



# Health News That's New

# Health Partners Connections

*Words from Health Partners Chairman, Joe Liszak....*

The Health Improvement Cycle. Health Partners has talked of it before in this and other venues, and we are knee deep in it right now. Over the last four years, the *2001 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment* became a measuring tool of health status for many organizations throughout Sandusky County. It has been referenced time and again in decision-making processes for youth programming, grant applications, and fund distribution from local boards. We are proud of the work that was done, and have been looking forward to its successful continuation.

We have arrived at an important point in the Health Cycle. Health Partners made the decision to reassess the people of Sandusky County (age 12-75) every four years. This year is that notable fourth year. As this is written, 900 surveys are being sent by mail to randomly chosen adults across the county. Later this fall,

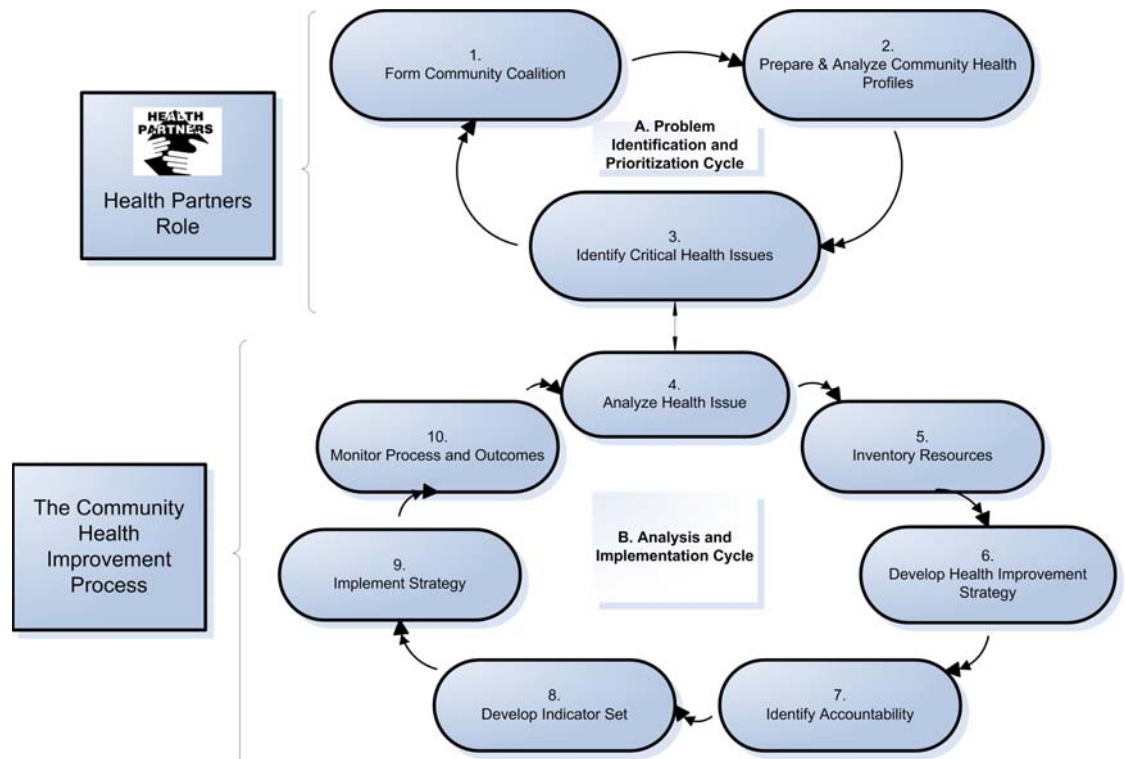
we hope to be in the schools administering the survey to 12-18-year-olds.

The surveys are little changed from the surveys used in 2001. They are still based on the Centers for Disease Control's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey and Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Health Partners did decide to contract with a different agency this time, and are employing a different methodology (see page 2). The survey also has Institutional Review Board approval, which will allow for greater validity of the results.

Health Partners is looking forward to garnering the responses of the participants, and to releasing the results of the *2005 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment*. We will look at the results, release them to the community, track the results over the last four years, and look toward the future. In other words, continue the Health Improvement Cycle.

## Health Partners Role in the Health Improvement Cycle



## 2005 Survey Methodology

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The methodology of this year's adult assessment differs from the 2001 procedure. We are still surveying adults age 19-75 throughout Sandusky County, but have decided to use a random mail system this time.

Health Partners has contracted with the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) and their associates from the University of Toledo. HCNO has recently been granted Institutional Review Board approval for this survey process.

A random selection of addresses was purchased from American Clearinghouse in Louisville, KY. This provided for 800 residents to receive the survey. Memorial Hospital also helped obtain addresses for the minority population, and this will help to oversample the Hispanic population.

Before mailing the survey to the adults, an advance letter was mailed to the randomly chosen adults in Sandusky County. The letter was printed on Health Partners letterhead, and was signed by the Health Commissioner. The letter explained the project, and also informed the recipient that their confidentiality would be protected.

Following the advance letter, a three-wave mailing procedure is used to help maximize the survey return rate. The first mailing includes a letter on Health Partners letterhead, a survey, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and a two-dollar



bill as an incentive. The second mailing follows about two weeks later with a reminder letter, another copy of the survey, and another reply envelope. Two weeks later, reminder postcards are sent those who have not yet returned the survey.

The response rate of this method in other counties has been in the 70%-range. Sandusky County is hoping to have a similarly high response rate with this technique.

The youth will be surveyed in the schools. Classrooms will be randomly chosen based on general classes such as English or Health. The classrooms chosen will be given a \$50 incentive as a thank you to the school.

## Priority Issues

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After the 2001 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment was completed, Partners evaluated the results and came up with six priority issues:

- Teen Sexual Behavior & Outcomes
- Depression & Suicide
- Alcohol Consumption & Driving Under the Influence
- Tobacco Use
- Diabetes & Weight Control
- Lack of Health Care Coverage

In the following years, the Assessment became a tool for groups focusing on these issues to reference.

The 2005 Assessment will allow for tracking of trends over the last four years. Because of a new methodology, direct comparisons will not be used for 2001 and 2005, but Sandusky County will certainly have a broader view of its progress over the last four years.

These priority issues may remain the top issues for Health Partners, or new concerns may arise. It will be Health Partners' priority to resolve.

"New knowledge is the most valuable commodity on earth. The more truth we have to work with, the richer we become."

-Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*, May, 1973

## Red Ribbon Activities

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2005 marks the 20th anniversary of the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Drug Enforcement Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena

at the hands of drug traffickers in Mexico. At that time, Kiki’s friends and neighbors wore red satin ribbons to show that they would continue his fight against illegal drugs. The Red Ribbon Campaign is now the oldest and largest drug prevention program, reaching millions of young people during Red Ribbon Week, October 23-31. (Source: [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov))

This year also marks the first time that Sandusky County has come together to have an orchestrated effort across the county schools for Red Ribbon Week. Prevention Partnership invited all of the schools to come together and choose theme days, contests and materials for the youth of Sandusky County. The response was very positive, and the committee generated many ideas.

With the help of a fund-raising campaign, Prevention Partnership was able to secure funds to purchase red silicone bracelets for all students in grades K-8, stamped with the theme: “Drug-Free 24/7”. The high schools are participating in a Red Ribbon art contest, whose winners will be displayed on sponsored billboards throughout the county.

The students will also be able to participate on the Theme Days, which are:

- Mon., Oct. 24 *Elect to be Drug-Free*  
(students wear red, white and blue)
- Tues., Oct. 25 *Don’t Let Drugs Turn you Inside Out*  
(students wear clothes inside out)
- Wed., Oct. 26 *National Wear Red Day*
- Thurs., Oct. 27 *Being Drug-Free is No Sweat*  
(students wear sweats)
- Fri., Oct. 28 *Team Up Against Drugs*  
(spirit day, team attire)

Prevention Partnership is organizing a **Family Fest** to coordinate with Red Ribbon Week. It will be held on Tuesday, October 25 at the Terra Community College Student Activity Center from 6:00 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. Area organizations will have informational booths on health and safety, as well as activities for the children.



“I...appreciate all those involved with the Red Ribbon Campaign. You are soldiers in the armies of compassion and are helping to foster a culture of responsibility and citizenship among our country’s young people.”

*-George W. Bush, in a letter to the 2005 National Red Ribbon Celebration*

## September is National 5-A-Day Month

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The 5-A-Day for Better Health Program is a national initiative to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables by all Americans to 5 to 9 servings a day. Eating 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day will promote good health and reduce the risk of many cancers, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other chronic diseases. Men should try to eat 9 servings a day of fruit and vegetables. Women should aim for 7 servings a day of fruits and vegetables.

For more information on the benefits of healthy eating and information on what to eat, visit the 5-A-Day website at <http://www.5aday.gov>





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Visit Health Partners at:

[http://www.sanduskycohd.org/Health\\_Partner.asp](http://www.sanduskycohd.org/Health_Partner.asp)

**Health Partners members:**

- **Bellevue City Health Department**
- **Bellevue Hospital**
- **Community Health Services**
- **Firelands Counseling & Recovery Services**
- **Francis Aona, MD**
- **Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Sandusky, & Wyandot Counties**
- **Memorial Hospital**
- **Sandusky County Family & Children First Council**
- **Sandusky County Health Department**
- **St. Francis Health Care Centre**

Established in 1993, Health Partners has always been dedicated to improving the quality of life for Sandusky County residents by identifying and addressing local health issues. Health Partners, in conjunction with The Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio is currently conducting a 2005 health needs assessment. This assessment, a customized version of CDC BRFSS/YRBS (Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System/ Youth Risk Behavior Survey), allows comparison of health status with that of the region, state, and US.

**Need health information for grants, reports, and other needs?** Call the Data Center at the Sandusky County Health Department. This center resulted from collaboration between Health Partners and the Health Department. Staffed by Rebecca Holland, a full-time health data evaluation specialist, the Data Center is a community resource featuring local, state, and national health, demographic, and miscellaneous statistics. The Data Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00-4:30 pm. Please call 419-334-6377 or e-mail requests to [rholland@sanduskycohd.org](mailto:rholland@sanduskycohd.org).