

It has been said that health is the absence of disease. Although that may be true in some cases, health is so much more. Health is reaching the optimal state of a person's potential both in physical ability and in mental and cognitive capacity. The impact of health on a community can either propel it to its full potential, play a role in stagnation, or weigh on the community by burdening its progress. As we look to build and rebuild our community, it is vital that we commit to placing health and well being as high priorities in our actions and endeavors.

BLUE RIBBONS

Health Care Infrastructure

A variety of health care resources abound in our community and offer health services to people both within and outside the Springfield-Greene County borders. As mentioned in past *Community Focus* reports, health care resources continue to be a pillar in our community. The city of Springfield:

- Boasts two health care providers, St. John's Health System and CoxHealth, which are consistently ranked among the "Top 100 Integrated Health Care Networks" in the country.
- Offers an ever-growing federally qualified health facility at Jordan Valley Community Health Center (JVCHC).
- Hosts Ozarks Community Hospital with a successful mission of serving the underinsured and the uninsured.
- Serves as home to The Kitchen Clinic serving patients based on low-income status.
- Offers a strong mental health provider in Burrell Behavioral Health with a commitment to helping people with mental health needs since 1977.
- Enjoys a unique partnership with the Forest Institute, which has a mission of offering education and training in behavioral sciences and human services.
- Serves as the location of the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners (MCFP), which is an administrative facility that provides medical, mental health, and dental services to male offenders.

In addition to health care services, the health care sector employs a large number of people. Currently, health care providers in Springfield employ more than 20,000 individuals and more than 1,000 physicians. According to the most recent reports from the Missouri Hospital Association, the Springfield health care industry creates more than \$50 million in economic impact to our community. When hospitals invest in capital equipment, physical infrastructure, and personnel, that significant economic impact ultimately promotes growth in the community.

The 2009 *Community Focus* report identified an ongoing shortage of health care professionals through 2020*. Allied health education and research programs continue to grow to meet that need. Most of the higher-level education facilities offer a wide range of allied health professional programs. Additionally, health care systems offer nursing programs that help meet the demand for nursing professionals.

Preventive services are more important than ever as we look to reduce the burden of chronic disease conditions on our community. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department Maternal and Child Health division has continued to improve and reach one of the most vulnerable populations through the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC). This program aims to safeguard children in lower-income homes from nutritional risk.

"The risk factors for the chronic diseases that cause the vast majority of disability and early death can be reduced by good nutrition, regular exercise, and not smoking. Our challenge is in re-engineering our community so that it is easy for all people to make the healthy choice, whether at home, school, work, or play."

Mary Ellison MA, MPH.
Women, Infants and Children Program Coordinator

The WIC program reaches more than 86 percent of the eligible population in the Springfield-Greene County area with health assessments, nutrition and breastfeeding education and support, food packages, and referrals as needed. The unique



WIC visits provide education and resources for young families.

partnership of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department's WIC office and JVCHC has offered an opportunity for clients to establish a one-stop shop for their medical needs, increasing convenience and access to quality health care and preventive services.

The Healthy Start program involves collaboration with Jordan Valley Community Health Center, St. John's Health System, WIC, and the Doula Foundation and provides education and support to qualifying women and children from the beginning of pregnancy through delivery. St. John's Health System has seen a decrease in morbidity rates and associated neonatal intensive care admissions ranging from 2-5 percent after the first year of implementation.

Health organizations have begun to recognize the need for additional prevention programs. A partnership was formed in early 2011 among the Ozarks Regional YMCA, Jordan Valley Community Health Center, and the Springfield-Greene County Health Department when the Missouri Foundation for Health and the Social Innovation awarded funds to develop and implement prevention programming within schools and worksites throughout the community.

Smokefree Air Act of 2011

In April 2011, the voters of Springfield passed the Smokefree Air Act of 2011, a comprehensive smokefree policy eliminating smoking from indoor workplaces and public places. Passing this ordinance will make a significant positive impact on public health in this community. Smoking and secondhand smoke have been identified as leading causes of preventable death and disease and are associated with a host of illnesses including cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Greene

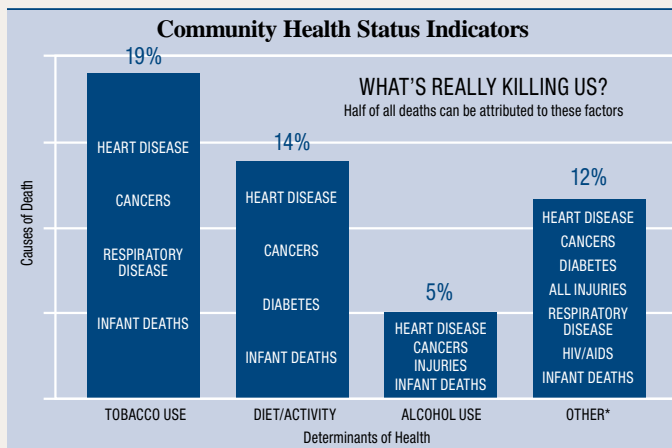
County has an adult smoking rate of 25.3 percent, which is significantly higher than the national average of 21 percent. Implementation of smokefree ordinances reduces exposure to secondhand smoke, has shown reductions in heart-attack admission rates to emergency rooms, and is a successful means of reducing the adult smoking rate. Research has shown that such policies have been associated with 3-6 percent reduction in smoking rates.

RED FLAGS

Communicable Diseases

Communicable diseases continue to be an area of concern since the 2004 *Community Focus* report. Vaccine-preventable diseases are of particular concern in recent years. Pertussis (whooping cough) rates rose in Greene County in 2010. This is particularly disturbing because it is a preventable illness. Pertussis and other vaccine preventable illnesses are on the rise throughout the rest of the country. While vaccination rates are relatively stable for Greene County, we need to continue to encourage parents and the community to vaccinate their children.

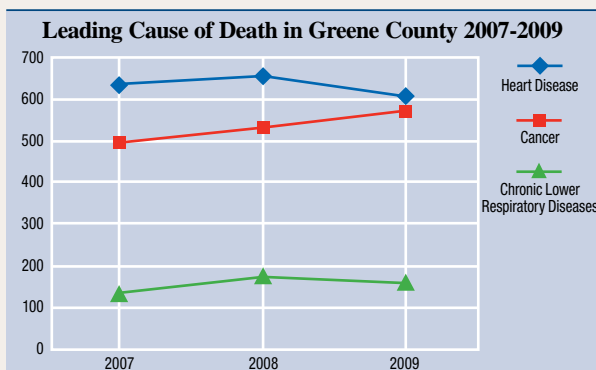
Chronic Disease Risk Factors



Source: *Journal of American Medical Association, 1993*
(Despite changes in percentages, determinants of health and causes of preventable deaths have not changed since 1993)

Chronic disease is complicated by the multiple factors that affect behaviors, knowledge, and motivation towards health. Tobacco and obesity are two of the most pressing risk factors causing preventable illness and death in our community.

Smoking causes illness and financial burden on our community. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than \$2 million in health-care costs are directly related to smoking in Missouri. This equates to \$586 of state and federal taxes per household used to pay for smoking-related government expenditures. In addition to the financial burden, smoking contributes to heart disease, cancer, and respiratory illness, the leading causes of adult deaths in Greene County.



Source: *State of Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA), 2007-2009*

Missouri is one of nine states with the highest percentage of overweight and obese adults. As of 2007, more than 29 percent of Greene County adults (ages 20 and above) are obese. Obesity increases the risk for heart disease, which is the number one killer of adult residents in Greene County.

Prevalence of Overweight and Obese Adults in Missouri and Greene County

Year	Missouri		Greene County	
	2003	2007	2003	2007
Overweight adults	35.9%	35.7%	33.4%	39.2%
Obese adults	24.9%	29.1%	20.2%	28.6%

Source: *State of Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA), 2003-2007*

The tragedy of deaths associated with chronic disease is that many of them are preventable. Prevention-based health care is vital to reversing these trends and saving lives in our community.

All these risk factors and disease-causing behaviors have not escaped our children. Unfortunately, childhood obesity* continues to increase, as stated in the 2009 *Community Focus* report. Childhood obesity has a greater impact on children from low-income families who often face barriers such as access to facilities or environments that promote physical activity and the inability to pay for the higher cost of fresh or nutritious foods.

Impact on Aging Population*

Advances in public health and medical care have improved and extended the lives of adults in our country. As life expectancy increases and the baby boomer population ages, the older adult population will experience unprecedented growth. According to most recent Census data, adults over the age of 65 represent nearly 15 percent of the Springfield population. Considering that almost 80 percent of older adults have one chronic condition and 50 percent have at least two conditions, chronic disease is a major health factor confronting the community.

Access to Health Care

The Health Commission formed in July 2009 as a community-based collaborative to coordinate the efforts of business, community, health care, and governmental leaders to address and improve the health of the community. A special focus of these efforts has been devoted to support cooperative processes that address access to care and improve health outcomes for the underserved population. The Health Commission took an in-depth look at some of the contributing factors to health outcomes and access in our community. According to the Ozarks Regional Social Capital Survey, the percentage of people that are covered by health insurance in the Springfield-Greene County area is nearly 87 percent, which is just slightly higher than the national average of nearly 85 percent. The percentage indicates that there are a number of people who are uninsured or underinsured. This problem is a source of great concern and discussion, but is clearly tied to a number of confounding factors. The Health Commission reported that one of the contributing factors to the lack of access to health insurance is associated with lower socio-economic status. This association limits a person's ability to pay for his/her medical care, reduces the ability to pay for items associated with a healthy lifestyle, and reduces access to transportation to necessary health care services.

Primary care access was discussed in the Health Commission report as well. The Health Commission suggested that there is a shortage of primary-care health services in the range of 28 to 100 primary-care providers. This factor is affected by the finding that nearly 60 percent of the available primary care medical office appointments in Greene County are used by residents outside of Greene County. Further investigation into these findings could provide insight toward creating sustainable options to address access to primary-care services, which is necessary to support the community's long-term health.

* Indicates Emerging Issue in 2009 *Community Focus* Report