

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

“One of the unique characteristics of the Springfield community is its ability to coordinate efforts on a daily basis, but especially during a crisis. There was no better example of this than during the 2007 ice storm when neighbors helped neighbors under crisis circumstances. It’s the difference between a good community and a great community.”

Tom Carlson, Springfield Mayor

INVOLVED COMMUNITY. Springfield and Greene County volunteers give generously of their time, talents, and resources, like citizens in many communities. What sets our residents apart are two unusual qualities. First, there is a history of strong collaboration among agencies and individuals who consistently put aside ego to work together for the benefit of all. Such collaboration is a signature strength of Springfield and Greene County.

Second, the community responds quickly to demonstrated needs. This was particularly apparent during the January 2007 ice storm that left many without power for up to two weeks. Community volunteers came out in great numbers to trim trees, clear yards and care for their neighbors, particularly the elderly.

Another example springs from the 2005 Community Focus Report that identified children in poverty and lack of access to health care as the community’s most pressing problems. This prompted the report’s five funding agencies to pledge to use the report’s “red flags” to guide their decision making.

From this pledge came the Grantmakers’ Challenge for Children, a five-year effort to address these problems. Fueled by 25 grantmakers and philanthropists, the Challenge will bring to bear more than \$9 million in local resources for local preventative solutions to targeted children’s issues.

The Junior League of Springfield established Isabel’s House, a crisis nursery for children when there is trouble at home. Families in crisis receive respite, support and training through Isabel’s House. Partners in the project are Burrell Behavioral Health, City of Springfield, CoxHealth, St. John’s Health System, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Missouri State University, Springfield-

Greene County Park Board and United Way of the Ozarks. The Junior League’s goal is to positively impact the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the community.

The Ozarks Regional YMCA responded with a tooth-brushing campaign in Prime Time, its before and after school childcare program, in 13 schools primarily located in low-income neighborhoods.

Across Springfield, local churches organized their members to become tutors in public schools, answering the call for caring adults to mentor and guide children.

CONCERNS FOR FUTURE. Citizen participation merits a blue ribbon for the community, but the future holds challenges as the nature of volunteerism changes.

Many volunteers need specialized training as well as education about legal issues such as mandated reporting laws. Background checks or drug testing are often required. As volunteer roles become more professionalized, agency costs increase.

In addition, minority populations are increasing. This means that volunteer recruitment and training must become more culturally sensitive to correspond with volunteer traditions in minority communities.

Regardless of these challenges, past history suggests that citizen involvement will continue to provide the important social capital that makes the Springfield region successful.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE. There are 872 registered charitable organizations in Greene County. Below is a sampling:

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS				
Organization	Volunteers 2004	2006	Volunteer Hours 2004	2006
St. John’s Hospital	654	682	138,477	147,695*
CoxHealth	1,263	1,981	129,029	141,250
United Way of the Ozarks	2,172	2,254	20,440	22,110
United Way’s Day of Caring	1,400	1,500	8,400	9,000
United Way’s Week of Caring (2007 ice storm response)	—	728	—	4,285
Community Partnership of the Ozarks	—	7,064	—	26,590
Junior League of Springfield**	160	190	11,000	19,000

* (7/05–6/06) ** Active members

In addition to charitable organizations, Greene County is fortunate to have service organizations whose members give their time in a variety of ways. Below is a sampling:

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS		
Organization	Estimated Volunteer Hours 2005	2006
Springfield/Greene County Library	4,632	5,115
Springfield Conservation Nature Center	15,441	16,385
Wonders of Wildlife	14,889	17,921
Master Gardeners	10,500	15,951
League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri	1,500	1,645
Council of Churches of the Ozarks	262,820	247,740

Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Acting on the red flags identified in the previous Community Focus report, CFO allocated \$1 million for a five-year grant. In 2006, the grant was awarded to Missouri State University’s collaborative elementary school-based ECHO (Enhancing Children’s Healthy Opportunities) Project. The ECHO Project brought to two Springfield schools the partnership of Springfield Public Schools, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and Burrell Behavioral Health. This project is a cornerstone of the Grantmakers’ Challenge for Children.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE OZARKS	
Assets 2003.....	\$52.2 million
Assets 2004	\$71.2 million
Assets 2005.....	\$87.9 million
Assets 2007.....	\$137 million (as of 6/30/07)

Junior League of Springfield, 2006–07.

- 556 volunteers; 192 active volunteers.
- 19,000 volunteer hours
- Created Isabel’s House, a crisis nursery, as a direct result of the 2005 Community Focus Report. Junior League and its partners contributed 10,000 hours to plan and develop Isabel’s House. (These hours are in addition to numbers provided above.)
- More than \$2 million raised to address child abuse and neglect.

School Volunteers. In Springfield’s public schools, 3,070 registered volunteers from the community gave 21,950 hours to students and schools, an average of seven hours per volunteer. Business and faith community involvement represents a significant portion of this support.

Students at Higher Education Institutions.

- Drury University:1,725 volunteer hours
- Evangel University:.....10,780 hours
- Missouri State University:.....114,468 hours
- Ozarks Technical Community College: ...Hours not available, but service learning students engage in community volunteer work related to coursework.

Faith Community. The Council of Churches of the Ozarks is a faith-based organization that has provided human services for nearly 40 years. It serves more than 100,000 people in almost half of Missouri’s 114 counties each year. In 2006, children made up 68% of those served.

Nine operating agencies collaborate with 80 ministry partners, as well as with agencies and organizations and thousands of volunteers and donors.

Examples of Council services include emergency food and clothing, adult day care, child care resources, handyman services, advocacy for nursing home residents, equine therapy for the disabled and senior citizens services.

The “Churches of Springfield” organization selects one middle school each year for a one-day megaproject addressing maintenance needs. The recipient for 2007 was Study Middle School.

Additionally, more than 400 church-based volunteers from this organization cleared more than 300 yards in Springfield after the January 2007 ice storm. In addition, more than 400 individuals have been trained as one-on-one reading tutors for public school students in grades K to 3.

