



# MID-IOWA COMMUNITY ACTION

*Helping People. Changing Lives.  
Building Communities.*



**Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children**

## *Our Mission:*

Collaborate with our community to create a healthier life for families through education and outreach.

## *Our Community Action Plan*

### Steps towards Success!

As part of this program we developed a Community Action Plan (CAP). In this plan we identified key objectives, from a list provided by NWA, which helped us strive towards our goal of creating healthier lives for families in Marshall and Tama Counties. We have identified these objectives as our primary goals:

- Increase the number of hospitals, primary care providers, and nonprofit organizations that receive basic training in WIC services & benefits, management services referrals, and breastfeeding in the target community.

In this objective we started strong with some early gains in breastfeeding at our local hospital. However, sadly our gains were followed by setbacks as our only hospital declared bankruptcy. Now, we are moving forward slowly as we wait for the hospital to transition to its new ownership.

We have found that when families are provided with contact information to a program they may qualify for, often the family may not follow up and make contact with the program or services they were referred to. Working with our community partners we are implementing a universal referral for which would allow clients to be easily connected by the providers for the services they are eligible for without needing to make initial contact themselves.

## *Project Overview*

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Healthy Mothers and Children Coalition was formed with the Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children project through the NWA and CDC. Healthy Mothers and Children Serves Marshall and Tama Counties, two rural counties in Iowa. Both counties scored poorly in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Iowa County Health Rankings report which is why these counties were selected out of Mid-Iowa Community Action's five core counties.

Along with scoring poorly on the county health ranking report, we find a high percentage of the population living in poverty in these counties. Though both counties are rural in nature, there is an imbalance of resources between them. Marshall County having a larger population, but smaller land size, finds it has many more resources than Tama, which has a smaller population and a larger land size. Often Tama residents will come to Marshall County for medical services and even basic shopping needs.

## Health Mothers and Children

- Increase the number of Grocery and Convenience/comer stores with in-store placement and promotion strategies for healthy foods.

This goal was much more challenging than what was expected. For being a small rural community it is surprising how few non-cooperate chain stores there are in our community. Sadly, corporate entities made it difficult to effect even small changes in our local stores. However, we were able to implement in one grocery store, one gas station, and a small comer store which is located in the poorest part of our Marshalltown. There is an interesting observation we made during our efforts; after we reached out to several corporate chain locations and were turned down, it was noted that several of the chains then soon after implanted changes that would have been exactly the type of changes we would have helped create.

- Increase the number of local businesses that publicly promote and welcome breastfeeding in the community.

This is where we saw the largest impact during our program. Originally, we only intended to reach out to grocery stores, restaurants, and a few non-profits in the community. However, as word spread of our efforts we found that far more places were interested in our efforts. We have added local libraries, a pharmacy, daycares, one k-12 school district, and even one community college district. We currently have 14 businesses/organization certified as breastfeeding friendly and they occupy nearly 25 buildings.

- Increase public and partner messaging on CPHMC efforts and achievements.

We have enjoyed amazing support in these efforts from our local media. Marshalltown's local paper is always happy to write up a store to print about our efforts. KFJB radio station has offered us free air time repeatedly. A rather new partnership forming in December was with Marshalltown Community Television (McTV), a city owned local television station. In an effort to find new ways to promote healthy foods, McTV was excited to partner with us to create a healthy food and living show. We are filming a 10-episode pilot season which will air Mid-February through the end of June. Episodes will also be posted on social media sites such as YouTube as to reach a larger audience.



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Rachael Black  
Mid-Iowa Community Action  
1101 South 18th Avenue  
Marshalltown, IA 50158  
(P) 641.752.7162 ext. 118

