

Working Together Towards a Healthier Uinta County

You might have seen in the newspaper last week that Uinta County is ranked 2nd and 3rd from the BOTTOM in the state in key health indicators (only beating out Fremont and Carbon County! --Which is not much to be proud of.)

Honestly, this low of a ranking came as a shock to me. At Public Health our vision is to work toward a healthy Uinta County, so the poor ranking has been something that we've worried over and taken some responsibility for.

But in thinking more about what health really is, and how it plays out in a broad community-wide sense, it becomes clear that much of what really affects our well-being occurs outside of our clinic, outside of the doctor's office or hospital. Factors such as education, jobs, income and the environment are critical in how healthy we are and how long we live. And in turn, the state of our health impacts pretty much every other aspect of life in our community.

So, with all of those other factors that play into our health, really, in one way or another, there are a lot of us whose efforts and work contribute to the health of our community. Which means that everybody is involved in Public Health! Public Health works toward the health of a whole community. And a key component of community-wide health is prevention. In the public health world, a way that is often used to explain the importance of prevention work is what they call the metaphor of the river. If children are spotted floating down the river through town, struggling for life, we will jump in and save them, of course, utilizing all kinds of resources to get them out. While saving them in that moment is important, it is imperative to go upstream and find out what is causing children to fall into the river. Going upstream is the key to working toward a healthier community.

Through the low ranking Uinta County received, we know that there are some dangerous "rivers," or health problems in our communities. Now it is up to us to get a better idea as to what those rivers are and to go upstream and determine ways to prevent people from falling in.

To get a good picture of what is going on here, and to figure the best ways to go upstream and prevent will take much more than one person or one agency. Because so many factors affect health, it takes a collaboration. To truly achieve a healthier level in our county, it will take the minds and efforts of everybody.

I believe that this poor ranking is an opportunity. It is a great time and a great chance to come together as a community and decide on and address those issues that will help us all become healthier and thus happier, and create a more vibrant place to live. And I think that improving health will positively affect a lot of other issues we face, too.

I really do think that this challenge can result in a beautiful thing. I'm convinced that improving our collective health will raise the quality of life in other areas, too.

And this kind of coming together in itself is extremely important and a sign of a healthy community.

So, come and be part of the coalition working for solutions and taking positive steps in our county!

We will be meeting Wednesday, March 15th at 12pm at the Bear Pond Building, where we will dialogue and hopefully, eventually, come to a place of planning and collaboration to create real change.