

WVPBRN & COMMUNITY NEWS

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WVPBRN HIGHLIGHT: Goals Set for 2016

The 3rd Annual WVPBRN Retreat was held in conjunction with the West Virginia Rural Health Conference at Stonewall Resort on October 15, 2015. This integration provided an opportunity for other providers, researchers and community members to participate in network activities and discussions.

Retreat participants identified, revised, and discussed WVPBRN goals and focus areas. A compilation of those goals can be found by clicking [WVPBRN 2016 Goals](#).

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Williamson community achieves recognition

Williamson, W.Va., located in Mingo County, is making huge strides toward improving the health of its citizens. At the forefront of the effort is Donovan "Dino" Beckett, DO, CEO of the Williamson Health & Wellness Center. After graduating from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Beckett returned to his hometown with the hope of improving the health and well-being of his community. Dr. Beckett also serves on the board of the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority.

In 2013, Williamson began to create a community model with health as the central driver. The Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA) provided funding to match the community contribution to establish the Williamson Health & Wellness Center clinic, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). The clinic space was completely retrofitted in 90 days with recycled materials, energy-saving equipment, and a solar electric system. The clinic opened its doors in 2014 to individuals and families with no insurance, as well as those with Medicaid and Medicare benefits or private insurance carriers. Now, serving approximately 80 patients a day on average, the clinic functions as a one stop shop in areas of behavior health, dental, pediatrics, and adult medicine and links people to healthy activities and resources in the Tug Valley.

The clinic also supports community health promotion initiatives that extend outside the clinical walls. These initiatives address community health priorities and disparities such as lack of income, poor housing, limited access to healthy eating and active living opportunities. The organization established an outreach team to drive change with community residents taking on some key roles in the transformation effort. [Healthyselves.org](#) is a website where individuals share stories online to document what is happening (like this [interview with Ben Lipps](#)). In Williamson, you can see the beginnings of change when walking down the street and hear it from the people who have grown up in the area.



Programs such as My Mobile Market, Farm Fresh 4U, Refresh Appalachia, the Healthy Feud, Lunch Walk Program, community gardens, facility improvements, annual fairs and events provide youth and adults with healthy alternatives. What is unique about this is how the team makes the effort to link the long list of neighborhood interventions with the clinics, physicians, and nurses throughout the Tug Valley area.

Last year, Williamson received the prestigious *Culture of Health* award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

A [celebration video](#) showcases diverse participation from the WVU Extension Service, Mingo County Schools, the STOP Coalition, and the Mingo County Commission who have all committed to building a culture of health. In 2015, Williamson joined the 100 Million Healthier Lives initiative with the aim of "cultivating" 5,000 healthier lives in the Tug Valley by the end of 2016. This goal setting collaboration includes community leaders like Nate Siggers who leads volunteerism efforts and champions the saying, "Team work makes the dream work!"



A community health worker project launched in Mingo County through the Williamson Health & Wellness Center in 2012 is expanding this year with financial support from HRSA and four area foundations. The Central Appalachian Health Alliance is the team of physicians and other healthcare providers who govern the program.

"The team of community health workers will assist providers in the network to improve chronic care management and will empower patients with the knowledge and resources to improve their health while reducing healthcare costs," Dr. Beckett said, stressing the importance of this type of collaboration.

Another arm of the organization is the Health Innovation Hub where social innovation, entrepreneurialism and job creation are at the forefront. "The hub" horizon is always evolving and determined by the types of ideas that experienced and new entrepreneurs bring to the table. The hub space is also used for community events and ongoing planning meetings.

Dr. Beckett and the staff at Williamson Health & Wellness Center have dedicated time and resources back into their community for years. They demonstrate how a highly motivated team and community can work together with health clinics, economic development entities, and other community businesses to make a change in the lives of citizens.

For more information on the Williamson projects and for how-to guides to implement projects in your community, visit [Sustainable Williamson](#) and [TryThisWV.com](#). If you would like to schedule a tour of Williamson, contact the outreach staff at (304)235-3400.

Project Better Health launched statewide

Melissa Olfert, PhD and Mary Ann Maurer, MD, are leading a WVPBRN network project entitled Project Better Health. This nutrition-focused project provides patients with dietary advice and suggestions from a registered dietician through a mobile app or website. Each patient enters health information initially, and continues to log their food into the system after each meal. The app can provide balanced food options based on the provided health information and previous entries of meals for that day. As the patient has questions or concerns, they can be connected with a registered dietician through text message, phone call, or email for support. The project is designed to assess the feasibility and initial effectiveness for this innovative approach to deliver specialized dietary guidance to rural patients with limited access to see a dietician in person.

Seven WVPBRN clinics are referring patients to this nutritional guidance program. These clinical sites include Cabin Creek Health Systems, New River Health Association, Wirt County Health Association, Valley Health Systems, Robert C. Byrd Clinic, and West Virginia University Family Medicine clinics in both the Morgantown and Charleston Divisions.

"I think this is such an exciting project to be working on," states Dr. Olfert. "It has great potential for the state of West Virginia by providing access to patients without leaving their front doors."

Dr. Olfert is an assistant professor at West Virginia University Program of Human Nutrition and Foods. Dr. Maurer is a physician and assistant professor at West Virginia University Charleston Division School of Medicine. The project is being funded by the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

Influenza vaccine perceptions examined among adolescent population

CEO and WVPBRN member Treah Haggerty, MD, with the WVU Department of Family Medicine Rural Scholars Program, is leading a project to examine the perceptions of influenza (flu) vaccinations among West Virginia high school students. Dr. Haggerty serves as the director of the Rural Scholars Program. The WVCTSI-supported Health Sciences Technology Academy (HSTA) is partnering on the project, which will identify obstacles preventing high school students from receiving a yearly flu vaccine. Surveys will be distributed to 11 high schools around the state.

Influenza is the eighth leading cause of death in the United States. The Healthy People 2020 national initiative aims to improve the vaccination rates in the 13 to 17 year-old population from 46.9 percent to 70 percent by 2020. This project aligns with that aim by learning more about the population.

Although many studies have investigated potential barriers to receiving the vaccine, most seek input and perceptions of elderly, adults, and parents of children, leaving a gap among adolescents. Parents provide children with services based on their own attitudes and perceptions, however, adolescents are likely to establish health behaviors and attitudes before they reach full adulthood. This may influence the decision to seek preventative care services.

The adolescent population will provide insight into perceptions of vaccines and how the healthcare sector can work to address these earlier. If these barriers are overcome during adolescence, good health habits can be established and the vaccination rate has the potential to increase over time.

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