

on the

# Road

to a healthier Douglas County



2015 Community Health Plan progress report

# Community Health Plan progress report

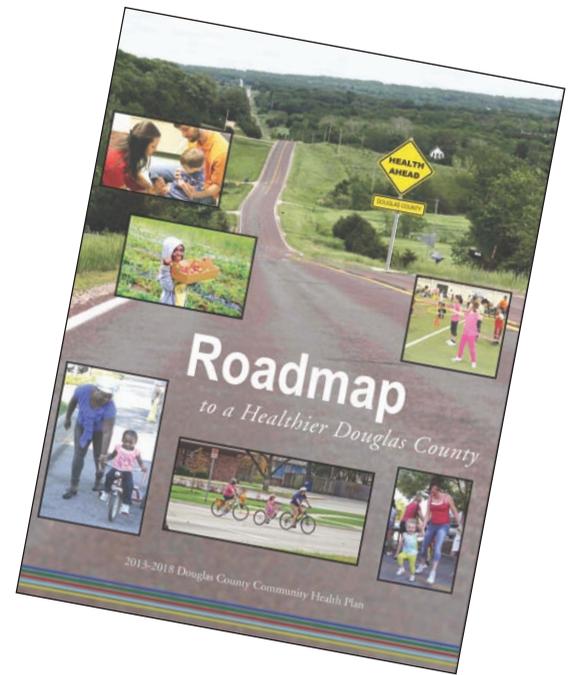
Recognizing that where we live, work, play and learn has the greatest influence on our health, Douglas County, Baldwin City, Eudora, Lecompton and Lawrence adopted the five-year community health plan *Roadmap to a Healthier Douglas County* in 2013.

Our plan focuses on five areas:

- Access to healthy food
- Access to health services
- Mental health
- Physical Activity
- Poverty and lack of jobs

These challenges are not easy to solve, but we have seen that your committed efforts are making a difference. The stories that follow are representative of our efforts and remind us of the importance of working collectively.

We invite you to learn more about the *Roadmap to a Healthier Douglas County* plan by visiting [www.healthydouglascounty.org](http://www.healthydouglascounty.org).



**Jim Flory**, Chair  
Douglas County Commission

**John Fiore**, Mayor  
City of Eudora

**Marilyn Pearce**, Mayor  
City of Baldwin City

**Mike Amyx**, Mayor  
City of Lawrence

**Sandra Jacquot**, Mayor  
City of Lecompton



**On the front and back cover:** Community members participate in the grand opening celebration of the new Outside for a Better Inside trail, located just north of the Community Health Facility, 200 Maine St.

Photos by Jeff Burkhead/Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center

## Community Progress

### HIGHLIGHTS

Forty-eight policy, system and environmental changes have been implemented, contributing to progress towards the goals in "Roadmap to a Healthier Douglas County."



December 2011-April 2012

Health Department staff and KU researchers gather information from 1,500 residents. The data collection efforts culminate in the release of the Douglas County Community Health Assessment Report.

June 2012-April 2013



Community leaders identified five priority areas based on the Community Health Assessment, and five work groups were brought together to draft a community health plan.

*Access to healthy foods*

# Market Match helps farmers, families in need

Shoppers and farmers agreed: the first season of the “Market Match” program was a success.

Market Match was designed to make healthy foods at farmers’ markets more accessible and affordable to residents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly called food stamps. The program matches up to \$25 per week in benefits, so a family spending \$25 in SNAP benefits would receive \$50 in tokens to use at the program’s pilot sites, the Lawrence Farmers’ Market and Cottin’s Hardware Farmers Market. The Douglas County Food Policy Council and LiveWell Lawrence developed the program.

Linda Cottin, owner of Cottin’s Hardware and organizer of its farmers’ market, described the program as a win-win-win. It generates more sales for local farmers, keeps dollars in the community, and “puts good food in good people’s tummies.”

Cottin can’t help but smile when thinking about a mother who visited the market with her kids last summer. “She got the tokens and divided them up among the kids. They were just ecstatic.



Photo by Karrey Britt/Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

**Lawrence Farmers’ Market Manager Sally Sanko, left, collects Market Match tokens from Jenny Welch Buller, of Buller Family Farms, during a market in October. The tokens were used by food stamp recipients to buy food. Through the Market Match program, they doubled their benefits up to \$25 per week.**

One little girl was really excited because she was going to buy carrots. It was just wonderful to see,” she said.

Cottin recalled another day when a shopper came to the market not knowing about the Market Match program. When the woman got double what she expected, she was excited and said, “It was like Christmas.”

Vendors shared her excitement. Cottin said, “Farmers, they too, struggle to make ends meet. The increased sales in produce definitely helped them have a better year.” She estimated her market had double the SNAP sales it typically does.

The Market Match program began in June 2014 and continued through the growing season, ending in late Novem-

ber. During that time, 188 participants spent an average of about \$18 per shopping trip. Total SNAP dollars matched was \$8,800, and the estimated total economic impact in the county was \$32,000. The City of Lawrence, Douglas County and LiveWell Lawrence provided the funding to match the dollars.

One Market Match user said the program created an incentive to shop at the farmers’ market and to learn about the foods her family eats. She believes local foods taste better and that her family is eating healthier. She’s able to stock up, freeze items and even try new recipes.

Cottin said, “I’m very proud to be part of a community that is willing to make an investment of time and money into the health of its members.”

The 2013-2018 community health plan “Roadmap to a Healthier Douglas County” was released. The plan set goals around the five priority areas and strategies to achieve the goals.



April 2013

May 2013



Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center began offering Youth Mental Health First Aid, a new course focusing on mental health disorders in youth, ages 13-18.

Douglas County and the four municipalities in the county adopt “Roadmap to a Healthier Douglas County” as a guiding document.

May-December 2013

## Access to health care

# Partnership enables uninsured to get needed therapy

*"I'm going to have you take your arm straight forward to strengthen that shoulder," Cassidy Carter, a physical therapist, said to her patient Richard Holleran.*

Holleran, 63, fractured the middle finger on his right hand nine months earlier, which caused persistent pain, sensitivity and enlargement. He was uninsured and couldn't afford to pay for medical care, so he was grateful Health Care Access clinic, 330 Maine Street, was available to help him with a splint and medications for the pain. But over the course of several months he lost mobility in his finger and hand, and his arm also became weak because he wasn't using it much.

Thanks to a new partnership between Health Care Access and the Visiting Nurses Association, Holleran has been able to get the physical therapy he needs but can't afford.

In just three weeks and two physical therapy sessions, Holleran's finger and hand movement had improved significantly.

"I'm very grateful for the therapy. Without it, I don't think I would have improved," said Holleran, who had just been laid off from a warehousing job.

Health Care Access clinic serves uninsured Douglas County residents. It provides primary care, a wellness program, mental health counseling and a prescription assistance program.

Interim Director Kim Polson said it just made sense to add physical and occupational therapy. "What we found was that lots of our patients were dealing with pain management. They would try to medicate to deal with it, and then they would get to a point where they would be in so much pain they would go to the hospital emergency room because it had become unbear-

able," she said. During the past year, 87 patients have used the therapy program, and there have been 274 appointments. It helps patients get to a point where they are completely rehabilitated or have developed successful strategies to manage the pain.

Polson said by reducing the root cause, the program has decreased patient visits to Lawrence Memorial Hospital's



Photo by Karrey Britt/Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

**Cassidy Carter**, a physical therapist for Visiting Nurses Association, helps **Richard Holleran**, a patient at Health Care Access, with an exercise to strengthen his arm.

emergency room. They've seen unneeded use of the ER go down 11 percent by this group of patients.

United Way of Douglas County has funded this collaborative effort.

"When you give the gift of feeling better, it's gratifying," Polson said. "We want to help people get to a healthier place."

Health Care Access and Visiting Nurses Association launch a new program to offer uninsured residents access to physical and occupational therapy.



December 2013

January 2014

The Economic Development Council of Lawrence and Douglas County purchased a 77,000-square-foot building to house the Dwayne Peaslee Technical Training Center.

The Douglas County food bank, Just Food, used one-time city funding to purchase a refrigerated truck. The truck allowed substantial expansion of its capacity to work with restaurants, grocers and other partners.



March 2014

*Mental health*

# Child advocate recommends First Aid course focusing on youth

For 16 years, Carolyn Johnson has worked for Douglas County CASA, a nonprofit that advocates for children who have been removed from their homes and placed under court protection. These children are victims of neglect, violence, psychological torment, sexual abuse or abandonment. It takes an emotional toll on these children. “Almost all of the kids we work with have mental health diagnoses,” Johnson said.

Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center began offering a new Youth Mental Health First Aid course in 2013 for people who work with youth, and Johnson was among the first to sign up. One of the big takeaways, she said, was learning how to assess youth for the risk of suicide or self-harm. “My natural inclination was to avoid the topic at all costs because it’s so sensitive.” However, in class, she learned that it’s important to directly ask about suicidal thoughts: “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

She also won’t forget the class exercise where someone whispered in her ear while she was trying to have a conversation. The exercise portrays what it can be like for someone who experiences auditory hallucinations, a common symptom of schizophrenia. “We have clients who hear voices,” Johnson said and then paused. Tears began to form in her eyes. “But I had never experienced what that might look like to somebody. You can’t even think straight. That was a very powerful exercise.”



Photo by Jeff Burkhead/Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center

**Carolyn Johnson**, of Douglas County CASA, participates in an exercise during a Youth Mental Health First Aid course offered by Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center. Johnson is a voice inside the head of another participant, who is experiencing auditory hallucinations.

So far, 122 people have taken Bert Nash’s Youth Mental Health First Aid course, which focuses on mental health disorders among youth, ages 13-18.

Chief Operating Officer Patricia Roach Smith said the class is for anyone — parents, teachers, faith leaders and neighbors. “A lot of times people think, ‘Oh kids, they are just going through a stage, but there are real mental health disorders that kids suffer from that can really impede their ability to do well in school, to get along with others — important things that are compromised because of their anxiety disorder or depression.’”

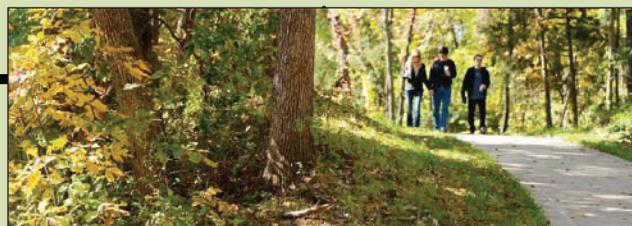
Roach Smith said mental health disorders are very common and treatable, and it’s important to treat mental health disorders early just like physical ones. She said about 40 percent of all mental health disorders occur in childhood. By the time adulthood occurs, 75 percent of all mental health disorders are manifested.

For a schedule of upcoming courses, visit [bertnash.org](http://bertnash.org).

April 2014

The Lawrence City Commission voted to expand the city’s Rental Registration Ordinance to all rental properties in Lawrence. The goal of the expanded program is to ensure safety of all rental housing.

The new half-mile Outside for a Better Inside trail opens near Maine and West Second streets. Six months later, the city opens the Sandra J. Shaw Community Health Park which connects to the trail.



May 2014



**Eudora resident Renee Mueting** walks along a new half-mile trail with her daughters Lillian, Liz, Lydia and Lianna. Liz and Lianna use the trail to walk to and from elementary school. The family also enjoys using the trail on weekends for walking and biking.

Photo by Karrey Britt/Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

## Physical activity

# New Eudora trail offers safe route for schoolchildren

Several months after completion of a new half-mile trail leading to Eudora Elementary School, fourth-grader Liz Mueting and her sister, Lianna, a first-grader, still use it nearly every day to walk to and from school.

“Yay,” Liz shouted along with three of her friends, when told they could walk the entire length of the trail after school. The girls chatted and laughed as they walked, skipped and ran along the path.

Liz and Lianna also use it on weekends to walk and bike with their parents, Renee and Doug, and sisters Lillian, 4, and Lydia, 20 months. Renee is appreciative that her children can walk to and from school safely and not encounter traffic. “I think being active

has a ripple effect. When you’re active, it’s good for the mind and body,” she said. “I think they’re happier overall. I think they’re more creative. They do better in school and their attention span is better.”

The elementary school uses the trail for activities like marathon club. Liz explained, “We do marathon club twice a week. Four laps is two miles.” Liz is one of 130 students who participate in the club. In the fall she completed a marathon, 26.2 miles, and earned a T-shirt. Before the trail opened in October 2014, the students ran in the grass, which was uneven and sometimes caused falls.

Eudora Elementary School Principal Amy DeLaRosa also credits the trail for

a new school district policy. Before the trail was built, Eudora students were not allowed to ride bicycles to school because there was not a safe way for most students to bike to school. “Streets here are narrow, and there are no sidewalks through much of the town,” she said. The rule changed once the trail opened. Now, DeLaRosa said, biking has become “cool” among older students. She estimated there are between 40 and 50 bicycles on the school’s bike rack on any given day.

The trail was a joint project of the City of Eudora and the Eudora School District and funded in part by a grant from Topeka-based Sunflower Foundation.

Market Match, a program matching food stamp benefits dollar-for-dollar up to \$25, is launched at two local farmers’ markets.



June 2014

July 2014

Lawrence Parks and Recreation becomes the first government agency to adopt nutrition standards for food and beverage vending and concessions.

The City of Lawrence completed its first “road diet” on a major city street, Ninth Street, between Mississippi Street and Emory Road, reducing four auto lanes to two lanes and a center turn lane, while adding bicycle lanes on each side of the street.



October 2014

# High school graduation rate rising among all students

Students smile and wave as Principal Cris Anderson walks down a hallway at Kennedy Elementary School. Some talk to her about how their day is going. She walks into a classroom and several students surround her and give her a hug.

“Every adult at Kennedy needs to be a caring adult to build a relationship with kids. We want kids to feel like this place welcomes them no matter who they are,” Anderson said during an interview in her office. That relationship, she believes, is the foundation for helping all children, regardless of race or income, be successful in school and ultimately lead a successful — and healthy — life.

Anderson, who has worked in Lawrence Public Schools for 25 years, said there are many children in the district who live in poverty. Some of these children deal with hunger, homes with no electricity or running water, domestic violence and parents who are in jail. At Kennedy, about 50 children receive backpacks of food to take home for the weekend. “I have kids who, when it gets cold, are relieved because their water and heat can’t be turned off,” she said, teary-eyed.

Anderson said her staff works with these students to help them overcome these challenges and to make sure they don’t fall behind in schoolwork. They monitor each student closely and collect information about how they are doing academically, socially and behaviorally. Her staff meets frequently to discuss ways they can best meet the needs of at-risk students. The school has started a “Communities in School” program, and a staff member provides case management for about 80 students and their families, connecting students and families to community resources and services they need.

That collaboration is working. At Kennedy, math proficiency levels have increased to 90 percent, up from 54 percent in 2011. Reading proficiency has risen to 83 percent.

The efforts at Kennedy are reflective of what’s happening across the school district to help students graduate from high school, a key step towards a lifetime of economic self-sufficiency. Lawrence Public Schools Superintendent Rick Doll said, “Poverty should not predict achievement. We know that kids from poorer families are just as smart, just as talented and just as gifted, but they often have challenges that some of



Photo by Karrey Britt/Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

**Kennedy Elementary School Principal Cris Anderson** reads stories titled “If I were trapped in a snow globe” written by students. She said Kennedy students have made significant improvement in their writing and reading skills.

our higher-income kids don’t have. Our job is to help those students meet those challenges and break that cycle.”

The graduation rate at Lawrence and Free State High Schools for low-income students was 82 percent in 2014, up from 54 percent in 2009. During that time overall student graduation rate also rose to 92 percent, up from 75 percent. “We are closing the gaps and getting closer to being able to say that poverty does not predict achievement. That’s our goal,” Doll said.

## October 2014



Sports Pavilion Lawrence opens its doors. The 181,000-square-foot facility provides a range of indoor and outdoor activities and programs. In the first three months of operation, 13,000 residents used the center.

A new half-mile trail was completed in Eudora.

The trail links Eudora Elementary School to several neighborhoods and is used extensively by students to walk to and from school and for programs like the school marathon club.



## October 2014

## *Community Health Plan steering committee members*

**Patricia Roach Smith**

Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center

**Chip Blaser**

Douglas County Community Foundation

**Jon Stewart**

Heartland Community Health Center

**Susan Johnson**

K-State Research and Extension, Douglas County

**Dan Partridge, Charlotte Marthaler**

Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

**Sheryle D'Amico, Janelle Martin**

Lawrence Memorial Hospital

**Erika Dvorske**

United Way of Douglas County

**Vicki Collie-Akers, Christina Holt**

Work Group for Community Health and Development,  
University of Kansas

Visit [healthydouglascounty.org](http://healthydouglascounty.org)



Report produced by the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department in collaboration with community partners