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By Stacy Sanborn

## Identifying strengths and weaknesses

A Visioning meeting was held last Monday at the Northwest Tech Center to discuss what elements are most important to include in a vision for the health improvement of Woods County.

Lana Shaffer, MPH (Master of Public Health), hosted the meeting and asked members of the community what issues good and bad were unique to this area.

Shaffer is a Turning Point Field Consultant and is part of the Woods County Coalition. The WCC is made up of local individuals, agencies, organizations, and businesses that focus on empowering the community to promote healthy lifestyles. Their mission is to promote safe and healthy lifestyles among youth and families in Woods County and prevent substance abuse and other high-risk behavior through increased public awareness, education, program development, policy change and community collaboration.

The Coalition is currently undergoing a planning and assessment process called MAPP Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships. MAPP's purpose is to create a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This process will guide the community in identifying priority health issues and taking action to address them. Several meetings are planned to allow any and all interested persons and agencies to join in the effort.

The first meeting was comprised of an eclectic group of citizens, including but not limited to bankers, superintendents, law enforcement, and medical professionals. The group was asked questions to develop a shared community vision to form the foundation for building a healthy future.

The WCC wrote down the answers to gain an understanding of community assets, issues, concerns, and perceptions about quality of life in our area.

Some of the questions and answers were:

- What are 2-3 most important characteristics of a healthy community?  
Answers included: Sustained growth, tobacco free, engaged youth, walking trails, coordinated services, vibrancy, parental involvement, access to a farmer's market, crime free.
- What are some specific examples of people and groups coming together to improve health?  
Listed were: Woods County Coalition, Friends of Play, Tobacco Free, Alva ALIVE, Methodist Church (health and wellness center), Dr. Kinzie, Bank It.
- What are our community's strongest assets?  
Participants answered: The University, Tech Center, Airport, Hospital, Wellness Center, Rec Center, Natural resources, Location, OSU Extension, Safer community, Local newspaper, Fire & Rescue, Law enforcement, Wealth, The Share Foundation/Trust, Wisdom Family Foundation, The Homestead, Health Department, Domestic Crisis, Northwest Family Services, Great Salt Plains Health Center.

- What are the struggles facing our community?  
Mentioned were: Local rights, housing (adequate and sufficient), lack of resources (job searching and placement), transportation, daycare, obstetric care, high cost of delivery of goods, lack of parental involvement (in schools), substance abuse, changing demographics, rise in crime.
- What issues are most critical?  
Housing needs was deemed the most critical issue.
- What conditions will be necessary to support these changes?  
Answers included: Money, people, norms, a central resource list.
- What are our next steps?  
The group listed: develop a list of resources, coalition participation, community involvement.

The Woods County Coalition wants to hear from anybody and everybody and asks for your participation. The Coalition meets the last Monday of the month (every month) at the Woods County Health Department.