

Forum Focus

Mountain View, Missouri



Held Aug. 14 at the Mountain View Family Youth Center, the Missouri Foundation for Health's eighth public forum of the year attracted 27 attendees. Speakers represented 10 counties, including Reynolds, Greene, Howell, Carter, Shannon, Douglas, Texas, Oregon, Webster and Wright. The Mountain View Chamber of Commerce co-sponsored the event.

Representatives from the Douglas County Health Department and Friends of Reynolds County opened the forum, sharing information about grants in two of the foundation's major 2002 focus areas – cardiovascular disease and strengthening existing services.

According to Chris Bender, the Douglas County Health Department is attacking diabetes and cardiovascular disease through a two-pronged approach, educating children about nutrition and exercise and providing screenings for adults. Through its grant, the health department is expanding education to adults and the community, even enlisting area restaurants to educate people about healthy eating and provide healthy menu items. Bender said the health department was surprised when fast food restaurants started participating in the program. "We have

McDonald's, Subway and Taco Bell, along with other smaller restaurants."

Howell County Heart Health Coalition also received a grant to combat cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Using a three-level approach, the organization starts with education, walking trails, speakers and weight management before moving on to a second level of testing and final level of support services. The group also provides diabetes supplies and is initiating a day camp for juveniles with diabetes.

Friends of Reynolds County received a core grant that addresses one of Missouri's major barriers to care – lack of access. Cheri Barton described the organization's new teleradiology system, which allows it to send digital images to radiologists in their homes and get reports back within hours, a process that previously took up to 10 days.

Charlotte Lucas, Ozark Family Care, Alton, is especially concerned about children and how lack of access affects them not only with direct medical and dental care, but also in regard to child abuse and neglect. "We have a high rate of child abuse and infant

mortality, lack of education, lack of nutrition, lack of the ability to access any health care providers." Her organization would like to partner with Springfield's Parenting Life Skills Center to combat child abuse and neglect.

Sandra Zarins, with the center, then talked about its Better Beginnings program, explaining

"The need that I see in the area ... is that it is extremely rural and extremely isolated – people [often] don't even have telephones and definitely cannot access health care."

Charlotte Lucas, Ozark Family Care, Alton

that it provides classes, support groups and mediation to improve children's lives. In Alton, this program could assist Ozark Family Care in providing intervention services in children's homes.

Cindy Moore, Ozark Independent Living, West Plains, an organization that assists people with disabilities, pointed out the need for treatment services, particularly equipment and programs. She mentioned high rates of spinal cord injuries in adults, stating that many have suffered injuries in area lumber mills. Moore also is concerned

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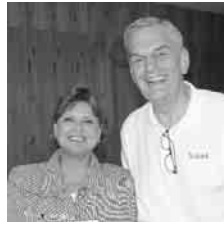
about brain injuries and developmental problems in children.

Access is one of many concerns for Wes Murray, Texas County Memorial Hospital. Although his hospital has a 24-hour, full-service emergency room, tertiary care is an hour away. He highlighted the need for women's health and pediatric specialists. Murray is further concerned about the long-term viability of rural hospitals, stating that his hospital provided about \$3.5 million in charity care last year. "Not only do we have to write

"We get physicians who can get their loans repaid or have VISA requirements, and while they are very qualified physicians, once those requirements are met, it is very hard to retain [them]."

Wes Murray, Texas County Memorial Hospital, Houston

off a significant amount, but we rely heavily on the government for assistance." When asked how the hospital deals with uninsured people, he said, "With a smile."



One attendee later commented on state budget restrictions: "The Medicare and Medicaid problem is big. They do not cover rural health care services the same way they do in urban areas."

Speakers additionally highlighted two specific populations needing additional assistance – the elderly and immigrants. Alice Sloan, West Plains Housing Authority, said the elderly sometimes have to wait for buses three or four hours to get to a doctor's appointment and also have problems completing the necessary forms and applications.

The foundation also learned about a growing Russian population in the Pomona area. One respondent said these new residents are unable to understand regulations for the construction of septic systems and wells, creating public health issues. The community is attempting to solve the language barrier.

The foundation will continue to deal with the concerns of Missourians through grantmaking and advocacy efforts. The foundation heard many new concerns in Mountain View and looks forward to working with the community to address these health issues and make an impact in southern Missouri.



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