

# Healthy Active Arkansas Case Study: Lafayette County Leadership Council



## CASE STUDY

November 2017

*Obesity causes or exacerbates numerous chronic diseases and conditions that can lead to death, including diabetes and hypertension. In an effort to address the obesity epidemic in Arkansas—which affects more than one-third of adults in our state—the governor-led Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) initiative provides a 10-year framework with phased goals to increase the percentage of Arkansans who are at a healthy weight. The HAA plan is comprised of nine priority areas in which individuals and communities can take action to encourage and enable healthier lifestyles. Supported by funding from the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) has convened five learning network events across the state and has engaged, recruited, and activated a network of local champions to assist in meeting these goals. This case study is part of a series of success stories highlighting action-plan progress from the HAA learning network. Visit [achi.net](http://achi.net) for more resources, including additional case studies and a structured tool to create your own action plan for your community.*

## HEALTHY ACTIVE ARKANSAS STATEWIDE LEARNING NETWORK

Nearly 250 city and county officials, hospital executives, superintendents, college administrators, community advocates, and others have joined the Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) network and have committed to changing norms and behaviors with respect to nutrition and physical activity where they live, work, and play. During five regional meetings throughout the state, network members generated more than 100 action plans identifying strategies, barriers, and partners to create change in at least one of the nine priority areas.

ACHI's fifth learning network meeting, in Magnolia, highlighted a unique nonprofit civic organization, the Lafayette County Leadership Council (LCLC). The LCLC's goals are to promote economic development, provide and assist in charitable community activities, improve quality of life in the county, and cultivate educational improvements of all residents. These goals align with two of the nine HAA priority areas: improving the physical and built environment (Priority Area 1), and ensuring physical education and activity in schools – early child care through college (Priority Area 4).

## LAFAYETTE COUNTY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The LCLC organized as a nonprofit charitable organization in 2014 with a mission to promote the interest, welfare, and educational excellence of Lafayette County through its endeavors. The LCLC serves as a platform for improving the quality of life and educational opportunities for the residents of Lafayette County and is open to any resident of the county to join. The vision of LCLC is to empower Lafayette County to establish itself as an economically diverse, productive, and self-sufficient county through farm and industry, business ventures, health awareness, and the welfare and development of youth.

Ethan Dunbar, president of LCLC, grew up in Lafayette County and left to pursue a 33-year career in the United States Army, before retiring as command sergeant major. After several return visits to Lafayette County, Dunbar realized that Lafayette County was devoid of real opportunities for children and young adults and experienced high unemployment and poverty rates. Recognizing a vacancy in active community leadership that left Lafayette County residents with very little structure and mentorship outside of the public school system, Dunbar decided “to return home and create this organization.”

LCLC Great American Cleanup

## LAFAYETTE COUNTY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL SUCCESSES

Since 2014, the LCLC has made a significant impact in Lafayette County by increasing community engagement. For example, the council orchestrated community trash collection as part of the “Great American Cleanup” in 2015. During this event, they collected 38 bags of trash from the roadways of Lewisville. The LCLC also acquired the former Stamps elementary school campus and has repaired and reopened the gym to host physical-activity related programs for



*ACHI is a nonpartisan, independent, health policy center that serves as a catalyst to improve the health of Arkansans.*

1401 W Capitol Avenue, Suite 300 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 • (501) 526-2244 • [www.achi.net](http://www.achi.net)

children and the community at large. Their 2016 Memorial Day three-on-three basketball tournament incorporated a health fair and blood drive, drawing 300 attendees. The council sponsors quarterly 5K walk/run events with an average of 15 participants in three age ranges and a four-team soccer league for ages 6 to 12.

The LCLC was the recipient of six grants between 2015-2016, totaling \$9,800 for gymnasium repairs, a “condition

LCLC Gymnasium



assessment report” for the recreational complex, an after-school sports program for children ages 6 to 9, community development, and a garden project. The council is also working with Smiles of Arkansas to set up monthly dental services to county residents to address the absence of a dentist in the county. The LCLC has served approximately 1,500 children and adults during its existence.

LCLC Quarterly 5K Walk/Run



## LAFAYETTE COUNTY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL NEXT STEPS

The LCLC expects to continue working toward converting the gym into a more comprehensive community recreational complex, increasing business and community engagement and involvement, and bridging the gap between perceived social and cultural differences in the community. The LCLC estimates that the community recreational complex will create between eight to 10 jobs for residents in the community and numerous volunteer opportunities. According to Dunbar, “there is a compelling need in this community to provide activities to increase quality of life and education, as well as physical activity.”

## REFERENCES

- Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
- Learn more about the Lafayette County Leadership Council:
  - <https://www.lafayettecountylc.org/>
  - <https://www.facebook.com/Lafayette-County-Leadership-Council-1597576607131187/>

### *Disclaimer*

*This case study includes information obtained during a series of interviews with Ethan Dunbar, president of Lafayette County Leadership Council. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) received written permission to use this information. Additional information was gathered from the Healthy Active Arkansas plan and the Lafayette County Leadership Council website and Facebook page.*