

Notes from Larry Olmstead, Director

Oklahoma Turning Point Initiative

The Oklahoma Turning Point Initiative is a philosophy of the way public health is delivered in Oklahoma. It is not a program. This statement has been made several times since the beginning of the initiative in 1998. This philosophy is putting health improvement into action in Oklahoma. Just take a look at the accomplishments that have been made in the communities across the state. We now have close to 50 partnerships at various levels of maturity and activity. One of the main things that is happening is the desire of a new group of partners that have never thought about the importance of good health in the state that are now working very hard to improve their communities' health, which improves the health of the state. The state of our health didn't get this way over night, and it's going to take a while to get the state of health that we desire. We have made improvements in the rankings, but we still have a long way to go. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the accomplishments of the communities, and say thank you for a job well done.

Turning Point lost some much-needed financial support from a couple of partners that came forward in the beginning of the initiative. Although they could not continue with financial support due to reduction in their budgets, they are still very strong and invaluable partners. Fortunately, Turning Point has made such an impact that when financial support was needed the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Community Health Service stepped in to pick up the slack. Their contribution made it possible to hire one additional Turning Point Field Consultant to work at the local level with partnerships. This gives us six field consultants, which is half way to the needed goal of 12 to provide the needed technical assistance to partnerships across the state.

The economy is related to good health! The number of nominations received by the Certified Health Business program was up to over 100 compared to 23 last year. This indicates an increase interest from the business community to develop a healthy work force. Business will improve in Oklahoma with a healthy work force. Thanks to those businesses that have implemented programs to improve their health, and we encourage other businesses to follow suit.

The Walk This Weigh Oklahoma campaign is increasing to 15 more communities in 2005! McDonald's restaurants are partnering again with this expansion. Oklahomans who have never walked for their health before are not out walking. This is great!

Lastly, thanks to all of our partners across the state that have worked so hard to improve the health of our state. I am amazed every day by the commitment of our Turning Point partners and the innovative work that you do. It is an honor to work with you, and I am more confident today than ever that our efforts are making a difference. *Together we will create a state of health!*