

# BLUE RIBBONS AND RED FLAGS

In this third edition of *Community Focus: A Report for Springfield and Greene County*, we have researched hundreds of indicators of our community's health and livability. As we discovered in the process, we shine in many areas and have far to go in others.


On this page, we've put the spotlight on selected conditions that merit honor or immediate attention. Some of these first


appeared in the 2004 and 2005 reports; others have made the list for the first time. Blue Ribbons show the successes and strengths of Springfield and Greene County. On the other hand, Red Flags point to community problems that need attention.

Our hope is that the Blue Ribbons cause us to celebrate while the Red Flags spark community discussion and a renewed commitment to improvement.


**BLUE RIBBONS.** We've found that we can accomplish more by putting aside turf issues and egos, looking instead for common ground. This level of collaboration is unusual for a community our size and contributes greatly to our forward progress. The 2007 report points to our strong economy, fueled by entrepreneurship, a strong health care industry and downtown development. The beauty of our surroundings, supported by the arts, schools and parks, create a quality of life to be envied.



 Collaboration among public and private entities and among organizations is making a stronger regional community.

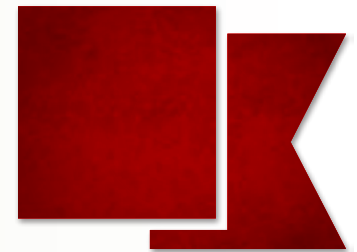
 The economy in Springfield and Greene County is strong.


- Steady job growth and low unemployment rates are fueled by both expanding and new businesses.
- Health care organizations like St. John's and CoxHealth continue their commitment to excellence, providing outstanding care and employment for people throughout the region.
- Higher education is driving workforce development.
- Center city, including Jordan Valley, is being renewed and revitalized.

 The quality of life in Springfield and Greene County is exceptional.


- Parks programs are nationally recognized.
- Proactive efforts are underway to preserve our natural environment.
- The arts community is unusually vibrant for a community our size.
- Public education achievements are significant.
- Transportation improvements ensure improved mobility and safety.

**RED FLAGS.** What diminishes the least in our community diminishes us all. We continue to be challenged by the issue of child abuse and neglect, with rates in Springfield and Greene County exceeding state numbers. A significant number of families need higher wages, proper health care and affordable housing to overcome the effects of poverty.




 The number of child abuse and neglect cases is intolerable.

- Greene County rates are higher than state averages.

 Too many families are living in poverty.

- Affordable medical, dental and mental health care is lacking, exacerbated by recent cuts in state funds.
- The region's average wage rate and income level lag behind peer cities.
- Adequate, affordable housing is outside the grasp of a significant number of residents.

 Despite recent support by voters, backing for essential services is not keeping pace with need.

- The burden of funding for public education has been increasingly shouldered by local districts.
- Crime is increasing while police officer recruitment is down and the jail is significantly overcrowded.