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## **Crow Wing County Collaborates to Build a Self-Healing Community**

Crow Wing County Community Services staff are working in conjunction with Bridges of Hope, a local resource, to research to build a self-healing community. The idea is to engage the public, inspire innovation, support peer helping, and ease the daily stress burden of parents to promote change so that together communities can better protect and nurture the next generation.

The Self-Healing Communities Model is designed to build a community capacity to improve outcomes for health and social issues by reducing and preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). By promoting community and culture change, Self-Healing Communities can help make dramatic reductions in youth and family problems including suicide, juvenile offenses, dropout rates and develop strong networks that promote greater collaboration across the community.

“This will help us work together with the communities we serve to develop the skills and supports necessary for individuals to become empowered and make changes in their own neighborhoods. It helps us to think about whole systems, not just part of a system, and uses data to decide how and where to focus our efforts.” says Community Services Director Kara Terry.

Crow Wing County is partnering with Bridges of Hope to create a model that will focus on high needs areas and get the community working together. “We have the data and now we need to take it out to the community and say how do we help you, how do we support you and how do we do things differently and help you and your family build on your own strengths.” says Bridges of Hope Executive Director Kassie Heissrerer.

This initiative will lead to more individuals who are able to work in our community. An increase in employable individuals will benefit local businesses, who are facing a work shortage. More stable families will also lead to a decrease in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which will reduce the risk of future generations experiencing the same outcomes as their parents. Research shows

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that as the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk of chemical use, depression and financial stress.

Every 3 years, Crow Wing Energized conducts a survey of adults in Crow Wing County. The second of those surveys was distributed in the fall of 2017, with more than 1,000 people responding. Results continue to show that almost 90% of the adults in Crow Wing County feel their health is good to excellent. Although when they report their actual health conditions, survey results show that 2/3 of the population is overweight or obese, and 25-40% have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, mental health conditions and arthritis. Results also indicated that 2/3 of adults are not eating 5 or more fruits or vegetables a day, nor are they getting the recommended physical activity.

Tobacco used increased in the past 3 years from 17.6% to 23.3%. Less than half of the cigarette smokers indicated they are trying to quit. Tobacco users report higher rates of obesity, depression, and anxiety.

Kara Terry says that over time the self-healing initiative will lead to a healthier community overall. "Self-Healing communities will benefit community partners. The educational system will likely benefit from better attendance and increased graduation rates. Law enforcement, the courts and the jail will benefit from decreased crime both in juvenile and adult populations. Community providers will benefit from a deeper connection to the community and increased awareness of the services that are available to help individuals who are in need of support."

Organizers of the Self-Healing Communities Models anticipate the implementation of the Self-Healing Communities Model will take 24-36 months and hope to see outcomes in 3-5 years.

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