

Oklahoma Turning Point *Initiative* Directors Report for 2007

Each year I try to feature a different aspect of Turning Point and the successes we have had in Oklahoma. I have written about our wonderful community partners, about our dedicated state partners, and about our initial supporters such as The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the national Turning Point program office. This year, I want to highlight the driving forces behind our Turning Point efforts – the Turning Point Field Consultants.

The Turning Point Field Consultants work with me on a daily basis and have a passion to improve the public's health in Oklahoma. They recognize that the only way to do this is by working hand-in-hand with our local community partnerships. You talk about driving forces – these ladies set the standard. In my 27 years of working in public health, I have worked with some outstanding professionals. But, I have never had a team that had so much talent and drive. Can you tell I am proud of them, and lucky to be on the same team with them?

Recently, I received a two-page letter from a community leader who wanted to let me know what the Turning Point Field Consultant had been doing in his community. I wish I could quote the whole letter in here, but room won't allow. The following comments sum up several other written and spoken comments I have received about all of the Field Consultants. I have made edits to avoid embarrassing her:

“We appreciate the work she has done in our community over the past years. We've accomplished several projects dealing with major community issues that would have been impossible without her help. Access to health care is one of our top priorities. Working with the partnership, she was the major reason all the various community groups, public schools, university, foundations, and others in town were brought together for the magnificent unified support to make application for a FQHC. She was also, subsequently, integral to the formation of the Community Health Center Board that will ultimately be responsible for running the clinic. *Doing that in a politically sensitive manner was not easy but she handled it deftly.*”

The community member continues to write about how the community has addressed childhood obesity and that she gave them ideas and worked with them to implement the ideas of the community. She also has helped the community generate thousand of dollars through grants for school programs and walking trails. The writer finishes up saying, “Each of the projects depended on a lot of people for their success. But again, she has been integral to each. She has impressed all of us with her poise and graciousness in dealing with all the various groups. For someone her age, it has been remarkable. She is to be commended and so are all of you for supporting the vision of what can be accomplished when communities come together. Ordinary people working together can and do accomplish extraordinary things.”

I want to publicly thank Arlinda, Beverly, Brandie O., Brandi M., Lana, Tammy, and Tracy, for making my job so easy, fun, and rewarding. I will tell you, though, supervising them is sometimes like herding cats, but I love it, and that's what makes them so good!

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