collaborated on this project, and every effort has been made to include a wide variety of sources and information.

Still, this is an imperfect process. “Red Flags” and “Blue Ribbons” are editorial by nature, and some may rightfully question the conclusions that have been drawn. Also, the categories themselves are subjective, and the perspectives through which we see our community will require future revision.

Pointing out the limitations of this report is not done to denigrate the effort, but it does reveal that this is a work in progress. And that ongoing reflection is the essence of the *Community Focus*—the understanding that a community willing to honestly examine itself is a community committed to a better future.

Finally, I want to thank the people who contributed to this report: Jennifer McClure, Todd Richardson, Dr. Andrew Baird, Dr. Julie Leeth, Dr. Lloyd Young, Brian Fogle, Annie Busch, John Rush, Jim Anderson, Brad Bodenhausen, Kathy Steinberg, Sandy Howard, Jeanne Duffey, and Maura Taylor. Numerous groups allowed us to use their information and data. In addition, the Steering Committee met several times to determine community strengths and weaknesses. Without the efforts of these people, this project would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

Gary Funk, President
Community Foundation of the Ozarks