

## Committee envisions healthier future for Fort Scott

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By Rayma Silvers ~ Herald-Tribune

Fort Scott, Kan. -- Encouraging local residents to live healthier lifestyles is part of the mission of a new grassroots committee currently forming in Bourbon County.

Not only is this community-driven task force, which is being formed through a grant program at the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas, promoting healthier living, it is also brainstorming ways to make this way of life more accessible to county residents, according to CFSK Program Director Stephanie Joiner.

"At the meeting, the group began a strategic plan to improve health and wellness in the area," Joiner said in reference to the committee's first meeting conducted on March 12. "To start with, they created a vision; a simple description of what Bourbon County would look like if we got it right in terms of health and wellness. Their vision statement is: Bourbon County: Healthy living for all. Their mission statement is: To encourage Bourbon County citizens of all ages with the opportunity and resources to make healthy choices leading to active, productive, meaningful lifestyles."

Joiner, who is also helping three other Kansas counties promote and support health and fitness, said creating a plan for a healthier Bourbon County will take the help of a variety of local residents.

"Creating this vision and a plan to achieve it will require the voices, the experiences and the knowledge of all types of citizens in Bourbon County," Joiner said.

Committee member and USD 234 school nurse Pam Brown said the new grassroots health and wellness committee has the potential to positively impact the county.

"The visioning committee would like to see a collaborative, community effort to improve the health and wellness of the residents of Bourbon County," Brown said. "Similar to the (USD 234) district's School Health Council, this committee could effect changes within the community in the areas of health, nutrition, physical activity, tobacco and drug prevention, education, mental, and spiritual health. ... The visioning committee will look at what programs and resources currently exist, what can we enhance and build upon, and set priorities."

Committee member and Bourbon County Coalition Chairman Ann Ackerman said anyone in the county who would like to contribute to the committee is welcome to attend the next meeting at noon on Thursday, April 23 at the First United Methodist Church, 301 S. National.

"I think it can be successful to have people putting their heads together and coming up with ideas," Ackerman said.

Joiner said anyone who wants to help in the effort to promote a community of health and fitness should attend the working lunch on April 23.

"Anyone interested in improving the nutrition and physical activity opportunities for Bourbon County citizens is invited to attend," Joiner said.

For more information about the newly-formed local health and fitness committee, contact Joiner at (620) 231-8897.

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