

Before the Central Oklahoma Turning Point began tackling metro-area health problems, communities across the state took action on their own. In fact, 41 of Oklahoma's 77 counties have established their own Turning Point initiatives since 1998.

"These communities have done an outstanding job in making things happen ... that have or will improve the health of their communities," said Larry Olmstead, state Health Department director of Oklahoma Turning Point.

Here's a map of the volunteer health initiatives in Oklahoma, highlighting five counties with noteworthy accomplishments:

HARPER COUNTY Turning Point Partnership

Following sales tax passage by 91 percent of voters, a new county health department opened in Laverne with a satellite office in Buffalo.

Contact: Lana Schaffer (580) 921-2029.

Successes to date:

- The partnership conducted a community health assessment and worked with the Osage County Partnership,
- A health survey was developed and distributed throughout the county. The partnership established affordable, independent living centers for elderly populations in Laverne and Buffalo.

TULSA COUNTY Turning Point

An original state Turning Point partnership, Tulsa County works with businesses, faith leaders and others in the community.

Contact: Melanie Christian or Gary Cox, (918) 582-9355, Beverly Williams at (405) 271-6127.

Successes to date:

- The partnership helped create a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week clinic to serve uninsured, underserved and Medicaid populations,
- Helped with Tour de Tulsa, an annual bicycle event in the Tulsa metro area. Developed the "Get Tulsa Trekkin" program to provide free walking kits and a nutrition campaign. Some 7,500 northeastern Oklahoma adults participated. Participants established a childhood obesity task force and anti-tobacco group and sponsored a "Blueprint for Change" workshop series aimed at addressing racial and economic disparities in health care.

In the works: A "Smoke Free Pregnancy" initiative is planned in Tulsa, along with National Cover the Uninsured Week in the spring.

CHEROKEE COUNTY Health Coalition

Cherokee County, selected by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation as one of the original 41 Turning Point programs nationally, has 60 active partners. It was started in 1998.

Contacts: Linda Axley, (918) 456-8826; Darla Thompson, (918) 825-4224; Carol Bush (918) 381-1961.

Successes to date:

- Tahlequah Public Schools eliminating unhealthy drinks and snacks from vending machines and enforcing a no-tobacco policy,
- Opening of a community health clinic in Hulbert,
- Implementation of the "Great Body Shop" a physical health curriculum in Cookson Hills and Cherokee Nation Head Start programs,
- Student-led anti-smoking programs in Tahlequah, Tenkiller and Keys middle schools,
- Some 1,000 car safety seats given away in partnership with the Cherokee Nation,
- Education-outreach program on the dangers of meth labs.

In the works: Opening later this year of the Northeastern Oklahoma Community Health Center, which will have a birthing center for indigent Cherokee County families.

JACKSON COUNTY Community Health Action Team

Contact: Brandie O'Connor, (580) 482-7308.

Successes to date: A

- An immunization surveillance program was started,
- The team worked with the Jackson County Health Department and Kiwanis to hold an immunization clinic every April,
- The team is working with the Altus Chamber of Commerce to build a walking track around the new children's park, Imagination Station,
- Held "Wild and Windy" walk in conjunction with Health Awareness Day,
- Turning Point sent out 9,000 community health surveys and developed a Community Health Improvement Plan,
- Altus City Council passed a local seat belt ordinance, and Altus Public Schools approved a 24-7 tobacco-free policy,
- The team established a committee to review research-based curricula on adolescent sexuality,
- The team conducted Health Awareness Day, offering free health screenings to all participants,
- The county has a Prescription Drug Assistance program.

In the works: Team meeting with city to discuss closing the road around the reservoir. It would become a place where residents could walk, ride bikes and use roller blades.

PUSHMATAHA COUNTY Turning Point Partnership

Since the late 1990s, the partnership has addressed risky behaviors including teen-age pregnancy after a Youth Risk Behavior Survey was conducted in all county schools.

Contact: Arlinda Copeland, (580) 298-6624.

Successes to date:

- The partnership has a community-based, substance-abuse prevention program,
- The team implemented after-school recreation programs in Clayton and Rattan schools and applied for a parks and recreation grant to develop Antlers' trail system,
- Turning Point developed three school teams of SWAT Students Working Against Tobacco.