

Leveraging a Community's Talents and Resources to Embrace Healthy Living: Residents Recognize and Act to Improve Community Health

STEPS
2018

INITIATIVE	Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions (STEPS)
LOCATION	Seneca County
YEAR LAUNCHED	2013
AFFILIATION	S2AY is a horizontal network of the eight rural Public Health Departments in the Finger Lakes region
ONLINE	www.senecasteps.org
PEOPLE SERVED	10,000+ residents of the towns of Covert, Lodi, Ovid and Romulus



STEPS recognizes that health is affected by a region's "social determinants": economy, education, employment/income, transportation and environment/housing conditions. Our grassroots efforts empower residents to improve these factors for the good of the full community. Want to get involved? See our contact details on the back.



A RESIDENT-DRIVEN PROGRAM

In southern Seneca County, the distance between communities can lead to isolation and sedentary lifestyles – especially for elderly and low-income individuals. Several years ago, many county residents recognized that these issues were contributing to health-related challenges among their neighbors.

In late 2013, the S2AY Rural Health Network teamed up with area residents to address these issues head-on by creating the STEPS (Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions) Neighborhood Health Improvement Project. STEPS's goal is to increase the physical, social and economic opportunities in southern

Seneca County and ultimately to improve the health of residents in the towns of Covert, Lodi, Ovid, and Romulus.

The project includes representatives from all four towns and recognizes that health is affected by social determinants. In other words, when it comes to health, where and how you live makes a big difference.

"The STEPS community is best described as a group of residents and community partners taking action to improve their neighborhood," said Project Coordinator Theresa Lahr. "They are believers in, and energized by, the possibilities which STEPS offers."

HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROJECTS

Dozens of creative health improvement projects have been developed and implemented with roughly 250 residents mobilized into action. All projects, simple or complex, contribute to the area's health and wellness and provide opportunities for residents to build relationships with their neighbors.

A RANGE OF INITIATIVES

STEPS initiatives include:

- Neighborhood beautification projects.
- Healthy cooking classes.

- A partnership with the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency and Seneca County to launch the South County Transportation Corps (SCTC). The program has volunteer drivers provide free transportation to residents for health-related appointments. SCTC was created in response to a community need and helps many community members improve their health by making it easier to see a medical professional.
- A micro-enterprise loan program for small business startups and expansions.

- Community gardens for residents to grow healthy fruits and vegetables and to provide a place for youth to learn about gardening.



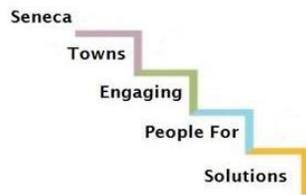
- A collaboration with the South Seneca and Romulus Central School Districts to work with students to repurpose and transform obsolete, coin-operated newspaper distribution machines into a series of mini, free “libraries” located throughout the four-towns.

“Great things are happening in the STEPS neighborhood,” said Community Engagement Specialist Lynne Doyle. “I am proud of residents’ commitment to and perseverance with community health improvement activities.”

CONTACT:

To learn more about STEPS, contact the STEPS office at: (607) 403-0069 orstepscommunity@s2aynetwork.org

To find out more about the Greater Rochester Health Foundation’s Neighborhood Health Status Improvement initiative, contact Program Officer Maynor Gonzalez at: (585) 258-1703 or mgonzalez@thegrhf.org



From Theory to Practice

People’s daily lives affect their health in countless ways – from the sense of safety and connection to neighbors, to the availability of healthy food, to access to green space and fresh air. And when a neighborhood is inspired to improve from the inside out by building on their strengths rather than dwelling on needs, they can realize improved physical, social and economic health.

That’s the premise of a grant program introduced by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation in 2008, which ultimately funded STEPS. The Neighborhood Health Status Improvement Initiative supports grassroots efforts to improve the health of people living in neighborhoods challenged by poverty and environmental factors.

Following a year-long assessment of their neighborhood, each grantee brought together residents to implement locally-based plans developed by the neighborhood itself. Each plan included a vision for a healthier future built on the assets they already have in their community.

The Greater Rochester Health Foundation partners with an expert in asset-based community development who provides ongoing technical support for the initiative, and two evaluators who work directly with grantees to ensure that evidence is gathered to support both process improvement and long-term project objectives.

Do you have an idea that you’d like to share? Contact us to see how, together, we might be able to help it take flight!