

# Personal Health and Community Health

As We Care for Our Bodies, We Should Care for Our Towns

“What it takes to keep a healthy mind, body and spirit is closely aligned with what it takes to sustain the health and wellness of a community.”

BY ANGIE BAUR



Angie Baur

**Being a cancer survivor** has heightened my ability to celebrate my existence and find meaning in what I can contribute while I am here.

Being a part of building strong communities is in my blood and gives me a tremendous amount of satisfaction in my work with Public Square Communities, Inc. (PSC) and Central Kansas Community Foundation (CKCF).

Because of my particular focus on personal health and well being these days, I find an uncanny correlation to the health and vitality of a community. What it takes to keep a healthy mind, body and spirit is closely aligned with what it takes to sustain the health and wellness of a community.

Like a healthy body that needs clean air, water, nourishment and exercise, the infrastructure of our communities play a role in the critical areas of air and water quality, access to fresh food, bike and walking trails, a capable workforce and strong businesses.

Many Public Square communities are familiar with this connection. An example is swimming pool projects, like Fort Scott's aqua center. Or Decatur County's healthcare action team dedicated to ensuring a vibrant medical community. Or Reading's tornado recovery plan that didn't just replace but improved their community park. Or Fredonia's Healthy Living action team's walking trail project. Or Decatur, Greeley, and Meade counties' workforce initiatives as they recognized that strong employment rates have a strong relationship to good health. Or PSC colleagues facilitating visioning with Iola's hospital and with public health departments of eight counties in southeast Kansas.

All these examples improve community

health. Yet I believe we can be even more intentional about how we ensure progress toward community health, much like we do our personal health.

I'm guessing many of you made a New Year's resolution about wellness. Have you stuck with it? What is supporting your personal goal? What is sabotaging it?

My health history makes me conscious of the need to take care of my body. Is there any interference in my plan? Absolutely! To avoid disruption, I must plan (menus and activities), monitor progress (blood pressure, weight and labs), access expertise (my endocrinologist) and use my support system (family, friends and fellow survivors).

For communities, a "resolution" of what a healthy, vibrant community looks, acts and feels like is step one. And will there be interference? Absolutely! So a community plan to achieve the vision can anticipate the interference, then monitor what supports success and what doesn't. On your own, you'll tend to slip back into old habits, so accessing the expertise of other communities can get you over the hump. Long term, this becomes your support system.

Building strong healthy communities is central to both my Public Square and Community Foundation colleagues across the state. Your community foundation may have funding available for community health projects. Reach out to them. Public Square helps communities create their unique vision and develop the structure to make it happen. **KCL**

**ANGIE BAUR** is a Public Square Communities colleague and Associate Director of Central Kansas Community Foundation.