

Marion County HEAL MAPPS Community Action Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marion County, Ohio ranks 87 out of 88 counties in Ohio for Overall Health Factors, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2018 County Health Rankings. The obesity rate is 33 percent and around 17 percent of the county's population is food insecure. Research suggests that the built environment can influence healthy eating and physical activity.

Over a three-month period, Harding High School students mapped features throughout Marion using the HEAL MAPPS™ process (Healthy Eating Active Living: Mapping Attributes using Participatory Photographic Surveys). HEAL MAPPS is a research process that uses photography, GPS and GIS technology, and residents' voiced perceptions to address food access, healthy eating, and physical activity.

The student mappers documented 51 photos and two routes that were included in presentations to provoke a larger community conversation. Photographs were displayed to a large group on September 25, 2018, and stakeholders were polled as to whether the feature made eating healthy or being physically active easier or harder for themselves or others in the community.

The HEAL MAPPS team at OSU Extension analyzed the conversations to determine community readiness for policies, systems, and environment changes related to obesity and food insecurity. The following actions are recommended:

- **Raise awareness about existing community nutrition resources** to increase access and utilization. Be clear and provide detailed information about community programs and initiatives.
- **Evaluate existing community programs** in order to improve services. Strong evaluation can ensure continued support and sustainability of programs and services. An engaged and diverse evaluation team can lead to more robust improvement efforts.
- **Implement the Collective Impact framework** to develop mutually reinforcing activities and reduce duplication.

In addition, the following recommendations represent those Marion community members who shared their ideas during the facilitated discussion of the photographed community features:

- **Increase awareness of existing resources.** Consider improving marketing efforts through a community bulletin, social media, churches, and parks.
- **Improve public transportation** by increasing hours of availability and radius of routes, especially to and from distant neighborhoods and grocery stores
- **Offer year-round free meals** for families throughout the year. Provide clear communication of hours of operation, location, and eligibility.
- **Offer more opportunities for nutrition education** in the community, in schools K-12 and public spaces
- **Work with corner and convenience stores** to incentives healthy and affordable food options

To view photographs and routes visit go.osu.edu/MarionFoodMapping or to learn more, contact: Whitney Gherman, OSU Extension Educator (740) 223-4040 or Gherman.12@osu.edu

