

Healthy Active Arkansas Case Study: Van Buren County Committee for Health Improvement



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 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.

The third of ACHI's five regional learning network meetings, in Clarksville, resulted in the development of an action plan by Roger Hooper, Van Buren County Judge, to engage and educate local leaders on the HAA framework. Judge Hooper's goal was to invite collaboration among local leaders in three of nine HAA priority areas: nutritional standards in government, institutions and the private sector (Priority Area 2); sugar-sweetened beverage reduction (Priority Area 7); and marketing (Priority Area 9).

JUDGE HOOPER'S JOURNEY

Judge Hooper, currently in his fourth term as county judge in Van Buren County, has been a staunch advocate for increasing economic opportunities for its residents. As part of an overall economic strategy, Judge Hooper understands that having a healthy workforce is crucial in the decision-making process for companies, and part of the solution begins with leadership. After battling a number of health issues, Judge Hooper took actions to change his personal behavior to address his diabetes. His overall goal was to reduce his HbA1C level (measure of average levels of blood glucose over three months) as part of his diabetes management. Activities undertaken by Judge Hooper included physical activity (walking at least 150 minutes a week), eating better, drinking more water, and reducing sugar-sweetened beverage intake. Since January 2017, Judge Hooper has lost 48 pounds, reduced his HbA1C from 10 percent to 5.9 percent, reduced the number of medications taken from three to one, and reduced his medication cost per month by almost \$1,000.

VAN BUREN COUNTY COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Following the learning network meeting in Clarksville, Judge Hooper contacted several community leaders to gauge their willingness to participate as members of a new committee tasked with improving the health and well-being of Van Buren County residents. The Van Buren County Committee for Health Improvement's members include representatives from the Van Buren County Judge's office, Arkansas Association of Counties, Arkansas Department of Health, Ozark Health, Scarberry Insurance Agency, and Clinton School District Superintendent and School Wellness Chair.

Van Buren County Committee for Health Improvement Meeting



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

On Aug. 16, 2017, Judge Hooper convened a meeting to discuss the HAA initiative and mechanisms to increase health awareness and activities in Van Buren County. Adopting suggestions from the regional meeting in Clarksville, Judge Hooper catered the meeting with healthy sandwiches, baked chips, unsweetened tea and water, an action step from nutrition standards in government (Priority Area 2) and sugar-sweetened beverage reduction (Priority Area 7). During the meeting, attendees completed an onsite questionnaire about their organizational level of involvement and the ease with which their organizations could initiate activities in the nine priority areas. Judge Hooper signaled his intent to introduce action plans and an environmental assessment to the Van Buren County Quorum Court.

Judge Hooper challenged attendees to:

- Complete an action plan
- Perform an environmental assessment of healthy options within their organizations and in the community

NEXT STEPS

In September 2017, the Committee completed the environmental scan and submitted the information to Judge Hooper. The remaining task is the generation of action plans to be submitted to Judge Hooper and then to the Quorum Court. Judge Hooper anticipates a robust discussion towards integrating a broad plan for addressing the health issues in the county.

REFERENCES

- Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
- Learn more about Van Buren County, Arkansas: <http://www.vanburencountyark.com/blog/2016/sep/1/county-judges-newsletter>
- Learn more: https://ozarkopp.org/news/article/_6.html

Disclaimer

This case study includes information obtained during a series of interviews with Roger Hooper, Van Buren County Judge. 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 Van Buren City Council website.