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Community Development, Health, and Wellness: The City of Bloomington Township's Wellness Lifestyle Series

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Community Development, Health, and Wellness: The City of Bloomington Township's Wellness

Lifestyle Series

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A Capstone Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The City of Bloomington Township, as part of its workfare program, offers to its recipients and the public the Wellness Lifestyle Series. It is a series of classes focused on health and wellness from a holistic perspective. The Series is a direct response to the 2019 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment that identified Access to Care, Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Abuse), and Healthy Eating/Active Living (Exercise, Nutrition, Obesity, and Food Access/Insecurity) as priority needs for the community. The Wellness Lifestyle Series is a creative solution for how community development can address the health and wellness of individuals and the community served by the Township.

Introduction

The City of Bloomington Township (hereafter referred to as the Township) is a local governmental unit in Bloomington, IL that is responsible for providing a general assistance program to help impoverished individuals with basic maintenance needs. These needs include shelter, utilities, food, and emergency relief. These needs are met by the Township by payments to landlords and utility providers as well as a benefit card to the local Kroger grocery store on Main St. in Bloomington. General assistance recipients are able to split up their monthly grant between housing expenses, utility payments, and the benefit card. General assistance recipients are required by state statute to participate in a workfare program (workfare is a type of social welfare program that requires those receiving benefits to perform some work or participate in job training). Workfare assignments vary from recipient to recipient. Recipients can be placed in various agencies throughout Bloomington, be assigned to the POTS (Promoting Others to Succeed) Program (the Township's plastic flowerpot and plant tray recycling program), or the

two classes offered by Township the Skills to Succeed course and the Wellness Lifestyle Series of classes (WLS). All three serve as workfare assignments. Recipients who are restricted in work due to a documented physical or mental health ailment are assigned to the WLS. The WLS allows for restricted Township recipients to complete their required workfare assignment.

As a member of the 2019 McLean County Community Health Council the Township responded to the 2019 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and the 2020-2022 McLean County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) by creating the Wellness Lifestyle Series of classes. The WLS provides participants with a knowledge base on healthy behaviors through the lens of holistic health. Participants are encouraged to apply these behaviors to their daily lives to see a positive change in their health outcomes. The WLS is taught by a local chiropractor, Dr. Josh Johnson, who volunteers his time each week to teach the class. His framework for the class is based around nutrition, exercise, mindset, reducing toxins, and spinal hygiene. These aspects of health inform every main topic covered in the WLS due to their impact on overall health outcomes. The WLS has shown, through personal testimony and measurable outcomes, to improve A1C (a marker for diabetes), blood pressure, and weight loss among participants. Before Covid-19, the WLS was open to the public and hosted at the Bloomington Public Library every Friday from 11:00am-12:00pm. The WLS will be open to the public once again when it is safe to do so.

The other aspect of the WLS is the Fitbit Program. The Fitbit Program was established when the Township and the Bloomington Public Library were awarded twenty Fitbit devices through a grant from the National Network of the Library of Medicine. As part of the WLS, the Fitbit Program is intended to increase physical activity among those who participate. Participation in the Fitbit Program is completely voluntary and separate from a recipient's

workfare assignment. Through a partnership with the Bloomington-Normal YMCA, participants in the Fitbit Program are given a free two-month membership. Participants are encouraged to make use of this membership and use the Fitbit device and app to track their health improvements during those months and beyond. The goals of both the WLS and the Fitbit Program are: 1) to broaden participants' knowledge of prevalent health issues in the community, 2) to provide participants with knowledge about health issues that personally affect them, and see this knowledge applied to their everyday life, 3) for participants to develop a positive mindset and confidence in healthy eating and active living, and 4) see an increase in healthy eating and active living among participants.

My role at the Township as the Workfare Development Coordinator was to develop the curriculum and materials for both the WLS and the Fitbit Program, which had not been standardized. Development of the WLS took up most of my time and developing the Fitbit Program was a part of that. I was involved with all aspects of these programs from the development to the administrative functions that took place during the class. Along with developing these programs, I had other roles as well. I coordinated the Skills to Succeed course, a job skills course, with the instructor and the Second Presbyterian Church in Bloomington, the host location. Another part of my work at the Township included working with the POTS Program. I coordinated the construction of five new collection bins and worked with the Workfare Coordinator and POTS program participants to collect and dismantle the old bins. I was also trained on front desk operations at the Township. This required answering phone calls, completing orientation questionnaires, handling confidential documents, and providing basic customer service related to the Township. Knowing front desk operations was vital to the Township continuing to smoothly function when coworkers were on vacation or out of the

office. My experience at the Township was both immersive and informative on how a local government unit operates. The experience of providing a service to others in a real-world setting has been vital to my education and professional growth.

Curriculum Development Process and Results

The reason the Township wanted me to further develop the Wellness Lifestyle Series was to create and standardize a curriculum and educational materials for the course in preparation for the inevitability that Dr. Johnson discontinued his volunteer work with the Township. As the instructor, Dr. Johnson has been an invaluable part of the WLS over the last two years. He has brought a vast knowledge base and unique perspective to help participants achieve better health outcomes. He has volunteered his time weekly to teach the class because he genuinely enjoys doing so and is service oriented. However, there will come a time when he no longer teaches the class. The Township wanted the WLS to be developed so the beneficial program can be continued after Dr. Johnson leaves as instructor and to keep a portion of Township recipients compliant with their workfare requirement. The other reason was to provide an outline of topics that would inform the direction of the WLS and be advertised through the partnership with the Bloomington Public Library.

Development of the WLS curriculum started as soon as I began my professional practice at the Township. When I began in June 2020 the class had been shut down since March due to Covid-19, so I was limited in how I could begin development. Deborah Skillrud, the Township Supervisor, came into my professional practice with ideas for what should be in the WLS. Meetings with her helped me to develop a plan to move forward on the WLS. What resulted from these meetings was the decision that a curriculum outline, curriculum manual, and

supporting educational presentations would be the best way to set the WLS up for success. After forming my work plan, I met with Dr. Johnson to get his input on how the WLS could be structured and what topics had been previously covered. From there I went about sorting through the material that was available to me.

There was an impressive and overwhelming amount of material available at the start of the curriculum development process. The class had been going on for at least a year and a half before I joined the Township, so there were about two file cabinet drawer's worth of material to refer to. The material came from previous topics covered as well as a newly created, but not implemented, program called Health-E. The Township developed Health-E to be the next iteration of the WLS and applied for a grant to fund the program. Unfortunately, the Township did not receive the grant for the Health-E program. Health-E and the material at my disposal served as the foundation for how I further developed the WLS. Development was difficult given the sheer amount of material at my disposal and the fact that classes were not meeting.

Once classes began meeting in August 2020, development of the WLS curriculum became easier. The classes served as valuable outlines for how I would structure each topic covered and provided time for short weekly meetings with Dr. Johnson. As the class moved from week to week, I would develop the outline and corresponding presentation for the weeks that had been previously covered. During the time the classes were meeting this was the basic development schedule I followed. This allowed for me to progress along with the class while doing my own research on the current topic and making the curriculum truly my own project. Development slowed down again from Thanksgiving 2020 through mid-January 2021 due to tighter state Covid-19 restrictions. Up to this point, the presentations developed were rough drafts that needed more research and editing. I was able to use the time when classes were not

meeting to edit and round out the rough edges of these presentations. This process continued through the end of my professional practice.

The topics developed for the WLS included “Introduction to Wellness Lifestyle”, “Heart Health”, “Cancer and the Immune System”, “Mindset”, “Nutrition”, and “Exercise”. These topics were fully developed and can be presented when needed. Topics that were selected for further development included “Toxins”, “Gut Health”, and “Oral Health”. The presentations for toxins and gut health are partially developed and need further development to be implemented. The toxins topic developed is more about how to reduce your exposure to environmental or household topics and alternatives to possibly toxic household items rather than the detox and cleanse strategies that can come from wellness professionals. The oral health topic will need to be developed without input from Dr. Johnson because he admittedly does not have the background to do so, or an outside speaker can be brought in for one or more class sessions to speak on the topic. I believe that the Township is in a good place to do either of those options.

I chose to use the framework supplied by Dr. Johnson to develop the health topics in the WLS with the exception of spinal hygiene. Throughout Dr. Johnson’s materials, spinal hygiene is given a great deal of coverage along with nutrition, exercise, mindset, and reducing toxins. Including spinal hygiene in his framework made sense given that he is a chiropractor. I removed spinal hygiene from my framework since the future instructor of the WLS is unknown. If a chiropractor is the next instructor, it can be assumed that spinal hygiene will be in the framework. If anyone else becomes the instructor, they most likely will not have the knowledge to teach about spinal hygiene in a safe and effective way. I felt that those risks did outweigh the benefits thus I decided to remove spinal hygiene from my WLS curriculum.

The Fitbit Program is the other aspect of the WLS that I was tasked with developing. The Fitbit Program is both its own program and a part of the overall WLS. It does not fit into the WLS curriculum, but the two programs are directly linked. Development of the Fitbit Program started at the beginning of my professional practice as well. Since the WLS was not meeting in person I began to further develop the partnership between the Township and the Bloomington-Normal YMCA. Deb and I met with YMCA leadership to establish how the free two-month membership would work and the process Fitbit Program participants would need to go through to redeem said membership. Treating the participants just the same as any other member was the process decided on. However, participants would need to go to the YMCA to register and start their membership. The membership would not start until they did so. This process was explained to participants when the class met again in person. The Fitbit Program hit many roadblocks while being developed due to the stop and start nature of multiple shutdowns during Covid-19, so the implementation of the program was essentially halted. This meant that some Fitbit Program participants had received the Fitbit device and were tracking data while others who wanted to be part of the program were waiting for the program to restart. As it stands the Fitbit Program consists of a class explaining how to use the Fitbit device, exercise examples for participants, and the framework for reporting data to the National Network of the Library of Medicine. I believe that the Township can further develop the Fitbit Program and will be able to implement the program when Covid-19 is less of a roadblock. This was the aspect of my professional practice impacted the most by Covid-19.

Challenges

The two main challenges I faced while developing the WLS curriculum were Covid-19 and balancing the viewpoints of chiropractic and conventional medicine. Covid-19 was a relevant issue for the entirety of my professional practice. It rarely impacted my work schedule since I was in the office for all but two weeks of my time at the Township. However, Covid-19 reduced the amount of time I had to work with the WLS. As previously mentioned, the WLS was not meeting when I started at the Township and was forced to shut down from Thanksgiving 2020 through mid-January 2021. This made starting on parts of the WLS project difficult because I could not see how the class operated week to week and could not work off of topics covered in class. Once the class began meeting in July 2020, I was able to better focus on my work and further develop the WLS. This was again an issue from late 2020 to early 2021 when the class shut down. As previously stated, I used the class meetings to format my work plan for the next week by developing material based off of the previous week's topic. The second shut down was easier to manage because I had a better grip of my responsibilities at the Township, had more material to work with, and felt more of a connection to the rest of the office than at the beginning of my professional practice. The second shut down greatly changed my approach to developing material. I went from developing material on a weekly basis to developing material that had not yet been covered in the WLS. This became a better approach to developing materials. I felt more engaged with my work because I was doing more research and learning about health topics for my own benefit. This method led to me having a greater than baseline knowledge of many health topics.

Doing my own research and learning more about health topics led to another challenge while developing WLS materials. Even before doing my own research, I realized that

chiropractic had its own viewpoints on health and wellness that did not always match up and occasionally challenged the viewpoints of conventional medicine. An example is adopting environment theory, sometimes referred to as terrain theory, environment theory argues that microbes become dangerous when the health of the host- its “terrain” or environment- deteriorates (Pontin 2018), over the well-established and accepted germ theory. Since Dr. Johnson had taught a successful class and had a useful framework for the class, the challenge became balancing the two viewpoints. To solve this issue, I decided to take the aspect of environment theory that stressed the importance of having a healthy body and immune system to combat the germs it came in contact with. I felt that this approach emphasized the healthy body aspect of environment theory while not disregarding the well-established and accepted theory that is germ theory. I have had to do this for other topics covered in the WLS as well. Since chiropractic does challenge conventional medicine at times, I had to rethink and even take out some of the material that I thought could be useful to know. Given that the WLS is open to the public, I felt the responsibility to be as neutral as possible when it came to the viewpoints expressed in my version of the WLS curriculum and presentations.

Community Development, Health, and Wellness

Community development has often been thought of as either a process or an outcome. Separating out these two aspects of community development into their own definitions does not fully capture the work of community development in an applied setting. When doing community development work there is always a process of bringing stakeholders together. This bringing together of stakeholders is intended to lead to the desired outcome. Phillips and Pittman (2009) argue that it is important to think of community development as both a process and an outcome.

Community development is the process of developing and enhancing the ability to act collectively that leads to the outcome of taking collective action where that action results in the improvement of a community in physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, economic, etc. terms (Phillips and Pittman 2009).

Community development relates to health and wellness because an improvement in all or even some of the aspects listed above would show an improvement in health and wellness too. Health and wellness are both key components of living a happy and healthy life, but it is important to know that they are not interchangeable. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (“Frequently asked questions,” n.d.). Wellness can be thought of as the approach to living where the goal is an optimal state of health for both the individual and the group (Radhakrishnan 2021). Wellness is important to health because you cannot directly choose your state of health, but you can actively choose your state of wellness by living a healthy and active life, thus influencing your health outcomes. The main difference between the two is that health is the goal while wellness is the means to achieve said goal. The main goal of the WLS is to help participants improve their health outcomes, their health status, by beginning to engage in healthy behaviors, their wellness status, on a daily basis. These behaviors can include cooking your own meals, incorporating fresh produce into meals, walking on a regular basis, doing an at-home workout, reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption, etc. There is a myriad of healthy behaviors that can be adopted to improve health outcomes.

When thinking about health and wellness one outcome that is important to think about is the built environment. The neighborhood and built environment of a community is a social determinant of health important to living a healthy life because that is where people spend most

of their time (“Neighborhood and Built Environment,” n.d.). If the environment in which they live is not healthy or one that is not designed for active living, then it is difficult for someone outside of that community to improve their wellness outside of what they can control. The built environment can allow for greater physical activity among a community’s residents if it is more walkable, has open and easy to access resources for physical activity, and has a quality public transit system (Goodell and Williams 2007). If a community is more walkable and/or has a quality public transit system, it is possible that residents of the community will have access to more options for physical activity and can improve their health outcomes by engaging in good wellness behaviors.

If we look at the physical activity resources in Bloomington-Normal we see that there are many options for the community to be active outside. The community has the Constitution Trail, an interconnected network of trails for biking, walking, running, etc. that goes through various parts of both Bloomington and Normal as well as the parks in the community. At least one park, Tipton Park, has installed equipment for individuals to complete body weight workouts as they walk along the trail. Along with the Constitution Trail and the parks in the community, Bloomington-Normal has a variety of marked bike paths that are separate from the Constitution Trail. This has shown to be beneficial for the community since eight percent (8%) of respondents to the 2016 McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey said they use a bicycle as their main mode of transportation for local trips. This is greater than the national percentage of 0.4% (MCHD 2019, 58). These parts of the built environment in Bloomington-Normal show that the community is engaged in making physical activity easier and more accessible to all residents, but there are still many aspects of health and wellness that can be addressed through community development.

Sidewalks, access to parks and open spaces, and aesthetics are features of the built environment that are related to physical activity, but there is a lack of evidence that they actually promote physical activity. (Goodell and Williams 2007). Creative solutions are a way for community development to both address health and wellness and promote physical activity. The trails that exist in Bloomington-Normal are a great example of these solutions, but more can be done and more has to be done to address all aspects of wellness. These solutions could be free or low-cost wellness programs, like the WLS and the Fitbit Program. Both programs could be a model for how a social service agency helps their clients improve individual wellness. These programs could and should be open to the public as well. Even if someone is not receiving assistance from the Township that does not mean they have access to free programs to improve their health and wellness. These programs could be with local organizations like the park district, the public library, or the local YMCA. Local organizations should, especially the YMCA and the public library, be able to provide these programs for free or at low-cost.

Programs being offered for free or at low-cost is especially important when considering the association between income and health outcomes. In a study of U.S. income data and life expectancy, Chetty et. al (2016), showed that a higher income was associated with greater longevity and differences in life expectancy increased across income groups. Life expectancy did vary across areas, but these differences were correlated with health behaviors and characteristics of the local area. Economic stability is another factor to consider when thinking about the association between income and health outcomes. Many people living in poverty are unable to afford things such as healthy foods, health care, and steady housing. People with steady employment are less likely to live in poverty and are more likely to live healthier lives. However,

many people with steady employment still do not make enough to afford a healthy lifestyle (“Economic Stability,” n.d.).

By providing low-cost or even free programming, communities would be able to reach those who have the least amount of access and thus improve the community’s wellness. Establishing these partnerships in the community would allow for these programs to grow and reach more people. One aspect of health and wellness that needs to be improved in the county is healthy eating. These programs can be run along with the physical activity programs to meet both community needs. A great way to do this would be to establish community gardens for low-income individuals. The public can be involved as well, but if the focus were on low-income individuals that would hopefully lead to people eating healthier because they know where their food is coming from. Being able to see the entire process of producing fresh produce leads to greater curiosity with foods and while cooking. Creative solutions are the way community development can impact health and wellness. Engaging people in those creative solutions is more beneficial than simply telling people how to live a healthier life.

Social Determinants of Health

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines social determinants of health (SDOH) in their Healthy People 2030 program as, “the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks” (“Social Determinants of Health,” n.d.). Social determinants of health can be grouped into five categories: Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context. Examples of social determinants of health include safe housing,

transportation, and neighborhoods, racism, discrimination, and violence, education, job opportunities, and income, access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities, polluted air and water, and language and literacy skills (“Social Determinants of Health,” n.d.). The Township, through its services and the WLS, has a role in addressing aspects of all five categories of social determinants of health.

Through its services the Township can help directly address the categories of economic stability and neighborhood and built environment. This is done by providing those in need with the economic assistance required to stay in their current housing situation and/or pay their bills for necessary utilities. The Township provides the necessary resources that would keep recipients in a safe and stable housing situation while providing some sense of economic stability.

The WLS directly addresses health topics related to the needs of the community served by the Township. The WLS provides access to education in a classroom setting that is focused on health and the health topics deemed necessary by the 2019 McLean County CHNA. With a focus on what is perceived to be the greatest health issues in the community and a tendency to divert into participant driven conversation, the WLS provides a setting where participants can gain knowledge about health issues and topics that they may be directly affected by. Through the WLS, participants develop a knowledge base that helps provide a better understanding of their personal health that can be beneficial when visiting their respective medical professionals.

Along with this knowledge base, the WLS addresses health care access and quality by providing participants with various resources to use when seeking health care. Whether these resources are a list of free or low-cost clinics in Bloomington or a list of at-home workouts and the modifications that can be implemented for those with limited movement, the ultimate goal of the WLS is to provide participants with ways to better their health on a daily basis. Another

benefit of the WLS is that it provides participants with a social setting where they feel comfortable sharing their health issues and asking questions. The weekly classes, for some participants, may possibly be one of the few times a week they are in a social setting with others. The WLS builds an accepting and open-minded community that is focused on the health of all participants while encouraging participants to share any information, tips, tricks, etc. that may benefit the person sharing.

Social Determinants of Health- McLean County

The social determinants of health outlined in the 2019 McLean County CHNA include Built Environment, Housing, Transportation, Public Safety, Social/Family Environment, and Physical Environment- Air, Water, Radon, Lead, and Hazardous Waste (MCHD 2019, 2). Built environment, through the lenses of physical activity and food security, and housing will be the only two social determinants of health addressed below due to the potential for the Township to have a direct impact on them. This impact can be made through the Township services of emergency assistance and general assistance as well as the WLS.

The Township and the WLS can address the built environment as it relates to physical activity and food insecurity by providing participants with a knowledge base about the benefits of physical activity and proper nutrition while encouraging changes to make them part of daily life. The Township helps address food insecurity through the general assistance program. Township recipients have the option to have part of their monthly grant go to a benefit card to the Kroger grocery store on Main St. in Bloomington. This allows participants to shop for food items, household essentials, and personal essentials.

The built environment refers to any physical or manmade features that may promote or discourage activity. Sidewalks, streetlights, traffic, and parks are all parts of the built environment. It is important to consider the built environment when discussing physical activity because there is strong evidence to suggest that there is an association between access to recreational resources, bike ability and walkability of neighborhoods and a safe, aesthetically pleasing environment with increased physical activity and reduced obesity rates (MCHD 2019, 58). Statistically the built environment in McLean County should support physical activity very well. The percentage of residents (83.6%) who have access to exercise opportunities ranks in the CHNA's top category (best 0-50th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois counties, but it ranks lower than the overall Illinois value of 91.3% (MCHD 2019, 58). Another promising statistic is that eight percent (8%) of respondents to the 2016 McLean County Regional Planning Commission survey noted that they use a bicycle as their mode of transportation for local trips. This is greater than the national percentage of only 0.4% (MCHD 2019, 58).

Food security and access to healthy foods are areas that the built environment fails McLean County residents. The Food Environment Index combines the percentage of the population that is low-income and has low access to a grocery store with the percentage of the population that was food insecure during the past year. The county ranked at a 7.6 on a 10-point scale with 0 being the worst and 10 being the best. This is in the CHNA's worst category (worst 50th-75th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois counties, is worse than the overall Illinois value (8.7), and is trending downward when compared to the previous value for the county (MCHD 2019, 59). From that metric it can be assumed that the built environment in the county fails in other areas related to food security and access to healthy foods. That assumption would not be wrong. Rates for grocery store density, access to a grocery store for low-income

adults, people with low access to a grocery store, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) certified stores, fast food restaurant density, and farmers market density all rank below the national value, in the worst 50th-75th percentile grouping or the worst 25th percentile grouping when compared to other Illinois counties, or below the overall Illinois value (MCHD 2019, 60-63).

Mid Central Community Action (MCCA) completed a needs assessment for the 2018 fiscal year. This is a useful tool given that most survey respondents were customers who received low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP). LIHEAP customers are a good indicator of the needs of the Township recipients given that both groups are low-income individuals. Data from the MCCA survey can help point to needs within the community served by the Township. For food security and access to healthy foods, 16.9% of respondents stated that they could use help getting food from food pantries or food banks (MCHD 2019, 60). This shows that food security and access to healthy foods is an issue for those served by the Township.

Housing is a social determinant of health outlined in the 2019 McLean County CHNA that can be directly addressed by the Township services of emergency assistance and general assistance. The county is home to 13.2% of households that have at least one of the following four housing problems, 1) overcrowding, 2) high housing costs, 3) lack of kitchen, or 4) lack of plumbing facilities. When compared to other Illinois counties the percentage falls in the CHNA's worst category (worst 50-75th percentile range). However, the percentage is lower than the overall Illinois value of 18.4% (MCHD 2019, 64). Homeownership and renters are areas that deserve to be addressed as well due to the Township having a direct role in helping both homeowners and renters maintain their housing costs. Homeownership in the county is at 59.7%. The percentage is in the worst CHNA category (worst 50th-75th percentile range) when

compared to other Illinois counties and is almost equal to both the overall Illinois value and the prior county value (MCHD 019, 64-65).

Data on housing affordability is concerning with 44.4% of renters in the county spending 30% or more of their income on housing or rent. This is in the worst CHNA category (worst 50-75th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois counties (MCHD 2019, 65). When renters are having to spend a high percentage of their income on rent, they can be forced into financial hardship. Paying rent may not leave enough money for other expenses, including food, transportation, and medical care (all social determinants of health). This is especially true for low-income renters, a population directly served by the Township. The 2019 McLean County CHNA has also noted that eight percent (8%) of survey respondents were homeless and seven percent (7%) of respondents had housing, but were worried about losing it (MCHD 2019, 66). This is a population that can be directly helped by the Township given that 8.9% of Township recipients were homeless during my professional practice (“System Statistic Report” 2021).

Another indication of social determinants of health in McLean County is the SocioNeeds Index from the Conduent Health Communities Institute. The SocioNeeds Index is a tool that measures socioeconomic need. The index is calculated from six indicators from the topics of poverty, income, unemployment, occupation, education, and language. The index values all ZIP codes, counties, and county equivalents in the United States from 0 (low need) to 100 (high need). To identify the areas of highest need within a specific geographical area the index ranks ZIP codes on a 1 (low need) to 5 (high need) scale. The ranking is based on their index value. McLean County has one ZIP code with a ranking of 5 (Bloomington- 61701) and eight ZIP codes with a ranking of 4 (MCHD 2019, 30-31). The 61701 ZIP code is significant to the Township given the high percentage of clients in the ZIP code and will be addressed individually

later. Bloomington has two other ZIP codes, 61705 and 61704, that both have a low need ranking, but are still important given that they are in the Township's service area (MCHD 2019, 31).

Health in McLean County- 2019 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment

Community health needs assessments are reports that identify key health needs and issues at the state, tribal, territorial, or local level through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis ("Community Health Assessments," n.d.). Hospitals are required to complete community health needs assessment every three years (MCHD 2019, 9). In 2015, community health in McLean County achieved an important milestone with the formation of the McLean County Community Health Council. Prior to 2015, the McLean County Health Department, Advocate BroMenn Medical Center (now Carle BroMenn Medical Center), and OSF St. Joseph Medical Center each conducted their own community health needs assessment. What resulted was three separated community health plans for McLean County. At the same time, United Way of McLean County was conducting a broad-based community needs assessment of their own. The 2015 collaboration produced the first joint McLean County CHNA report in 2016 and the McLean County 2017-2019 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). In 2019, Chestnut Health Systems joined the McLean County Community Health Council as a collaborative partner for the 2019 McLean County CHNA (MCHD 2019, 9).

Primary and secondary data was gathered and assessed by the Executive Steering Committee to determine the significant health needs that would be prioritized by the 2019 McLean County CHNA. The criteria for assessment were "size of the issue, rates worse than rate of Illinois counties or the state rate, disparities by race/ethnicity, age gender or ZIP code, and

does not meet the Healthy People 2020 target” (MCHD 2019, 11). This assessment identified the six significant needs as “Access to Appropriate Care, Behavioral Health (mental health and substance abuse), Healthy Eating and Active Living (exercise, nutrition, obesity, and food access/insecurity), Heart Disease, Oral Health, and Respiratory Disease”. (MCHD 2019, 11).

From there, the Executive Steering Committee employed the Hanlon Method to determine the three significant health needs that were to be prioritized and addressed by the 2020-2022 McLean County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) (MCHD 2019, 12). The Hanlon Method, developed by J.J. Hanlon, “is a well respected technique which objectively takes into consideration explicitly defined criteria and feasibility factors” (MCHD 2019, 188). The method is beneficial when the wanted outcome is an objective list of health priorities based on gathered data and values (MCHD 2019, 188). Using this method, the Executive Steering Committee identified access to appropriate care, behavioral health (including mental health and substance abuse), and healthy eating/active living as the three health needs to be addressed by the 2020-2022 McLean County CHIP.

The 2019 McLean County CHNA and the 2020-2022 McLean County CHIP are the main driving forces behind the development of the Wellness Lifestyle Series of classes. The 2019 McLean County CHNA provides many valuable data points that can help shed light on the health status of the county and specific geographical areas within the county. The data points discussed in the 2019 McLean County CHNA are taken from the 2018 McLean County Community Health Survey and, when deemed important, compared to the community health survey that was taken in 2015. The highlighted data points refer to adults only. Children do indirectly benefit from Township services if they are part of a recipient’s household, but they are not direct recipients of emergency assistance or general assistance from the Township.

One of the most glaring health statistics for the county is the self-assessment of overall physical health. Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents stated that their overall physical health was “average or poor”. This percentage has increased from 2015-2018. That leaves only twenty-seven percent (27%) of respondents who perceive their health as “good” (MCHD 2019, 44). In terms of access to care, the most important statistic for the Township and the WLS to be aware of was that access to medical care, prescriptions, and dental care tends to be higher for Whites, those with higher education and higher income levels, and those in stable housing situations. Another relevant statistic is that those who have less access to medical care, prescriptions, and dental care tend to also list emergency rooms as their choice of medical care (MCHD 2019, 52). Both of these statistics point to the access to care disparities that exist in McLean County and the population served by the Township.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), six in ten adults in the country have chronic diseases and four in ten adults have two or more chronic diseases (“About Chronic Diseases,” n.d.). Statistics on chronic diseases in the county are important to highlight because this is one of the more concrete areas where the WLS can help participants make improvements in their everyday lives through its emphasis on poor nutrition and a lack of exercise being major causes of many chronic conditions. Chronic conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes account for three of the top twenty causes of death in McLean County (MCHD 2019, 43). Heart disease, cancer, and diabetes all have similar risk factors such as tobacco use, poor nutrition, and lack of physical exercise (“About Chronic Diseases,” n.d.). The WLS approaches these chronic conditions with the understanding that a healthy diet and regular exercise can have a major impact on those risk factors. The WLS provides participants with examples of healthy diets and exercises that can help mitigate these risk factors.

Given that nutrition, weight, and exercise are three of the more concrete areas where the WLS can help participants make improvements, it is important to understand the status of these health factors in the county. When considering fruit and vegetable consumption, five percent (5%) of McLean County residents report no consumption (zero (0) servings per day) and fifty percent (50%) of residents report low consumption (one to two (1 or 2) servings per day). Only six percent (6%) of residents are eating more than five (5) servings per day. Whites and those with higher education and income tend to consume fruits and vegetables at a higher frequency (MCHD 2019, 52-53). Understanding why fruit and vegetable consumption is so low among county residents is important as well. The two main reasons why county residents do not eat fruits or vegetables are the inability to afford them and not liking them. The inability to afford fruits and vegetables being a top reason for not eating them falls in line with the fact that those with a higher income tend to consume fruits and vegetables at a higher frequency (MCHD 2019, 52-54).

The weight status of McLean County residents shows a troubling trend. Thirty-two percent (32%) of residents are classified as obese. This is a higher rate than the state (31.6%) and the country (29.9%). It also does not meet the Healthy People 2020 target of 30.5%. The troubling trend is that the obesity rate in the county increased from 2004-2014. There was a slight increase from 2004-2009 and then a dramatic increase from 2009-2014. The obesity rate in the county increased 11.4% from 2004-2006 to 2010-2014 (MCHD 2019, 54-55).

One of the contributing factors to this troubling trend could be exercise -or the lack thereof- in McLean County. The percentage of adults in the county who did not participate in any leisure-time activities (physical activities other than their regular job) during the past month was 23.5%. While being in the top CHNA category (best 0-50th percentile range) when

compared to other counties in the state, it is lower than the overall Illinois value (21.5%) and significantly lower than the Healthy People 2020, a previous iteration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2030 program, target (32.6%) (MCHD 2019, 56). Exercise frequency is a troubling statistic as well. Fifty-one percent (51%) of respondents reported that they either do not exercise or exercise one to two times per week (MCHD 2019, 56-57). The positive trend noticed here is that the percentage of adults not participating in any physical activity decreased seven percent (7%) from 2015-2018 (MCHD 2019, 58).

Mental health and substance abuse fall under the identified health priority of behavioral health. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the subject is more difficult to cover and less concrete than chronic diseases. However, it is important to understand the state of mental health in the county. The rates for age-adjusted emergency room visits due to mental health and suicide and intentional self-harm are both in the top CHNA category (best 0-50th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois counties (MCHD 2019, 108-110). The death rate due to suicide is also in the top CHNA category (best 0-50th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois counties, but it is trending unfavorably in a statistically significant direction and does not meet the Health People 2020 Target (MCHD 2019, 111-112). Mental health in McLean County follows suit with other health indicators by having disparities between the county and specific geographical areas within the county (MCHD 2019, 138). Given the prevalence of chronic conditions and the poor status of nutrition, weight, and exercise in McLean County, it is important to have classes like the WLS to impart knowledge to participants on how they can begin to adopt and implement healthy behaviors into their daily lives. Even though it is a small step, this will begin to improve the health outcomes of the community.

Bloomington- 61701 ZIP Code

Health statistics show that McLean County is healthier than other counties in the state and the country, but the disparity within the county is readily apparent. As previously stated, the SocioNeeds Index from the Conduent Healthy Communities Institute scored nine McLean County ZIP codes as high need with the highest score being Bloomington- 61701 (MCHD 2019, 30-31). This score is important to know given the large impact socioeconomic needs have on poor health outcomes. The disparities that exist between Bloomington- 61701 and the rest of the county are important for the Township given that 68.1% Township recipients were from Bloomington- 61701 during my professional practice (“System Statistic Report 2021). The percentage of the Township clients from Bloomington- 61701 has held steady over the past five fiscal years (Annual Town Meeting 2021). The 2019 McLean County CHNA provides relevant statistics that point to the disparities that exist between Bloomington- 61701 and the rest of the county.

The first statistics to highlight are the disparity between income and people living below the poverty level. Median household income for McLean County is \$67,065 compared to the median income of \$47,846 in Bloomington- 61701. Along with the median income being lower in Bloomington- 61701, the percentage of people living below the poverty line is also higher. The percentage of people living below the poverty line in the county is 14.5% compared to 22.2% in Bloomington - 61701. Bloomington- 61701 is in the worst CHNA category (worst 25th percentile range) when compared to other ZIP codes in Illinois (MCHD 2019, 37-38). The Township can directly help people living below the poverty line in Bloomington and Bloomington- 61701 given the service guidelines of the Township.

Disparities in household makeup and affordability are key statistics to consider as well. The percentage of single parent households and people aged 65 and over living alone in Bloomington- 61701 are both higher than the county and state percentages (MCHD 2019, 36). Homeownership for Bloomington- 61701 is at 46.9%, this is in the worst CHNA category (worst 25th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois ZIP codes. Housing affordability is another issue as well with 49.6% of renters in Bloomington- 61701 spending 30% or more of their income on housing or rent. This is in the worst CHNA category (worst 50th-75th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois ZIP codes (MCHD 2019, 64-65). When renters have to spend such a high percentage of their income on rent, they may not be left with enough money for other expenses, including food, transportation, and medical care (all social determinants of health). They may also be forced into financial hardship from spending a large percentage of their income on rent.

Physical and mental health disparities exist when comparing Bloomington- 61701 to the county as well. The fact that health disparities exist between Bloomington- 61701 and the county fall in line with the SocioNeeds Index score given that high socioeconomic need is a determinant of poor health outcomes. Lifestyle diseases are a main focus of the WLS. The 2019 McLean County CHNA highlights disparities among Bloomington- 61701 and the county for hypertension and diabetes. The age-adjusted emergency room rate due to hypertension for the county is 25.2 ER visits per 10,000 population ages 18 years and older. The rate for Bloomington- 61701 is higher at 33.5 ER visits/10,000 18+ years (MCHD 2019, 89). Hypertension is one part of heart disease and is directly addressed by the WLS. Disparities for diabetes exist for both age-adjusted emergency room visits and age-adjusted hospitalization rates. These rates are higher for diabetes, type 2 diabetes, uncontrolled diabetes, and long-term

complications from diabetes (MCHD 2019, 96-97). Diabetes is another lifestyle disease that is directly addressed by the WLS by focusing on nutrition, exercise, and other main risk factors.

Mental health is another area where there are great disparities between Bloomington-61701 and McLean County. Depression, anxiety, and frequency of self-medication have all been shown to have a significant relationship with an individual's behavioral health. These characteristics also tend to be higher among older people, those with lower education and income, and those with an unstable housing environment (MCHD 2019, 116). Township recipients are low-income individuals, and some may have come to the Township seeking assistance due to an unstable housing environment. Therefore, it is important to highlight the mental health disparities that exist between Bloomington-61701 and the county. The age-adjusted emergency room rate due to mental health for McLean County is 92.1 ER visits per 10,000 population ages 18 years and older. This is in the top CHNA category (best 0-50th percentile range) when compared to other counties in Illinois. The rate for Bloomington-61701 is worse. At 175.3 ER visits per 10,000 population 18+ years, the rate falls in the worst CHNA category (worst 25th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois ZIP codes (MCHD 2019, 108-109). The age-adjusted emergency room rate due to suicide and intentional self-inflicted injury follows the same trend. The county rate is 38.0 ER visits/10,000 population 18+ years and again falls in the top CHNA category (best 0-50th percentile range) when compared to other counties in Illinois. The rate for Bloomington-61701 is 81.5 ER visits/10,000 population 18+ years and again falls in the worst CHNA category (worst 25th percentile range) when compared to other Illinois ZIP codes (MCHD 2019, 110-111). Mental health and behavioral health are more difficult to cover in the WLS than lifestyle disease due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

The WLS attempts to address these health topics by covering mindset and the benefits of maintaining a healthy, positive mindset.

By highlighting the health disparities in Bloomington- 61701, the 2019 McLean County CHNA shows that there are numerous health needs in a community that is most directly impacted by Township services. The Township and the WLS can play a direct role in addressing these needs in the community. Through its services, the Township can help individuals stay in safe, stable housing environments. The WLS helps address health issues by providing participants with a knowledge base to make improvements in their everyday lives that will lead to better health outcomes for not just themselves, but the community they live in as well.

The Wellness Lifestyle Series and Addressing the 2019 CHNA Health Priorities

The three health priorities that were selected based on the 2019 McLean County CHNA were access to appropriate care, behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse), and healthy eating/active living (MCHD 2019, 160-161). The health needs that were not selected as priorities for the county were heart disease, oral health, and respiratory disease (MCHD 2019, 161). The health needs that were selected were based on the data gathered in the CHNA and a community health survey. The survey asked respondents to report on their perceptions of the three most important health issues facing the community as well as, “the unhealthy behaviors and factors that contribute to the well-being of the community” (MCHD 2019, 150). The survey showed mental health and obesity/overweight were the two major health issues for the community. Aging issues came in as the third highest rated perceived health issue, but with an almost twenty percent (20%) gap between that and the second highest perceived health issue of obesity/overweight (MCHD 2019, 150). Cancer and dental health filled out the top five

perceived health issues. When compared to the perceived health issues outlined in the 2015 McLean County Community Health Survey there was not much change in perceived health issues. The top three perceived health issues in 2015 were mental health, obesity/overweight, and cancer (MCHD 2019, 150). This lack of real change shows the need for these issues to be addressed in the community.

The WLS can address most, if not all, of the health needs prioritized by the CHNA and those health needs not prioritized. The health needs not prioritized are actually easier to address by the WLS than the three health issues prioritized. This is due to the fact that what is being taught in the WLS can be applied to help participants manage lifestyle diseases, such as heart disease. Healthy eating and active living is where the WLS can have its largest impact because each health topic covered tends to have a focus on proper nutrition and physical activity. Access to care is difficult to cover since the WLS cannot provide participants with the resources to receive appropriate care. Behavioral health is difficult to cover as well due to the sensitive nature of mental health.

The health priority of healthy eating and active living is the one can be most directly addressed by the WLS. A main goal of the WLS is to encourage healthy eating and active living among its participants by providing them with the necessary information needed to make positive changes in their everyday lives. To do this nutrition and exercise are two of the core topics of the curriculum and have time dedicated to cover both topics separately. The WLS goes in depth on nutrition to cover the standard American diet, healthier diet alternatives to what has for a long time been thought of as healthy, healthy alternatives to unhealthy foods, health effects of poor nutrition, and common misconceptions about nutrition. Nutrition is covered in other core topics as well. Active living is covered in the WLS through exercise. Given that most of the

WLS participants are restricted due to their physical or mental health, the WLS has a focus on what exercises can be done at home and what exercises can be done while seated. The WLS provides some resources that contain both at home and seated workouts. The WLS helps promote active living through the Fitbit Program. WLS participants who choose to participate in the Fitbit Program are provided with a Fitbit device and a free two-month membership to the Bloomington YMCA. The hope is that participants use the free membership and see their health outcomes trend in a positive direction even after such a short period of time. Participants hopefully will be encouraged by the results of the Fitbit Program to continue their membership with the YMCA if possible.

Healthy eating and active living are large portions of other health topics as well given that poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are common risk factors for many chronic diseases. Nutrition and exercise play a key role in the prevention and treatment of many common chronic conditions and diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and even cancer. This importance is stressed greatly throughout the WLS. Within both the heart disease and cancer conversations the topics of nutrition and exercise are covered as ways people living with those diseases can change the course of their disease. Research that shows how nutrition and cancer are related is one of the more interesting parts of the cancer conversation. How cancer and sugar interact and the possibility that a ketogenic diet can reduce or even kill cancer (Friebe 2007) are fascinating topics to learn about in the WLS. The importance of nutrition and exercise in the prevention of chronic diseases is one of the best examples of what the WLS can do to help participants improve health related behaviors and see positive health outcomes.

Access to care and behavioral health are the two prioritized health issues that are more difficult to address in the WLS. Access to care is difficult to address given that participants

cannot apply it to daily life. Access to care can be addressed by providing participants with affordable healthcare related resources within Bloomington-Normal. This can be done in a multitude of ways whether that be a list of resources available, a full presentation of those resources, or when covering a specific topic the health resources related to that topic can be covered as part of that specific presentation. A way the WLS helps improve access to care is by providing participants with a knowledge base that can be applied when visiting with their healthcare provider. The focus on the community's perceived health issues and the tendency to divert into participant driven conversation results in the knowledge base that is related to issues dealt with by participants rather than a knowledge base established by what the Township thinks their health issues are. This knowledge base can help participants work with their healthcare provider to figure out the best way to move forward with their health issues.

Behavioral health is the other prioritized health issue that is difficult to address due to the sensitive nature of the subject. The Township does not want to attempt to give mental health advice since that is best left to mental health professionals. One way the Township does help its clients who have documented mental health ailment for that client to complete their required workfare assignment by attending appointments with a mental health professional. Chestnut Health Systems is directly involved with this. On the other hand, the WLS does not directly address behavioral health, mental health, or substance abuse.

In order to aid participants in working through behavioral health issues, mindset has been developed as a core topic in the WLS. Mindset has been broken down into subtopics of mindfulness, relationships and strategies to connect, fixed mindset vs. growth mindset, the six basic human needs, health coping skills and how to deal with negative emotions, the five love languages, etc. While the mindset topic can sometimes be covered as, "you will not become sick

if you have a positive outlook”, the mindset topic developed for the WLS has more of a focus on mental health and strategies to deal with issues as they come. The WLS recognizes that the causes of health issues are greater than how someone views the world while acknowledging the power mindset has when beginning to adopt healthy behaviors. The great variety of mindset topics is intended to help participants foster a healthy and positive relationship with themselves and others by allowing them to further understand themselves, their thought processes, and the actions of others.

Throughout all topics, especially mindset, time has been carved out to ask participants about what health issues they are currently dealing with. This allows participants to engage in a constructive conversation with the instructor. These are focused on health issues but can be anything from mental health to physical health to social interactions that bring up specific feelings or emotions. These short sharing sessions have allowed participants to drive the conversations of the series in a way that helps them better understand the issues they are currently dealing with. When the class was held in person, these interactions happened frequently. Since the class began being held virtually due to Covid-19, the interactions slowed for a variety of reasons. Blocking off a certain amount of time at the beginning of each class to talk about these health issues encouraged more participation and changed the dynamic of the classes. This sharing opportunity provided participants a way to interact with and support each other while further learning about the health topics that are affecting them. This essentially created an informal group therapy session and created a community among the WLS participants all while the class was held virtually.

Mindset is also touched on throughout the other core topics of the WLS. For those topics, mindset is focused on how someone thinks about the health issues they are currently dealing with

and how to overcome them. Mindset can be an important force in dealing with chronic conditions. By understanding that the disease you may have does not define who you are, a participant can improve their health and even fight off some lifestyle diseases. Mindset as it relates to healthy eating and physical activity are covered as well. How one thinks about proper nutrition and physical activity is extremely important to the person performing those healthy habits. The WLS attempts to help participants understand that both are not difficult to do by providing them with tips and tricks to start eating healthy and exercising. By doing this there is a hope that some participants will begin to implement these behaviors into their daily lives. Participants are encouraged to take a “better than nothing” approach to both healthy eating and active living. By slowly beginning to introduce these behaviors into their daily lives, participants will hopefully create habits that lead to better health outcomes out of those behaviors.

The Role Township Plays in the Implementation of 2020-2022 CHIP

The 2020-2022 McLean County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is the document developed in response to the 2019 McLean County CHNA. The purpose of the 2020-2022 McLean County CHIP is to improve the health of McLean County residents. This is done so by developing partnerships that can implement interventions laid out in the CHIP by working together to, “encourage health and healthcare access awareness, and to foster systemic approaches that will improve the health and well-being of county residents and the community” (MCHD 2020, 11). As a member of the 2019 McLean County Community Health Council, the Township is one of those partners. The interventions laid out in the 2020-2022 McLean County CHIP are designed to meet the needs of the health issues prioritized by the 2019 McLean County CHNA. The high-level goal for behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) is,

“Advance a systemic community approach to enhance behavioral health and well-being by 2023”. The high-level goal for access to care is, “Ensure appropriate access to care to improve the health and well-being of our residents, neighborhoods and county by 2023”. The high-level goal for Healthy Eating/Active Living is, “Promote healthy eating and active living to strengthen the health and well-being of our community by 2023” (MCHD 2020, 15-16). The Township can help address many of these high-level priorities by implementing the processes outlined in the previous section. The WLS, the Fitbit Program, and Township services play a large role in the implementation of the 2020-2022 McLean County CHIP.

The Future of the Wellness Lifestyle Series

As for the future of the WLS moving forward, I think that the Township is in a great place to continue when Dr. Johnson no longer wishes to teach the classes. The curriculum outline and the educational presentations were developed to the point that essentially anyone can take over instruction. There are a few topics that have yet to be fully developed, but this can be done given the vast amount of resources available. When thinking about who could take over as instructor, I think that it would be best to have someone with a health and/or wellness background, especially when it comes to topics like oral health. This could be done on a rotating schedule with a dentist, a fitness instructor, a nutritionist, a yoga instructor, etc. Once Dr. Johnson is done being the instructor it is possible that the instructor would not be as available as he has been. This would make a rotating schedule of health and wellness professionals extremely practical and beneficial. As for the near future of the class I think the Township is in a good place to implement the prior aspects of the WLS that were halted before or due to Covid-19. The Fitbit Program will be implemented once it is safe to do so. Before I started at Township, the

WLS had planned grocery store/food label tours, a cooking class, and a class on how to grow your own produce. I think that these would be great opportunities, especially the cooking and growing classes, for participants to learn and grow in their healthy behaviors. The Township and the WLS are in a great position to continue in its mission to further better the health outcomes of the community it serves.

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Wellness Lifestyle Series Manual
City of Bloomington Township

Introduction

The Wellness Lifestyle Series (WLS) is a weekly class intended to educate and promote healthy approaches to daily living through a focus on holistic health. The four key areas of health that are the focus of the WLS are Nutrition, Mindset, Exercise, and Reducing Toxins. These are the four pillars that drive all other topics in the WLS. Each is covered as their own topic, but it is understood that each play a role in all the other topics covered by the WLS. Therefore, each of the four main areas of health are covered significantly in all other topics. The other topics covered in the WLS are Introduction to Wellness Lifestyle, Heart Health, Cancer and the Immune System, Mindset, Nutrition, Exercise, Toxins, Oral Health, and Gut Health. The focus on a wide swath of health topics provides participants with knowledge of a variety of health topics and shows the interconnected nature of health. With this knowledge, participants will be able to apply the concepts learned in class to better their health outcomes.

Purpose and Goals

The Wellness Lifestyle Series was started as a direct response to the 2019 McLean County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and the 2020-2022 McLean County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHNA recognized Access to Appropriate Care, Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Abuse), and Healthy Eating/Active Living as the three main health priorities for McLean County. The three health needs that were not selected as priorities were Heart Disease, Oral Health, and Respiratory Disease.

The WLS can address most, if not all, of the health needs priorities by the CHNA including those health needs not prioritized. Heart disease, oral health, and respiratory disease are all lifestyle diseases that can be positively impacted by the concepts covered in class. Behavioral health is covered through the topic of mindset and participants are encouraged to seek help from a mental health professional if they are in a crisis. Access to care is addressed by providing participants with resources available and knowledge of health topics to take into appointments with their healthcare providers.

The purpose and goals of the WLS are:

- to provide participants with knowledge of health issues that are personally dealing with,
- to provide participants with knowledge of health topics that can be applied in their daily lives to better their health outcomes,
- to impart a positive mindset about health outcomes on participants,
- to impart a positive mindset about healthy eating and active living on participants, and
- to increase healthy eating and active living among WLS participants.

Audience

The audience for the Wellness Lifestyle Series curriculum is recipients of General Assistance from the City of Bloomington Township and the public. Participants who are Township recipients are all low-income adults of varying age who are completing their required workfare assignment by attending the class. They are all restricted from doing other workfare assignments due to their physical or mental health.

Determining the make-up of the participants from the public is not possible. They are attending the course voluntarily.

Structure

The class is a cycle covering the health topics laid out below. Other topics can be added as time goes on.

Classes are held from 11:00am-12:00pm on Fridays. Classes have been held via Zoom during the pandemic but will be held in person when it is deemed safe to do so.

Classes are held in person at the Bloomington Public Library in the Community Room.

The class structure is designed for an instructor to deliver the materials to the class. Instructional materials include:

- Already developed PowerPoint presentations
- Worksheets
- Handouts
- Videos

The class structure is designed for Q&A sessions while the instructor is delivering the materials. These questions may or may not be related to the topic being covered, but that really gets to the purpose of the WLS. This leads to lots of group discussions that can go off on various tangents, but it is a way to discuss the health topics participants are concerned about. This leads to participants giving advice based on their previous health experiences. Participants can drive what the next topic covered will be as well.

Some topics brought up during group discussion can be incorporated into the WLS later.

If possible, and when in person, there is time after class for participants to discuss with the instructor other health topics that may be uncomfortable to speak about in a public space.

Timeline

Gut Health and Oral Health Timelines will need to be established after the topics are covered

- July to August: Introduction to Wellness Lifestyle, 6 Weeks
- August to September: Heart Health, 8 Weeks
- September to October: Cancer and the Immune System, 8 Weeks
- October to November: Mindset, 6 Weeks
- November to December: Break for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year Holidays
- January: Nutrition, 5 Weeks
- February: Exercise, 4 Weeks
- March: Toxins, 4 Weeks
- April: Gut Health, specific timeline needs to be established
- May: Oral Health, specific timeline needs to be established

Course Objectives- Learning Objectives

- Understand the relationship between all core topics
- Understand the personalized nature of all core topics
- Goal setting for all core topics

Course Objectives- Trackable Targets

- Target: 40% of Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaged in healthy behaviors to reduce chronic diseases
- Target: 35% reduction in risk factors for chronic diseases among Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
- Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaged in some form of daily physical activity
- Target: 40% of Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaged in some form of weekly mindset exercises

Four Key Areas of Health

- Nutrition
- Mindset
- Exercise
- Reducing Toxins

Topics Covered

- Introduction to Wellness Lifestyle
- Heart Health
- Cancer and the Immune System
- Mindset
- Nutrition
- Exercise

Topics for Further Development

- Toxins
- Gut Health
- Oral Health

Wellness Lifestyle Curriculum Outline

Introduction to Wellness Lifestyle

- What Does This Class Want to Accomplish?
- Defining Health and Wellness
- Facets of Wellness
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Environmental Wellness
 - Financial Wellness
 - Intellectual Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
 - Social Wellness
 - Spiritual Wellness
- Living a Healthy Childhood
 - Health of Children- U.S. Data
- Overview of Modern Healthcare System
 - Health Statistics- U.S. Data
 - The Cost of Health Care- U.S. Data
 - Overmedication
 - Public Health Preparedness
- The Whole Picture
- What Are Your Goals?
- Four Areas of Health and Wellness- the foundation of a lifestyle focused on improved health and wellness.
 - Nutrition
 - Mindset
 - Exercise
 - Reducing Toxins
- Nutrition
 - Obesity Trends Among U.S. Adults 1985-2019
 - The Real Cost of Cheap Food
 - If Kids Eat Healthy Foods, They Will Like Healthy Foods
- Mindset
 - Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset
 - Mindset and Health. What is Health?
- Exercise
 - Exercise and Oxygen
 - What Do You Want Your Physical Ability to Be?
 - Barriers to Exercise
 - Barriers to Exercise Quiz and Handout
 - Better Than Nothing Behavior

- Long Distance Runner vs. Sprinter: Who is Healthier?
- Basic HIIT Plan
- Proper Form
- Reducing Toxins
 - Plastics
 - Environmental Toxins
 - Food Additives
 - The Toxic Top Five
 - Medications
 - Household Products
 - Teflon Cookware
 - Tap Water
 - Heavy Metals and Biotoxins
- What Change Would You Like to Make?
- Overview of the Wellness Lifestyle Series
 - Heart Health
 - Cancer and the Immune System
 - Mindset
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Toxins
 - Oral Health
 - Gut Health

Heart Health

- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
 - Spiritual Wellness
- Heart Disease Statistics- U.S. Data
- What Are Your Goals?
- Anatomy of the Heart
- Key Risk Factors
- What is Blood Pressure?
 - High Blood Pressure
- What is a Stroke?
 - Lifestyle Risk Factors
 - Ischemic vs. Hemorrhagic
 - FAST Stroke Test
- What is Cholesterol?

- High-density lipoproteins (HDL) vs. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL)
- Causes of High Cholesterol
 - Risk Factors Within Your Control
 - Risk Factors Outside of Your Control
- Truth About Cholesterol
 - Necessary for Bodily Processes
 - “Good” cholesterol vs. “bad” cholesterol
 - Oxidization of Cholesterol
- Cholesterol Medication
- How to Naturally Lower Cholesterol
- Inflammation
 - Healing Process
 - Links to Chronic Diseases
 - Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Inflammation
- What is a Healthy Diet?
 - Paleo Diet
 - Mediterranean Diet
- Importance of Hydration
- The pH Scale
 - How Changes in Blood pH Impact Heart Health
- Negative Impacts of Sitting
 - Sedentary Behavior Linked to Diseases
- Exercise and Heart Health
 - Summary of Heart Health Benefits Linked to Exercise
 - Exercise Can Reduce Risk for Those with Heart Disease
 - Heart Health Exercises
 - Aerobics
 - Strength Training
 - Flexibility
 - Metabolic Conditioning
 - Classic Cardio and Strength Training
 - Basic HIIT Plan
 - Long Distance Runner vs. Sprinter: Who Is Healthier?
 - Better Than Nothing Behavior
- De-Stress and Rest
 - Link Between Heart Disease and Conditions Related to Stress
 - Positive Impact of Stress Reduction on Heart Health
 - Ways to De-Stress and Rest
- Summary of Heart Health
- Five Tips to Keep a Healthy Heart
 - Maintain A Healthy Weight
 - Eat Well
 - Get Enough Sleep

- Exercise Regularly
- Manage Stress Levels the Best You Can
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand the link between nutrition and heart health
 - Understand the link between exercise and heart health
 - Understand the link between stress and heart health
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Participants engaged in healthy eating behaviors to reduce heart disease risk factors
 - Target: 40% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Participants engaged in some form of daily physical activity
 - Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants

Cancer and the Immune System

- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
 - Spiritual Wellness
- Current U.S. Statistics
 - Map of New Estimated Cases for 2020
 - Current U.S. Statistics- 2020
 - Trends in Age-Adjusted Cancer Death Rates for Males, 1930-2017
 - Trends in Age-Adjusted Cancer Death Rates for Females, 1930-2017
- Can Cancer Be Prevented? Yes!
- Who Is at Risk?
 - 55+ Years Old
 - Those Who Smoke, Drink Alcohol, and Have Excess Body Weight
 - Family History
 - Genetic Susceptibility
- Who/What/Why Motivates You?
- Cancer and the Immune System
 - UCLA Study
 - The Gut Microbiome
 - How to Improve Your Gut Microbiome
 - Eat A Diverse Range of Foods
 - Eat Fermented Foods
 - Limit Intake of Artificial Sweeteners
 - Eat Prebiotic Foods
 - Eat Whole Grains
 - Try A Plant-Based Diet

- Eat Food Rich in Polyphenols
 - Take A Probiotic Supplement
 - Take Antibiotics When Necessary
- Why Is Progress on Cancer Difficult?
- Germ Theory vs. Environment Theory
- Genes and Cancer
 - Epigenetics
- Is Cancer Related to Wound Healing?
- Normal Cells vs. Cancer Cells
- Treatments for Cancer
 - Chemotherapy
 - History of Chemotherapy
 - Chemotherapy Side Effects
 - Surgery
 - Radiation
 - Immunotherapy
- How Cancer Develops
 - Otto Warburg and the Warburg Effect
 - MSU Study
- Lifestyle Changes
 - The pH Scale
 - How Changes in Blood pH Impact Cancer
 - Vitamin D and Cancer
 - Inflammation
 - Healing Process
 - Links to Chronic Diseases
 - Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Inflammation
 - Sugar
 - What Is Worse Than Sugar? Artificial Sweetener
 - Natural Sweetener Options
 - Fats
 - Bodily Functions Rely on Fat
 - Essential Part of a Healthy Diet
 - Good Fats vs. Bad Fats
 - The Good Fat
 - Obesity Trend Among U.S. Adults 1990, 2000, 2010
 - The Standard American Diet
 - Ketogenic Diet
 - Can a Ketogenic Diet Kill Cancer? Summary of Study
 - Anti-Angiogenic Foods
 - Exercise and Cancer Prevention
 - Basic HIIT Plan
 - Better Than Nothing Behavior

- Toxins
 - How to Eliminate Toxins
 - Your Body's Detox Channels
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand the risk factors for cancer and the populations most at risk
 - Understand the benefits and side effects of conventional cancer treatments
 - Understand lifestyle changes that can be made to prevent and/or treat cancer
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Participants engaged in healthy eating behaviors to reduce heart disease risk factors
 - Target: 40% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Participants engaged in some form of daily physical activity
 - Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants

Mindset

- Behavioral Health Resources
 - Chestnut Health Systems
 - Crisis Text Line
 - 211
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Social Wellness
- What Is Mindfulness?
 - Two Definitions of Mindfulness
- How Mindful Are You?
- Ways to Develop Mindfulness
 - Intention
 - Attention
 - Attitude
- Relationships
 - Personal
 - Community
 - What Communities Do You Belong To?
- Social Isolation
 - Definition
 - Effects of Loneliness and Isolation
- Ways to Connect with Others
- Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset
 - Differences Between the Two Concepts

- How Each Influences Our Behavior, Relationship with Success and Failure, and Our Capacity for Happiness
 - Why is Mindset Important
- Six Basic Human Needs
 - Certainty
 - Uncertainty
 - Significance
 - Connection
 - Growth
 - Contribution
- The Self-Fulfilling Cycle on How to Get Good at Stuff
- Emotions
 - Definition
 - Negative Emotions
 - Healthy Coping Skills
 - Six Steps to Deal with Emotions
 - What Influences Our Emotions?
 - Thoughts and Their Impact on Emotions
 - Can We Change Our Thoughts or Emotions?
- Emotion Messages
 - Understanding Where Specific Emotions Come from and How to Apply the Six Steps to Deal with Them
 - Uncomfortable
 - Fear
 - Hurt
 - Anger
 - Frustration
 - Disappointment
 - Guilt
 - Overwhelmed
 - Inadequacy
 - Lonely
- Unconditional Self-Worth
 - How to Cultivate Unconditional Self-Worth
- The Five Love Languages
 - Words of Affirmation
 - Acts of Service
 - Gifts
 - Quality Time
 - Physical Touch
- Five Love Languages and Relationships Resources
- Behavioral Health Resources
 - Chestnut Health Systems

- Crisis Text Line
- 211
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand what mindfulness is and how to cultivate mindset
 - Understand the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset
 - Understand the Six Basic Human Needs
 - Understand strategies for how to deal with negative emotions
 - Understand the Five Love Languages
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Participants engaged in weekly social interactions outside of the Wellness Lifestyle Series
 - Target: 40% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaging in daily mindset exercises
 - Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants

Nutrition

- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
- Nutrition Self Check
- Common Barriers to Eating Well
 - Conflicting Information
 - Not Wanting to Feel “Deprived”
 - Short-Term Goals vs. Long-Term Goals
 - Budget Concerns
 - Unsustainable Diets
 - Past Failures
- U.S. Health Statistics
 - Obesity Rate in Adults Among OCED Countries
 - Lifestyle Disease Case Study- Diabetes
- Nutrition Misconceptions
 - Misconception: Genetics Determine Our Health
 - Plays a Role in Our Health Outcomes
 - Lifestyle Choices Play a Large Role Too
 - Lifestyle Diseases
 - Inflammation
 - Misconception: Counting Calories is Required
 - You Need a Calorie Deficit to Lost Weight
 - Quantity and Quality Matter
 - Not a Requirement for Weight Loss

- Sugar Consumption Trends- U.S.
 - Ten Reasons to Avoid Sugar
 - What is Worse Than Sugar? Artificial Sweetener
 - Natural Sweetener Options
 - Processed Foods
 - About 60% of Calories in The U.S. Diet
- Misconception: Fat Rich Foods are Unhealthy
 - Are Not Bad
 - Are Part of a Healthy Diet
 - High-fat Diets Linked to Weight Loss
 - Quality Matters
 - Good Fats vs. Bad Fats
 - The Good Fat
- Misconception: Fat in Meats are Unhealthy
 - Are Not Bad
 - Can Be Part of a Healthy Diet
 - Quality Matters
 - Problems with Conventional Meats
 - Bioaccumulation
 - Biomagnification
 - Omega Ratios in Grass-fed Cattle vs. Omega Ratios in Grain-Fed Cattle
 - Change the Animal Product
- Misconception: Cholesterol is Harmful
 - Is Not Naturally Bad for You
 - What is Cholesterol?
 - High-density lipoproteins (HDL) vs. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL)
 - Causes of High Cholesterol
 - Risk Factors Within Your Control
 - Risk Factors Outside of Your Control
 - Truth About Cholesterol
 - Necessary for Bodily Processes
 - “Good” cholesterol vs. “bad” cholesterol
 - Oxidization of Cholesterol
 - How to Naturally Lower Cholesterol
- Grains
 - Good or Bad for You Depends on Who You Are
- Misconception: “Approved” Means Healthy
 - Approved by the FDA and USDA Does Not Ensure a Healthy Product
 - Pop Tarts vs. Avocados
 - Common Food Additives
 - Label Reading Do’s

- Toxic Foods
 - EWG’s 2021 Dirty Dozen
 - EWG’s 2021 Clean Fifteen
 - Shopping Tips
 - Plan Your Meals for the Week
 - Take a List
 - Keep the “Basics” Stocked for Meals on the Fly
 - Spend More Time Planning/Shopping Than Cooking
 - Read Labels
 - Use the Pesticide Guide
 - Misconception: Healthy Eating is Not Hard
 - What is a Healthy Diet?
 - Paleo Diet
 - Mediterranean Diet
 - Food to Avoid
 - Practical Tips for a Healthy and Sustainable Diet
 - Tips from Blue Zones
 - General Healthy Nutrition Tips
 - Better Than Nothing Behavior
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Identify individual participant’s diet
 - Cultivate familiarity, confidence, access, and enjoyability of cooking with healthy foods
 - Understand the negative impacts an unhealthy diet can have on health outcomes
 - Understand the positive impacts a healthy diet can have on health outcomes
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants have increased daily intake of fruits and vegetables
 - Target: 80% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants’ daily food preparation to includes one meal incorporating fresh ingredients.
 - Target: 80% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - An increase in participant’s use of fresh produce
 - Target: 40% increase among all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants

Exercise

- Negative Impacts of Sitting
 - Sedentary Behavior Linked to Diseases
- Exercise and Cancer Prevention
 - High Physical Activity Linked to a Lower Risk of Several Cancers
- Exercise and Heart Health
 - Summary of Heart Health Benefits Linked to Exercise

- Exercise Can Reduce Risk for Those with Heart Disease
- Better Than Nothing Behavior
- Basic HIIT Plan
- Fit While You Sit
 - Hands and Forearms
 - Head and Neck
 - Shoulders
 - Core
 - Fitness
 - Seated Exercises
- Heart Health Exercises
 - Aerobics
 - Strength Training
 - Flexibility
- At-Home Workout
 - [30 Moves to Make the Most of Your At-Home Workout](#)
- Trainer and Dietician Tips from Carle Health & Fitness Center
 - [Trainer and Dietician Tips](#)
- Constitution Trail Maps
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand the negative impact a sedentary lifestyle has on health outcomes
 - Understand the positive impact a physically active lifestyle has on health outcomes
 - Increased familiarity with types of exercise
 - Create individual exercise plans
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaging in some form of daily physical activity
 - Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants

Toxins

- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Environmental Wellness
 - Intellectual Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
- What Are Toxins?
- Toxins in Food
 - Seven Toxins in Food
 - Common Food Additives
 - How to Avoid Food Additives

- Processed Foods
- EWG's 2021 Dirty Dozen
- EWG's 2021 Clean Fifteen
 - <https://www.ewg.org/>
- Toxins in Cleaning Supplies
 - Supplies to Avoid
 - Ingredients to Avoid
- Toxins Cookware and Containers
 - Nonstick Cookware
 - Plastic Containers
- Toxins in Air
- Toxins in Water
- What We Can Control
- Resources
 - Environmental Working Group website
 - <https://www.ewg.org/>
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand what toxins are and how they affect you
 - Understand how to reduce toxins and what we can control
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Overall increase in toxin awareness by Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants reducing exposure to toxins
 - Target: 20% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series Participants

Gut Health

- Topic for further development
- Outline of Conversation
- Facets of Wellness
 - Intellectual Wellness
 - Physical Wellness
- The Gut Microbiome
 - How to Improve Your Gut Microbiome

Oral Health

- Topic for further development.

Fitbit Program

Introduction

The Fitbit Program is a 6-8-week program that Wellness Lifestyle Series participants can opt into. Opting into or choosing not to participate in the program does not have any impact on a participant's standing with the Township. The Fitbit Program was established when the Township and the Bloomington Public Library were awarded twenty Fitbit devices from a grant from the National Network of the Library of Medicine. Participants in the Fitbit Program are given a Fitbit device and baseline body measurements are taken to compare with at the end of the 6-8-weeks.

Bloomington-Normal YMCA Partnership

Through a partnership with the Bloomington-Normal YMCA, Fitbit Program participants receive a free two-month membership. Participants are encouraged to make use of this membership and use the Fitbit device to track their health improvements during those two months.

Purpose and Goals

The main purpose of the Fitbit Program is to increase daily physical activity among Wellness Lifestyle Series participants. The hope is that participants will see a positive change in their health outcomes through the data tracking available on the Fitbit device and app. The device can track steps, heart rate, sleep patterns, active minutes, food and water intake, and weight. By hopefully seeing positive changes in these data points and their health outcomes, participants will be encouraged to continue physical activity after the conclusion of the Fitbit Program.

The main goals of the Fitbit Program are to:

- see an increase in familiarity with physical activity and exercises,
- see an increase in confidence while doing physical activity or exercises,
- see a positive change in participants' health outcomes, and
- design individual exercise plans

Audience

The audience for the Fitbit Program must be those receiving Township General Assistance. This is because the Fitbit devices belong to the Township and those receiving assistance are required to check in with Township for class and other appointments. Giving Fitbit devices to the public would be too risky given that they are not required to attend the class or have affiliation with the Township outside of the class meeting.

Data Collected

Measurements taken at the beginning and end of the Fitbit Program are:

- Weight (lbs.)
- Chest/Bust (in.)
- Left Bicep (in.)
- Right Bicep (in.)
- Abdomen (in.)
- Waist (in.)
- Hips (in.)
- Left Thigh (in.)
- Right Thigh (in.)

Data collected from the Fitbit device and app include:

- Active Minutes
- Steps
- Miles
- Calories
- Heart Rate
- Sleep
- Weight
- Food Intake
- Water Intake

Measurements taken at the beginning and end of the Fitbit Program are used for reporting to the National Network of the Library of Medicine. The data collected from the Fitbit device and app are for the participant and can be provided to the Township if the participant would like to do so.

Fitbit Program Outline

- Instructional Class on How to Use the Fitbit Device and App
 - Purpose and Goals
 - How to Set Up and Use the Fitbit Device and App
 - Compatible Apps
 - Measurements to Take
 - Bloomington-Normal YMCA membership
 - Exercises
 - Trail Maps
- Body and Weigh Measurements
- YMCA Membership

- Explanation of Membership
- Share Participant Information with YMCA
- Create Exercise Plans
 - Aim For At Least 150 Minutes of Physical Activity a Week
 - Participants Can Build Up to 150 Minutes of Physical Activity a Week
- **Topic Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Understand how to work the Fitbit device and app
 - Increased familiarity with types of exercise
 - Understand FITBIT Program and FITBIT Challenge
 - Create individual exercise plans
- **Topic Specific Trackable Targets**
 - Wellness Lifestyle Series participants engaging in some form of daily exercise
 - Target: 50% of all Wellness Lifestyle Series participants
 - Data collected from FITBIT Challenge
 - Active Minutes
 - Steps
 - Miles
 - Calories
 - Heart Rate
 - Sleep
 - Weight
 - Food Intake
 - Water Intake
 - Participant Testimonials