

LEADING COMMUNITY HEALTH INDICATORS - 2006



Introduction

THE WELBORN BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Preface

During the three years since the last release of the Leading Community Health Indicators Report, the Foundation worked together with community members to broaden and deepen the scope of this report, and to develop new indicators that help us better understand the status of the area we serve. If there was anything important to learn throughout this process, it is that everything is connected to everything else. The fabric of our community is woven with many threads; it is impossible to pull on one thread without affecting another, then another and another.

The board of the Welborn Baptist Foundation believes that the health of the community

is the shared responsibility of individuals and many organizations such as employers, health care providers, health departments, schools, colleges and universities, government, and others. With this in mind, great care was taken to seek advisors from every segment of the community. We are thankful to everyone who participated and assisted. You have made this report much better than it ever could have been without your input.

The thought process behind this assessment of our community is based on sustainability – our ability to meet our own needs in the present time without compromising the ability of our future generations to meet their needs. This type of thinking leads to an awareness of the future and

a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of everything we do.

What exactly are indicators? They come in many familiar forms. Their use is universal: to provide information about how something is working. Indicators are the speedometer in your car, your blood pressure, barometric pressure, a meat thermometer. We use indicators constantly. The indicators in the report are overarching indicators; we call them *systemic* indicators. They are small pieces of information that represent trends in larger systems. These indicators do not tell us everything, but they tell us enough to lead us to further investigation and better decisions.

How do we use indicators? We use them to measure what we care about. Each one may be a critical problem, a strong asset, or a key component. They represent the values of the community combined with its important attributes. Measurement of them provides us with insight into how well we are doing, for gauging the impact of our activities on our community, and for connecting past and present activities to achieve future goals. Indicators help us see relationships among different aspects of community life. They can bring different sectors of the community together, facilitate new alliances, and provide all citizens with a better means for understanding

community problems and strengths. Partnerships for improving communities can be formed as members begin to appreciate the linkages among seemingly unrelated aspects of community life.

We hope our citizens in business, government, family and personal lives will take advantage of this report to look at this picture of our community. Look at the trends. Consider how they link with each other. Think about how these indicators can be affected. This report does more than show you how we're doing – it provides the wellspring from which exciting new ideas can emerge.

This report does not measure everything. Users are encouraged to link their own information to these indicators when approaching an issue or problem. This report is a starting place. It is our hope that:

- Individuals and organizations in our community will use these indicators as a catalyst to seek answers to our problems, find methods that work, and think strategically about long-term solutions
- These indicators will serve us well as a basis upon which to measure our progress and our future success
- They will generate a growing sense of caring and responsibility for the future of our community

- They will inspire people to think creatively and systematically about what is best for our community in the long term

In the coming years, our vision is that we will be celebrating and building on our successes, and continuing to address the root causes of those things that take away from our dream of a better quality of life in our community.

“Do all you can with what you have, in the time you have, in the place you are.”

-Nkosi Johnson

From the Executive Director

The Welborn Baptist Foundation (WBF) is pleased to present the 3rd Edition of our Leading Community Health Indicators Report. This report has vastly expanded the number of indicators in order to reflect the inter-connectedness of our community's many facets of life.

The Foundation uses this data to identify areas of need to which our support can make a contribution to the improvement of the quality of life. We work to define "root causes" of our community's condition; funding is directed to initiatives and programs which address the "root causes" with the objective of making permanent progress.

Identification of our current state and the measurement of changes in the community's collective efforts is our goal with this report. Local, state and national data are considered as the comparison is made to our peers. We recognize the need for collaboration of all the organizations of our community that affect our status: public and private. We offer this database to all who are interested in defining our needs utilizing a statistical approach.

While the WBF funds only in the areas of health and education, the status of all the domains are relevant. No one area can encounter challenges without affecting others. We appreciate the work of the United Way to define priorities through their needs assessment.

The Foundation is continually assessing its strategic plan and modifying it as it gains experience and our needs change. Our focus is becoming increasingly sharper as we develop more proactive initiatives which reflect our community's needs. Currently we fund in the areas of: School Based Health, Early Childhood Development, Healthy Adolescent Development, Community Health Status, Faith Based Programs, and General Opportunity. Please check our web site for additional information: www.welbornfdn.org.

We appreciate the work that WBF's Ruth Metzger, Program Officer and Research Specialist, has devoted to this endeavor. She has been assisted greatly by the interest and energy of the members of the Data Advisory Committee. Our thanks to all.



Marjorie Soyugenc

Executive Director

Welborn Baptist Foundation

About this Report

Six years ago, the Welborn Baptist Foundation first brought together a group of community stakeholders to help assess the status of our community's health. The Foundation broadly defines health as being determined by individual biology and behavior, the physical and social environments, policies and interventions, and access to quality health care. This broad definition of health led to the selection of education, economic, social, environmental, and cultural measures to describe the health of our community and the publication of the first Leading Community Health Indicators Report in 2001. This group of advisors has grown

and continues to serve as vital partners in the ongoing learning process.

With this, the third edition of the Leading Community Health Indicators Report, we made a multitude of changes. In response to input from the Community Data Advisory Panel, we incorporated a greater focus on the diversity of our people. We also added new indicators to the initial set of indicators and included more in-depth data. For many indicators, the focus is on Vanderburgh County, which is the population center of the 14-county region served by the Foundation. Wherever data was readily available, however, efforts were made to

include additional counties. It is our hope that in the future, partners can be found to help broaden the report to include more of the region.

In addition, five critically important topics were identified that warranted a more in-depth discussion. These topics provide important background information that has a crucial impact on numerous key indicators. You will find these Key Findings at the beginning of this report, followed by a section outlining the region's demographics and how they are changing.

We sought data from the most reliable sources available: local, state, and federal governments, organizations that are known leaders and experts in their fields, and established foundations that are recognized for setting the national standards in research and analysis. As always, data had to meet the following criteria:

- Readily accessible, at county level
- Reliable and able to be consistently updated over time
- Valid, providing meaningful information about the indicator domain

- Relevant, in that there is meaningful action for the community to take in response
- Understandable, easily understood by the public

Some data in this report do not meet the requirement for local-level data. In those cases, it is either because the data were not available, or the population size was too small to provide meaningful information. However, where these indicators are considered important measures of the domain despite the lack of local data, state and/or national data are provided.

Feedback

Input from the community about this report is always welcome and appreciated. Although this issue is now complete and published, the process that surrounds it is ongoing and we are continuously seeking ways to improve it. You may contact the Welborn Baptist Foundation at 812-437-8260 or e-mail us at info@welbornfdn.org.

This report is also available on-line at the Welborn Baptist Foundation web site: www.welbornfdn.org.

Overview of Main Findings by Domain

Education and Literacy

- Significant differences exist in student academic achievement and high school graduation by race and gender.
- Educational attainment is gradually increasing; the greatest proportion of our population has at least a high school diploma.
- The number of child care centers meeting the high standards for formal accreditation is slowly beginning to grow.

The Economy

- Vanderburgh County's resident labor force is growing and is better educated than it was in 1990.
- Three industry clusters provide 58% of the jobs in the eight Indiana counties served by the Foundation.

- Houses are still affordable in Vanderburgh County, although income is not rising as rapidly as house prices.
- Average annual unemployment rates in Vanderburgh County are roughly consistent with state and national trends, rising since 1999 but not yet leveling off as state and national rates have done since 2003.
- Household income in Vanderburgh County lags behind the state of Indiana and the nation.

Health

- The prevalence of overweight/obesity, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease in the tri-state is greater than the national average.

- Our region's young people are more likely to engage in daily alcohol use and smoke than youth nationwide.
- While overall infant mortality shows a downward trend, low birth weight and prematurity appear to be increasing.
- A growing portion of our population lacks health insurance coverage.

Natural Environment

- Overall ozone levels have improved; fine particulate matter levels rose in 2005.
- Energy consumption is rising and nearly all of that energy is currently coming from fossil fuels.
- Vanderburgh County is steadily losing farmland and woodlands to development.

- Municipal waste generated per person in Vanderburgh County is steadily increasing; recycling rates lag behind the nation.

Social Environment

- Minority populations lag far behind the majority in many basic quality of life measures.
- With some fluctuations, teen birth rates have shown a general decrease since 1998.
- Growing numbers of babies are being born to unmarried mothers.
- Voting rates in Indiana and Vanderburgh County have gradually declined since 1990.

- Substantiated child abuse reports have been relatively stable since 1999; neglect is on the rise.
- Violent and property crime rates were relatively stable in Evansville from 2001 to 2005.

Culture and Recreation

- Public library usage is steadily rising.
- We need to develop ways to assess the quality of our artistic and cultural life.
- Overall public park acreage is about average; public spending per resident for parks is below the national average.

Domain Definitions

The Welborn Baptist Foundation uses a community-based process to determine the indicator domains and measures that will serve as a framework for information useful for initiating and monitoring efforts to improve community health and well-being. Based on community dialogue and examination of numerous community indicator reports from across the United States, the original set of indicators used in prior editions of this report has been expanded and refined to reflect a more comprehensive view of our community. The following definitions have their basis in Jacksonville, Florida's Indicators for Progress, but have been modified to fit local interests and concerns.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The community's system of education, including early childhood development for children ages 0 – 5; public, parochial and private primary and secondary schools; adult education; vocational/technical training, colleges and universities.

THE ECONOMY

The standard of living for local residents, including economic well-being and the community's economic status.

HEALTH

The fitness and health of residents, including health status and health-risk behaviors, and the local system of health care providers.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The earth's ecosystem, including the quality of air, water and soil, natural vegetation and wildlife, and use of land.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The social network, safety, and support status and trends including equality of opportunity, racial equity, appreciation of cultural diversity, family life, human services, participation in public affairs, and the incidence of crime.

CULTURE AND RECREATION

The availability and use of cultural, entertainment, and sports events, the performing and visual arts, public recreation, and leisure activities.