



New cooperative purchasing effort to offer public agencies access to lifesaving medications

In conjunction with President Obama's announcement of local, state and federal efforts to address the growing problem of opioid misuse and abuse, local leaders recently announced a new cooperative purchasing agreement to expand public agencies' access to potentially lifesaving opioid withdrawal medications.

The National Association of Counties (NACo), National League of Cities and United States Conference of Mayors, with the U.S. Communities Purchasing Alliance and Premier, Inc., have secured industry-leading discounts for naloxone and medications containing buprenorphine. These medications help prevent painful withdrawal symptoms when a person stops taking opioid drugs. The program pools the purchasing power of more than 62,000 agencies in state and local government and the non-profit sector.

"Medication-assisted opioid treatment programs can mean the difference between life and death," said National Association of Counties President Sallie Clark, commissioner, El Paso County, Colorado. "Counties are uniquely situated at the intersection of the local health, human services, justice and public safety systems. We see firsthand the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse and heroin use. This is a non-partisan issue, and we are implementing smart strategies to address this growing problem in our communities."

Additionally, as part of its Safe and Secure Counties Initiative, NACo is working with state associations of counties to develop policy recommendations and promote promising practices to address the opioid epidemic plaguing communities. Learn more at www.naco.org/resources.

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Grant will finance solar heating projects at Cook County highway garages



Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County President

Four Cook County Transportation and Highway Department (CCDoTH) facilities will be largely heated through a solar power project financed through a grant accepted by the County's Board of Commissioners.

The \$295,000 grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation will contribute to the County's continuing sustainability efforts by reducing reliance on gas-fired units that currently heat the facilities where trucks and road equipment are stored.

"We have set an ambitious goal of reaching an 80 percent reduction in our Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs) by the year 2050," said County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "Through this grant we can eliminate 80 percent of the need to heat these buildings through traditional methods, saving energy and also reducing our heating costs."

The grant funding will allow the County to install solar walls at CCDoTH garages in Des Plaines, Orland Park, Schaumburg and Riverdale. The solar walls will be constructed vertically and affixed to existing building walls with southern orientations to maximize their ability to harness solar power.

The solar thermal wall will directly convert the sun's rays into thermal energy, heating air and delivering it to indoor spaces. This is one of the few possible solutions for reducing dependency on traditional natural gas heat for large spaces such as the garages and will directly result in a reduction in the burning of fossil fuels. The project is expected to save the County \$47,000 annually and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 457 tons per year.

This direct sun-to-air heating will reduce the amount of heating load now met by the gas-fired unit heaters (GFUHS). Additionally, because the reduced load on the GFUHS will also lessen the current reliance on them, the County will likely see improved service life and lower maintenance costs.

Preckwinkle has made sustainability a key goal for the County since taking office in 2010. The County to date has benchmarked its energy use as a necessary first step toward reductions, is undertaking installation of new efficient heating/cooling units at County buildings, has replaced some of the older cars in its fleet with hybrids, and established policies such as the Demolition Debris Diversion ordinance, which significantly reduces the amount of waste from building demolitions going to landfills.

"Through the initiatives we already have under way, and others like this one, we will continue to make Cook County a national model of sustainability programs that foster both energy efficiency and decrease pollution," Preckwinkle said.

Christian County door-to-door transportation service newly available

Officials with a newly implemented public transit program in Christian County are hoping a wider variety of the population there will take advantage of the system and that it will pay economic dividends down the road.

After some fits and starts, Central Illinois Public Transit (CIPT), operated through the C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation, rolled out on Nov. 19 with Monday-through-Friday service in the county. Residents can use the door-to-door transportation to get to doctors appointments, get to work or work interviews or to go shopping. And while the ridership is open to anyone, marketing it, said Jennifer Moore, mobility manager for CIPT and Effingham County Public Transportation, has been a different ballgame.

"Public transportation in the rural community is still somewhat of a new concept," admitted Moore. "Most people think of it as transportation for senior citizens, for persons with disabilities and for low-income people. That is just not the case (exclusively). We are open to anyone, to any age, with any income. This is a big hurdle in marketing the program."

The challenges have also brought opportunities. Moore, who markets ridership in four of the seven central Illinois counties CIPT serves, has become a one-person band for the program, talking to groups of any size, offering to ride with people unsteady about the bus service and marketing the service for special outings.

Two of those outings included transporting a group of Taylorville High School students to a Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities program at O'Shea Builders in Springfield and transporting people to a food pantry at the high school just before Thanksgiving.



Central Illinois Public Transit employee Rick Kehias drives to Pana Community Hospital's Rehabilitation/Wellness Center to pick up a scheduled rider. David Spencer/The State Journal-Register

President's Message

by Deborah Sims, Cook County Commissioner



I would like to thank you all for your continued support of the Illinois Counties Association (ICA). Our organization continues to make strides in providing representation and support to county governments across the state. From the roads we drive on to the sheriffs' departments that keep our communities safe, counties are key to Illinois' quality of life.

As state and local governments evolve to meet the changing needs of the citizens we represent, counties will continue to play a prominent role. Because the challenges facing state government ultimately are faced by local government as well, a strong association is necessary to work with the state in the formation of common sense, and affordable public policy needed and deserved by our citizens.

Nearly every action taken by the executive and legislative branches of state government affects local government. As county elected officials, we must be involved in this process, representing the interests of the counties and people we serve. The participation of each and every county in Illinois is crucial to the ICA's ability to effectively represent the interests of county government. I urge county government personnel to actively engage in this process, staying informed through our communications to members, publications, website and organizational meetings.

The National Organization of Black County Officials, Inc. (NOBCO) is another such organization. A 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 1982, NOBCO serves vulnerable populations through education, training, outreach and advocacy. It provides resources to empower and transform communities into more sustainable environments to support a stronger and more viable America. The organization's primary focus is health and health care, public safety, pensions, civil rights, economic development, environmental matters, and social justice issues. Simply put, NOBCO is another association of county governments assembled for the purpose of serving and representing counties.

I am pleased to announce that this spring, Chicago, Illinois, will play host to NOBCO's annual conference on April 20-24, 2016 at the Hyatt McCormick Place Hotel. This year's conference has a particular focus on criminal justice, education, health, violence, pensions and economics, all topics that ICA's members struggle to address daily. I encourage all ICA members to attend and participate in this year's conference. It provides an opportunity for the ICA to learn about approaches taken by other counties across the nation in addressing these shared challenges. If you or your governmental body have successful strategies you would like to share, I encourage you to come and participate in this spring's conference. Your contribution and that of your colleagues may prove very helpful to the ICA membership in these difficult times.

As we head toward the future, the challenges facing counties will continue to grow. State and federal funding reductions, paired with increasing demands for services, will force counties to find innovative solutions to better serve their citizenry. We are at our strongest when we are working together, shaping the future of our great state of Illinois.

Christian County continued from page 1

"I have a lot of appreciation (for CIPT) in both those instances," said Amy Hagen, market president of U.S. Bank in Taylorville. "It's a demonstration that they want to be part of the community.

"Sometimes (a program like CIPT) has to figure out what it can do differently. But I know business people are thrilled that it's come about."



Economic impact

The service, said Christian County Board Chairman Paul Schmitz, could be a boon to a couple of the area's largest employers, including Grain Systems Inc., which is based in Taylorville and Assumption and is the world's largest manufacturer of steel farm bins, storage grains bins and grain silos; and MBM Foodservice Distribution., a national company that has a center in Taylorville.

CIPT director Kim Adair added that while the service increases residents' access and mobility, it could also "improve local economic development paths for future business growth."

Moore said it was too early to determine any measurable economic impact the service had on the county. From Nov. 19 to Nov. 30, Moore said 72 riders used the service.

Schmitz said the county board had tried to land a public transportation plan over the last five years. Earlier in the year, the county board picked the Senior Citizens Center in Taylorville as the plan's administrator in part because the center ran its own limited transportation service, but the Senior Center backed out in April citing its changed economic picture. That's when the board turned to C.E.F.S., which already operated transportation systems in Clay, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie, Shelby and Effingham counties.

"The county board was always supportive of what was going on (relative to public transportation)," said Schmitz. "Every time there was a black mark, we'd erase it and go on to the next step."

CIPT is not designed to be in competition with Senior Center transportation or local taxi service, said Moore. In fact, if CIPT can't accommodate riders, it refers them to those providers, Moore noted.

Many uses

The Rural Transit Factbook indicates that nearly 40 percent of Christian County's transit-dependent population – primarily senior citizens, persons with disabilities and low-income individuals – live in rural areas.

The factbook noted that as of 2009, there were 1,358 transit systems in rural areas across the country.

According to 2010 census figures, Christian County has a population of 34,800.

While some families may not have their own transportation, some don't even have the luxury of calling on family, friends or spouses to help get them around to doctors appointments or for shopping, said Moore. CIPT is working with doctors and hospitals on appointment times for patients that might be more amenable to the system's present schedule, she added.

Some riders are taking advantage of the new service in unique ways. One family, said Moore, uses CIPT to send their children to an after-school day care. Another woman has used it to visit her husband in a nursing facility.

Riders in Moultrie County have scheduled CIPT buses to take them to shopping trips in Mattoon and Decatur at designated times during the month.

Moore said the first month of CIPT's operation proved the demand is there, with the idea that the numbers can be increased.

"The obstacle is reaching those people who want transportation and don't know we're here," she said. "The focus is on anyone who needs a ride and doesn't already have one."

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AND WHO DOESN'T LIKE TO SAVE MONEY?



Will County eyes financing plan for capital improvement projects

Seven year plan includes new courthouse, sheriff's office and health department

The Will County Board discussed a \$225 million financing plan to fund construction of a new courthouse, sheriff's office, and health department building. The plan calls for shovels in the ground by next year and work continuing until 2022.

"The Board is going to move forward with a Long Range Building Plan to make the county more efficient and adequately meet the demands for our ever growing population," said County Board Speaker Jim Moustis. "These are very important public safety needs, and along with continuing to improve and upgrade our roads, a necessary investment in our future. I look forward to reaching a consensus on a financing plan."



"This is a fiscally responsible plan that doesn't raise taxes, uses existing revenues and only borrows what is necessary," said Mike Fricilone, chair of the county board's finance committee. "I look forward to seeing ground broken next year and building a Will County for the future."

The plan being discussed identifies eight revenue streams to finance the building of four facilities over the next seven years. The plan also ensures significant revenues are still allocated to road projects. Construction on a new sheriff's office building would begin in 2016 and conclude in 2017. Thereafter, a new courthouse in downtown Joliet and a satellite courthouse in the northern part of the county would get built, followed by the Health Department Building.

"We have examined all revenue options and put together a diverse package that includes existing property and sales taxes, courthouse and user fees, special funds, bonding rebates and contributions from the City of Joliet," said Mike Fricilone, chair of the county board's finance committee. "This is a fiscally responsible plan that doesn't raise taxes, uses existing revenues and only borrows what is necessary. I look forward to seeing ground broken next year and building a Will County for the future."

The current courthouse was built in 1969 when the county's population was 250,000; today the county has nearly 700,000 residents and is projected to grow to 1.2 million over the next 30 years. Its 23 courtrooms lack the necessary space and security and do not meet the minimum standards for safety and security as set by the Illinois Supreme Court. Will County has 35 judges, with one vacancy, who handle 80,000 cases annually.



This new courthouse is proposed to be constructed on the site of the former First Midwest Bank building in downtown Joliet. The county purchased this building in 2014. (Rendering courtesy of Wight and Company)

The new courthouse and judicial complex will house between 30 and 36 courtrooms, with a satellite courthouse in the northern portion of the county housing several more. The judicial complex will hold judges and numerous other departments including court clerk, state's attorney, public defender, court administration, jury commission, court reporters, and the probation department.

"All of these projects are crucial in addressing our long-term capital needs," said Ragan Freitag (R-Wilmington), chair of the county board's capital improvement's committee. "As a local attorney and frequent user of the courthouse, I see firsthand the importance of getting these projects underway and completed as soon as possible. The Sheriff's Office and Health Department are both overdue for new facilities that can meet the public safety needs of our county."

The Sheriff's Laraway Road campus will see new evidence storage and training buildings as well as a new administration building with space to consolidate public safety offices such as the Coroner's Office and Emergency Management services. Currently, there is a need for a central location for these functions that are now spread throughout the county. The Health Department will mark 70 years of service to Will County residents next year and provides comprehensive public health programs, behavioral health resources, and primary health care and dental services at facilities located in Joliet, Bolingbrook, and Monee.



ICA COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

As a non-profit association that provides services to county government, the Illinois Counties Association (ICA) is committed to promoting and advancing educational opportunities for Illinois students.

ICA will be awarding academic scholarships throughout the State of Illinois to students wishing to pursue higher education during the 2016-2017 academic year. For details or to apply online, visit IllinoisCountiesAssociation.org.



**Submission Deadline:
APRIL 30, 2016**



County health rankings and roadmaps

Building a culture of health, county by county

by Ruth Anne Tobias, DeKalb County Board

What makes a county a healthy place to live?

The first thought for many would be the presence of a great health care system – a hospital and good doctors and physician assistants or nurse practitioners. Professionals who can take care of your health needs. The second thought would be that the community where you live matters to your health for a variety of reasons. A third thought is that personal choices make a community healthy or not healthy. It would appear, then, that a healthy county combines the many attributes of good health care, vibrant social networks, clean environments, and personal responsibility.

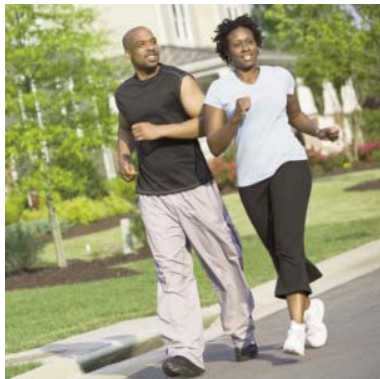
The County Health Rankings website (www.countyhealthrankings.org) will provide your county officials with information on which issues you could prioritize to improve total health, and make your county more inviting.

In searching online for characteristics of healthy communities, you can quickly find many sites, especially from public health departments all over the country, that outline what a healthy community is and how good health is supported. The usual components include positive social environments, good physical assets, economic opportunity, human development, and strong local institutions like schools, places of worship, and community organizations, all in addition to local healthcare. Why do these non-healthcare related topics matter so much in a healthy community, how do we measure them, and where can we see how our counties stack up?



ronmental, social, psychological and physical health, through the built environment, networks of care, education, and economic opportunity for a lifetime of good health.

The County Health Rankings are designed to ‘help counties understand what influences how healthy their residents are and how long they will live’, and then to use actionable data and strategies to make it easier for people to be healthy. In Illinois, the main unhealthy personal factors are tobacco, alcohol, and drug use; and the social/environmental factors are unemployment, children in poverty, poor high school graduation rates and community crime, along with poor housing and long commute times. These contribute to differences across counties in healthy outcomes and to excess premature unnecessary deaths, but they can be addressed with some assistance from the Roadmaps to Action Health Center at countyhealthrankings.org.



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Health indicators and characteristics

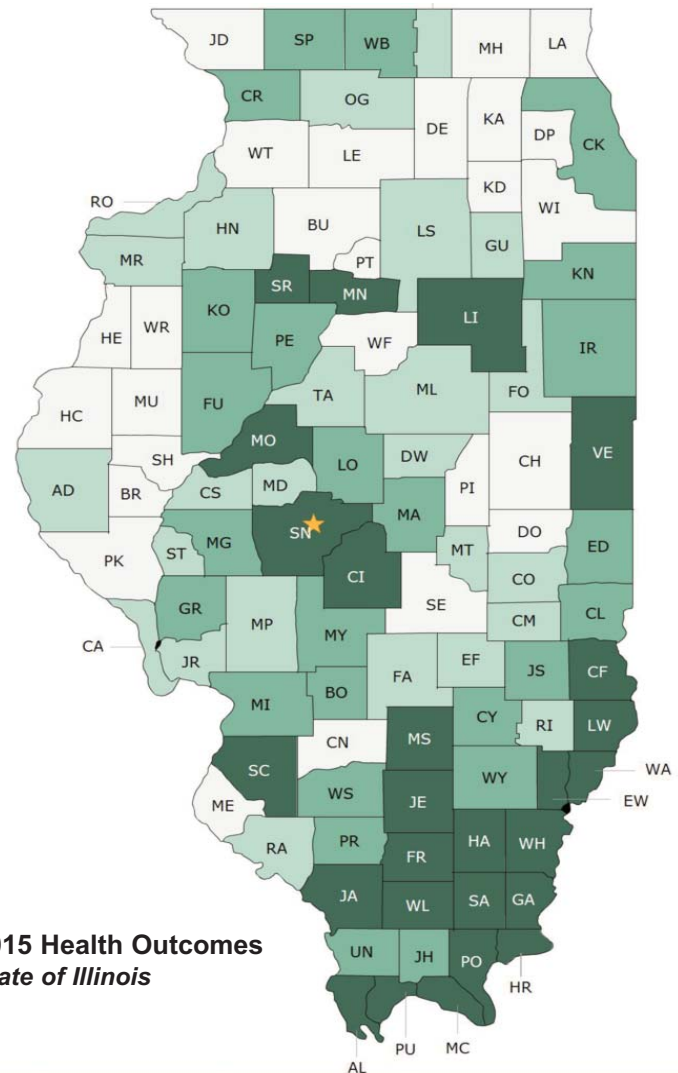
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has an online document called *Healthy People 2020*, the latest decadal iteration of the ‘grand plan’ for Americans’ good health. And the Healthy People 2020: Leading Health Indicators website (www.healthypeople.gov/2020/leading-health-indicators.org) details national and state progress toward positive goals on such characteristics as access to health services, environmental quality, maternal and child health, mental health, obesity and physical activity, oral health, social determinants of health and substance abuse. For the period from 2010-2014 there has been general improvement and progress on more than half of the 26 goals for a healthy population.

The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a statistical data comparison system for counties to compare themselves with a ‘peer’ group of counties that reports on mortality and disease counts, health care access and quality, health behaviors, social factors and the physical environment (www.cdc.gov/communityhealth/profile). Your county will be compared to peer counties similar to you on more than 20 different population characteristics and you will be compared as ‘Better’, ‘Moderate’ or ‘Worse’ than your peer counties on many of the 42 most recommended health metrics for community health assessment.

Each state Department of Public Health has like goals that it wants its population to meet, and collects data, available by county, to show how citizens are meeting those goals. In Illinois, the Illinois Department of Public Health collects and reports on social and physical health characteristics of its citizens through the national Behavioral Risk Factors Survey System, and also requires each county health department to create a five year plan – IPLAN – to show how people in each county are standing up for their good health. They also collect Vital Records Statistics on births and deaths among other topics so health workers can track trends.

There is another nationwide, county level system, supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute called County Health Rankings (www.countyhealthrankings.org) that takes advantage of much of this already available data.

These data are attractively packaged and easy to use and let you know what is keeping people healthy or making them sick. The site can also provide counties with roadmaps to evidence-informed strategies to improve on indicators that pinpoint poorer health outcomes. The goal of all this health data is leading the U.S. to population health management outcomes where we all work toward good health through prevention and timely care, rather than expensive emergency care or lifelong care of avoidable chronic diseases. We do this by investing in our communities and families and providing envi-



**2015 Health Outcomes
State of Illinois**

Rank 1-26 Rank 27-51 Rank 52-76 Rank 77-102

You can see from the accompanying map of the state where the darker colors mean poorer health outcomes that central and southern Illinois counties exhibit more issues with the measures of the length and quality of life. These include premature deaths and measures of the number of poor physical and mental health days, the percent of live births with low birthweight and the percentage of adults reporting poor health days.

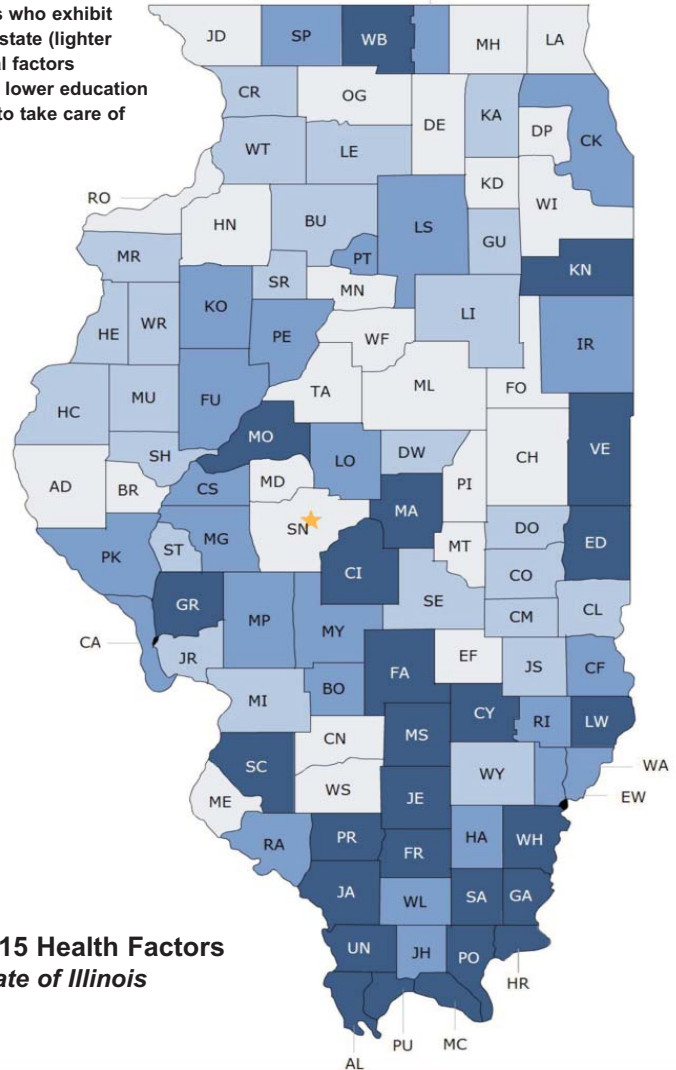
It would appear that there is a great need to look for assistance in meeting health challenges in Illinois counties. What contributes to the quality of life issues reported here?

continued on page 5

The blue map of health factors shows us a similar pattern where the percentage of adults who exhibit unhealthy behaviors increases as the data move to the middle and southern parts of the state (lighter colors on the map are healthier). These are influenced by all the social and environmental factors mentioned earlier that impact an individual's physical health, including smoking, obesity, lower education levels, lower income levels, poorer environmental quality, and fewer opportunities taken to take care of personal health along with community health .

Community health is based on the cumulative effects of everyone's health and on a supportive environment, so what can be done about making improvements in everyone's access to the good life of a healthy county? County public health departments are at the forefront of promoting good public health. They provide screenings for entry into Kindergarten, childhood immunizations, flu shots, food and milk supplements for mothers with new babies, health promotions, facility inspections, and animal control. Health departments watch out for residents' general good health – they prevent, protect, and promote healthy communities.

Public health departments work with other leaders in the area to provide programs that benefit residents and target the greatest needs in their own communities as identified in each local IPLAN 5 year assessments. They work with the rest of county government, citizens and local business and government leaders to provide bike and exercise paths to encourage healthy movement; to support local food networks for access to fresh food; to educate families about how to be a good family; and to support local education initiatives.



2015 Health Factors
State of Illinois

Rank 1-26 Rank 27-51 Rank 52-76 Rank 77-102



In Chicago, the Exercise Prescription Fitness Center Waivers provide free or reduced cost memberships at park district fitness centers based on a doctor's detailed prescription of safe levels of activity.

Now there is a new partner to assist in these major efforts. The County Health Rankings site adds a problem solving action component to assist local areas after the health issues have been highlighted – it is called County Roadmaps, and it is personalized for your community to help move you from data to action. The Roadmaps to Health Action Center is a one-stop shop of information to help any community member or leader to improve their community's health by addressing factors that we know influence health, such as education, income, and community safety. It will provide community coaches to give customized consultation, webinars with local leaders sharing tips on building a healthier community, a searchable database of evidence-informed policies and programs that can improve health, and total online step-by-step guidance to move your community to action.

Each step on the Action Cycle is a critical piece of making communities healthier. There is a guide for each step that describes key activities within each step and provides suggested tools, resources, and additional reading. You can start at Assess or enter the cycle at any step. Work Together and Communicate sit outside because they are needed throughout the Cycle. At the core of the Action Cycle are people from all walks of life because we know we can make our communities healthier if we all get involved.

Two Illinois-Iowa areas that have used this approach are Davenport in the Quad Cities region and Chicago and they are making a difference with 'park prescription programs. In the Quad Cities, one of the local health systems has partnered with Davenport Parks to develop park sites that encourage and promote healthy exercise and outdoor fitness for all ages. In Chicago, the Exercise Prescription Fitness Center Waivers provide free or reduced cost memberships at park district fitness centers based on a doctor's detailed prescription of safe levels of activity. These programs were developed in conjunction with the assistance of the County Roadmaps program and provide two national models for how to get health improvements moving.

Why do we want and need to focus on improving all the various kinds of community health? Because it is very expensive not to! Healthcare itself is one of the largest components of the American economy and of every family's annual budget. It costs a lot to be sick and not just for doctors' and hospital bills. It costs in lost productivity, less participation in the life of the community, and lost opportunity. It costs in lives cut short. And not having a healthy social and physical environment costs in lost economic development.

Communities with vibrant resources of all kinds – healthcare - education - jobs - appealing environments - good food supply – are communities where people will want to live and grow, and so become healthy counties.

Sangamon County Circuit Clerk's office now taking passport photos

The Sangamon County Circuit Clerk's office is now able to take photos when people apply for passports. While the county has been processing passport applications for decades, people had to get their photos taken at some other location.

"Normally, people would have to go to Walgreens or CVS or another facility and come in with their photos," Circuit Clerk Paul Palazzolo said. "We now will be able to take that photo for them and make it more of a one-stop shop for folks who would like to complete their passport application with us in the circuit clerk's office."

The circuit clerk's office charges \$10 for photos. Fees for a new passport are \$110 to the U.S. Department of State (USDS) and \$25 to the circuit clerk. Renewals are \$110 to USDS and nothing to the county. For children 15 and under, cost are \$80 for regular or renewals.



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Lake County Opioid Initiative launches Text-A-Tip

Anonymity makes it a comfortable place for students to voice concerns about themselves and others

LEAD, a Lake Forest based non-profit, is expanding its 24/7 anonymous Text-A-Tip program to include all communities in Lake County, IL. After successfully launching in Lake Forest/Lake Bluff the system has been extended to include towns along the North Shore and recently became available in McHenry County.

Text-A-Tip provides a 24/7 anonymous text-communication system to youth needing immediate mental health assistance for themselves or a friend. Members of the community can send a text message to a dedicated number and receive an immediate response from a licensed clinician while remaining completely anonymous. The anonymity makes it a comfortable place for students to share and provides a safe outlet for voicing concerns about themselves and others.



"I am excited to bring this program to the entire county and provide the people of Lake County a vehicle by which they can get support anonymously, said Michael Nerheim, Lake County State's Attorney. "This will, without a doubt, save lives."

"Thanks to the efforts of LEAD, Text-A-Tip has been hugely successful in offering youth an innovative way to seek help," said Michael G. Nerheim, Lake County State's Attorney. "I am excited to bring this program to the entire county and provide the people of Lake County a vehicle by which they can get support anonymously. This will, without a doubt, save lives."

"Text-A-Tip was created to give young people an outlet for anonymous, immediate help for themselves or their friends," said Andy Duran, executive director of LEAD. "Whether struggling with depression, drug or alcohol abuse, bullying or challenging family issues, we allow them to reach out for help using their preferred method of communication – text messaging."

How It Works:

Each community receives a unique ID which routes messages, in real-time, to a local on-call response team. All messages are sent through an off-site cloaking server that keeps the communication completely anonymous.

Anyone in Lake County wishing to use the system will simply text the phrase "LAKECO" to 274637.

Who Responds to the Texts?

The Response Team for Lake County consists of licensed/certified mental health professionals from Barrington Behavioral Health & Wellness who are on-call 24/7 to respond to messages. On-call clinicians from both their Barrington and Lake Zurich offices are responsible for responding appropriately to each communication and for following up whenever necessary. In the case of a life-threatening condition or criminal activity, emergency responders will be notified.

LEAD is proud to partner with the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center, Lake County Opioid Initiative, Lake County Regional Office of Education, Barrington Behavioral Health & Wellness and The Child, Adolescent and Family Recovery Center to bring this initiative to the whole of Lake County. Carol Calabresa, Lake County Board Vice-Chair, was responsible for securing funding for the expansion of Text-A-Tip into Lake County through the Lake County Board.

LEAD™ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to parents and other adults and their role in the promotion of healthy family relationships and the prevention of alcohol, drug use, and other risky behavior by youth. LEAD has served the Lake Forest, Lake Bluff and Knollwood, IL communities (population 30,000) for nearly 30 years, and now conducts trainings, workshops and presentations for both youth and adults all over the country. For more information visit www.leadingefforts.org or call (847) 295-9075.

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Madison County, City of Alton and non-profit join forces for home rehabilitation program

Madison County Community Development, in association with the City of Alton and Justine Petersen, a not-for-profit housing and redevelopment corporation, have teamed-up to create an innovative program to help homeowners in the Hunterstown Neighborhood rehabilitate their homes.

The Alton Home Emergency Rehabilitation Program is designed to preserve homes in strategic parts of the city and stabilize property values. "Importantly, the rehabilitation of the Hunterstown area will enhance the stability of the neighborhood and increase owners' pride in their homes," stated Madison County Chairman Alan J. Dunstan. "This is the type of public investment and progress that generates excitement and private interest in the area."

The Hunterstown Home Rehabilitation Program can provide qualified owners with a maximum of \$10,000 for home rehabilitation in the form of a five-year, zero percent forgivable loan with deferred payments until the date of forgiveness or the transfer of ownership.

Eligible home repairs include items that specifically address health and/or safety issues, roof, plumbing, HVAC and window repairs or replacements. Cosmetic improvements or changes to increase or reduce the size of the home will not be considered.

Applicants must own and personally occupy the property, have not received other rehabilitation assistance in the past five years, must be current on all property taxes and free of any debt owed to the City of Alton or Madison County.

"The sustainability of our neighborhoods is essential to the vitality of the City of Alton, and to Madison County," Dunstan said. "Programs such as the Home Emergency Rehabilitation Program helps build great neighborhoods and encourages those looking to buy a home to consider a neighborhood as a place where they want to invest their hard earned capital, live and raise their families."

The program is funded by Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). Madison County Community Development will administer the HUD grant and coordinate environmental reviews. The City of Alton and representatives from Justine Petersen will share responsibility for the implementation of the program.

Morgan County forms committee to discuss options for animal shelter

Morgan County Commissioners have formed a new committee to be lead by Commissioner Ginny Fanning that will consider plans for an expansion of the county animal shelter or building of a new facility.

In 2013, Philip Howard bequest \$385,000 to the county to be used for a new or expanded animal facility. The current shelter is owned by the City of Jacksonville so expansion may not be an option. In 2014, the shelter rescued 69 dogs and 332 cats with only 16 of the animals being euthanized. The committee will look into sites for a new building to include a city-owned lot south of the existing facility.

"It's a wonderful generous bequest from Mr. Howard, so we are just trying to be fiscally responsible and see what we are able to do," said Fanning. "We are super excited, because there is such a need for it."



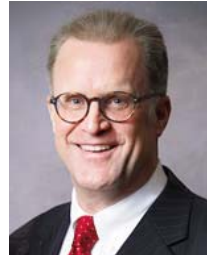
DuPage County retains AAA bond rating

DuPage County has retained its AAA bond rating, the highest possible, during recent reviews with Fitch Ratings and Standard & Poor's (S&P).

County Board Chairman Dan Cronin said the AAA bond rating is especially significant when many government entities are struggling with large deficits or unpaid obligations.

"DuPage County is committed to reducing the cost of local government and maximizing our tax dollars. It is rewarding to see our diligence recognized," Cronin said. "DuPage's AAA bond rating gives the County access to lower interest rates, providing excellent value for our citizens."

According to Fitch's, the bond rating reflects the County's strong financial standing, healthy reserves and manageable debt levels. It also praised the County's diverse local economy, low unemployment rate and high wealth levels. In the S&P report, analysts cited DuPage's strong economy, fiscal management and budgetary performance.



New Peoria County Maternal and Child Health report released

In January, the Peoria County Board of Health reviewed statistics included in the new 2014 Peoria County Maternal and Child Health Report released by the Peoria City/County Health Department. This is the first year for the report which examines preliminary birth data on various birth outcomes and characteristics of mothers including maternal race, age and geographic areas.

Monica Hendrickson, Epidemiologist at the Peoria City/County Health Department, states, "The Report helps us all see what is affecting the health of residents so, as a community, we can see where we need to improve. The health data suggests one challenge to maternal health lies in changing health behaviors such as smoking cessation and gaining early access to care during pregnancy, both of which are indicators for health outcomes. The Report is a tool that we can use to identify and develop initiatives or next steps to becoming a healthier community."

In 2014, Peoria County as a whole had better birth outcomes than Healthy People 2020, the national health promotion and prevention initiative that provides science-based objectives in improving population health. However, within certain Peoria County populations such as teens and African American women, birth outcomes were poorer than the rest of the county, state, and national values. To view the entire report, visit www.pcchd.org.

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FEMA to work with State on flood, storm damage assessments in Illinois counties

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will assist with damage assessments in nearly two dozen counties devastated by record and near-record flooding and severe storms in late December and early January.

"We want to do everything possible to help people and communities affected by this devastating flooding and the severe storms that preceded it," Governor Bruce Rauner said. "These damage assessments will provide us with greater detail as to the impact of these storms and could be used to support a request for federal assistance if the results indicate we meet federal requirements."

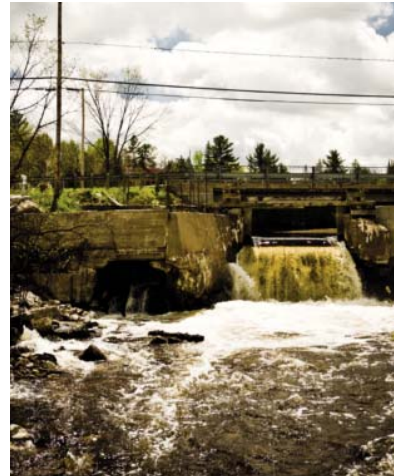
Personnel from FEMA, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and local emergency management agencies are expected to begin assessing damage to homes and businesses in Alexander, Christian, Clinton, Douglas, Iroquois, Jersey, Madison, Randolph, Sangamon and St. Clair counties on February 4.

FEMA will also work with the state and local officials on assessments of storm-related costs incurred by local governments in Alexander, Bureau, Calhoun, Cass, Cumberland, Iroquois, Jackson, Jersey, Madison, Marion, Mason, Menard, Monroe, Morgan, Moultrie, Pike, Randolph, St. Clair and Vermilion counties. Those assessments are expected to begin on February 1.

Gov. Rauner added Bureau and Mason counties to the state declaration for the disaster after local governments in those counties submitted information about their storm and flood-related expenses. Twenty-three counties previously were declared state disaster areas for this event.

The state provided assistance to many of the affected communities, including more than one million sandbags, 10,515 tons of rock, 4,546 tons of sand, 732 rolls of plastic, 8,600 hours by inmates filling and placing sandbags, 133,000 sandbags filled by inmates and more. The State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield was activated on December 28, 2016 to coordinate deployments of personnel and resources to help communities battle floodwaters.

There are two separate federal assistance programs. The Individual Assistance program offers grants and low-interest loans to people affected by disasters. The Public Assistance program provides reimbursement up to 75 percent of eligible costs incurred by local governments as they dealt with the disaster and subsequent recovery. While there is no defined damage amount for Individual Assistance, the state's past experience with requests for federal assistance shows that is usually takes hundreds of homes with severe damage to qualify for the program. The Public Assistance program has a population-based threshold, which for Illinois is \$18.1 million statewide. Once the state meets that threshold, individual counties also would need to meet a threshold of \$3.56 multiplied by the county's population.



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