

# OGLE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT FUNDING IN ACTION

## Ogle County Addresses Social Determinants of Health in Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties

Policy, System, and Environment Plans Created by a Tri-County Multisectoral Partnership

### Challenge

Levels of nutrition and physical activity are risk factors of becoming obese, yet these rural communities have very limited access to grocery stores and recreational fitness facilities when compared to the rates for Illinois and the United States. 25% percent of Ogle and Lee county residents and 26% percent of Whiteside county residents have obesity. Fresh produce and a place to be physically active are hard to come by throughout rural northwestern Illinois. Studies have been done by the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity that state an increase in nutritional foods and regular physical activity will reduce the chances of becoming obese as well as developing other chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

### Approach

Nutrition and physical activity can be perceived differently by everyone. In partnership with two local universities, a Rural Active Living Assessment was completed to identify the areas within the three counties that were in most need. A Nutritional Environment Measures Survey was conducted to evaluate the quality, availability, and price of items that were offered to the community. To engage with the community and gain knowledge on their perception of availability, a Google Forms survey was distributed via social media. Community hospitals, health departments, and educators worked together to create the surveys and collecting data from community members on their perception of nutrition and the availability of nutritious foods.

### Results

The Rural Active Living Assessment was conducted in 12 towns and it was discovered there is a need to increase the knowledge about what fitness opportunities are available to community members. Sidewalk walkability and adding clearly marked signs to parks were some of the recommendations that were made. The Nutritional Environment Measures Survey showed that there is a low availability in reduced sodium options in the stores in the catchment area. The Google Forms survey had 364 responses with 28.2% reporting they "Disagree" when asked if they have the ability to support the costs associated with purchasing nutritious foods. Because of these results, plans have been put in place to bring additional access to nutritious foods by increasing food pantries and mini food centers in the 3 counties.



### At A Glance

Residents in Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside counties have limited access to healthy foods due to the rural nature of these counties. Increasing access to healthier foods by planning to establish mini food centers and community gardens in addition to increasing nutrition education and the number of food pantries, community members will learn about how nutrition effects chronic disease rates and have healthy food options available to them. The Ogle County Health Department partnered with other local health departments, community hospitals, and educators to engage with the community and create the plan

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