

Time for a Healthier YOUinta County

What would a healthy Uinta County look like?

Go on, close your eyes for a second and envision it... What do you see?
(By the way...Please share your vision with us on Facebook!)

There are probably varied visions of what a healthy community might look like, but there would likely be more similarities. And put them all together and they would paint a picture of a pretty fabulous place! Health is key to feeling secure, to feeling like life is good, to being happy, and to an overall sense of well-being.

Working toward that very goal, that idealistic vision of a Healthy Uinta County is exactly the job description of Uinta County Public Health.

It is both a tall order and a privilege to strive for. It starts with the focus: While doctors, clinics, psychologists, counselors, urgent care centers and the hospital care for and work toward the health of *individuals*, public health has the mandate of working toward the general health of the *whole population*.

Those working at the *individual level* in health care diagnose and treat individual people, utilizing mostly medical interventions, such as medication, surgery or therapy. Having access to this sort of individualized care is hugely important for the overall health of a community, and so as part of its job, public health also seeks to support and promote appropriate medical care and intervention.

But in addition, those working in Public Health, in *population-based health care*, look at the whole population with heavy emphasis on preventing sickness and injury and promoting healthy behaviors. This takes a wide approach, including such interventions as education, motivation, supporting individual healthcare access, and looking at environmental and other societal factors.

With guidance from the Wyoming Department of Health, this broad vision has been broken down into a four-piece mission, to provide clarity and guidance in what we do to promote a healthy county:

1. Prevent Disease & Injury,
2. Promote Healthy Lifestyles,
3. Protect Community Health, and
4. Prepare for Emergencies and Threats.

We craft and implement programs, services and campaigns all aimed at improving the health of our county that fit within one of these four mission statements.

To work toward and attain that beautiful vision of a healthy community requires everyone's attention and support. This is an opportune and important time to gather input and feedback and strive to muster community will and involvement in this vision.

It is an opportune time because we have great opportunities for affecting change in our community's health—it seems that the idea of taking charge and ownership of one's own health is gaining popularity, while at the same time we have unprecedented access to health information, as well as the tool of social media to assist with motivation and support.

And it is an important time, because the current status of our community's health is not good.

Every year Wyoming's counties are ranked according to health by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (a large, well-respected health research group.) This year we dropped to 21st... out of 23 counties.

We are only above Rawlins and Riverton in terms of health! Rawlins is Rawlins, and Fremont County has the reservation. So, yeah, not great. But, of course, it's not just about the ranking and being only better than those two communities. That rank number represents suffering and disease and less-than-ideal living. It means rising healthcare costs for our community members. It means frustrating and demoralizing lack of independence.

So, what do we do? Where do we go from here?

We go up! Let's go up! Let's work together to improve our collective health! The first step is to take charge of your own life and health and soon, together, we'll rise in the rankings! A healthy YOU is a Healthy Uinta County (A Healthy YOUinta County?!) Let's start a health movement in our community!

If you need ideas about where you can start being more healthy for yourself, come visit us at Public Health. Also, look for ideas, promotions, tips, strategies, positive discussion, etc. both here in this column and on our Facebook page—info will all be health-related in some way, and all with the purpose of promoting healthy behaviors and supporting people as they try to make changes.

What does a healthy Uinta County look like? It looks amazing. Can we work toward it? Absolutely! But we need everyone. Please join the movement—the movement toward a healthy YOUinta County!