

Oklahoma Turning Point *Initiative*
Directors Report for 2008

Oklahoma Turning Point

Vision:

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Mission:

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

A smart cowboy once told me, “If your ridin’ ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it’s still there.” Ridin’ ahead on new paths of improving the health of Oklahoma is what I have felt the Oklahoma Turning Point Initiative is about. Yet, it hasn’t turned out to be new paths at all. It’s what has worked for centuries in all cultures – local folks that have a passion for something, and coming together to make changes. This is Turning Point’s philosophy. Each year at this time I am asked to put together this report, so I look back to see what’s gone on for the last year (see if the herds still there).

Yes, the herd is still there, and it’s growing. The passion to improve the health of Oklahoma has spread way beyond the 64 Turning Point Partnerships across Oklahoma. “Healthy Communities,” the vision established by Neil Hann, Valerie Williams, and a host of others who developed the plan to Build Healthy Communities through Partnerships, is truly getting closer to reality. Our amazing community partnerships are responsible for the many changes we are seeing today. True to Turning Point’s core values, these partnerships don’t care how a community health improvement initiative gets done, or who gets the credit, just that it gets done. And it’s happening!!! You can see efforts all across Oklahoma where folks are working to improve the health of their communities. So, please take a look at the Community Reports!! You will see a host of successful stories.

I’d like to share a couple of my recent experiences. On November 15th the Choctaw County Coalition dedicated the Elephant Walk Walking Trail. The wind was howling and, the temperature was 38 degrees at 10:00 a.m. on a Saturday. When I arrived, coalition members were setting up the registration tables for the walk on the new trail, just trying to keep things from blowing away. They feared that not a single soul would show up. Guess what? 300 plus men, women, children, and two elephants came for the walk!!! Last spring, I visited the Fit Kids Coalition of Southwest Oklahoma. We spent the day visiting the projects they have started (see report). One visit was to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge where we learned about their efforts to get our young people out into nature. Many of our children never experienced nature. Well, they made sure these kids did experience nature, and they got great exercise in the process. Also through the efforts of Fit Kids of SWOk, soon there will be a hiking/biking trail from Medicine Park through the refuge and ending up in Cache – an amazing accomplishment! It shows just what can happen when a group of dedicated people get together to make a difference.

A healthier herd is behind us getting larger and moving faster. Lets keep moving ahead!!

Larry Olmstead, Director
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