



## Push on for new view of health

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Passion and teamwork are sure to be needed if a push is to grab hold of the way Garvin County and even Oklahoma residents view health in their lives.

Here the push is being led by the Garvin County Health Coalition.

The group's members are specifically hoping to get more information out to area residents about the Certified Healthy process.

It's a process meant to make schools, local businesses and even towns just a little bit healthier.

Health educator Julie Selman of the Garvin County Health Department said the Certified Healthy push is really meant to help turn around some dismal health statistics for all of Oklahoma.

"Help us move the needle," Selman said about the poor health numbers.

"You also get recognition as being a place that goes above and beyond by having an environment that encourages good health," she said about some of the benefits of certification.

"If you're Certified Healthy, employees at a business or students at schools will be more productive, attentive.

"Please help us get the word out. Reach out to people. Let them know what you've heard here."

The certified Healthy program is an annual program designed to help provide more healthy options and possibly provide for some grant money to help with that effort.

Any grant monies to communities and schools that meet the Certified Healthy criteria comes from the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

These grants are intended to go for projects that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

"Community is probably the one I'm most passionate about; that and the schools," said Betsy White of the McClain County Youth and Family Center.

"It's a great thing to improve the health of our community, but it is also good to have a chance at some extra money," she said.

The only Certified Healthy town in Garvin County is Lindsay, which also has two of the schools in the county with the certification. Whitebead School is the other.

Lindsay also has the only Certified Healthy business in the county.

In Pauls Valley there are a few places with the certification, places like city hall and the health department building.

The key factors for schools is the health education provided, nutrition, physical activity and having a facility and grounds that are always tobacco free.

Individual businesses can also apply to be certified, while even churches and early childhood programs can seek the certification.

For a local restaurant the benefits can be bringing in more customers and more sales by way of offering healthy alternatives on the menu.

“It’s going to take a big push,” White said about a campaign to get more places certified as healthy.

“Help us create a healthy environment for our children.”

Jennifer Samford, local parks and recreation director, sees it as changing how residents here view health.

“I think the whole point is to change the way Oklahoma thinks,” Samford said, referring to health.

“The best way to do that is to start at this level with communities and schools.”

Selman and White both stress they can lead people through the certification process or they can go to [www.certifiedhealthok.com](http://www.certifiedhealthok.com) online to apply or get more information.