

St. Clair County's Health Policy Summit puts Healthcare Reform on the 'MAPP' through Collaboration and Community Mobilization

When the St. Clair County Health Department began its 3rd Round of the Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IPLAN) in the spring of 2005, members of the assessment and planning team did not set out to create a bold vision to become **the Healthiest County in America by the year 2020**. Yet, something 'synergistic' happened along the way as the 16 affiliate organizations representing the County's Health Care Commission started a new journey towards health using the NACCHO model known as MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership). That 'synergy' is what St. Clair County has come to refer to as *Community Connectedness*; and it has served to be a unifying theme for the Commission each year as they work together to address the seven strategic health issues identified in the County's 2006-2011 IPLAN.

Mark Fenton, Host of the PBS series, ***America's Walking***, joined the local effort in 2009 as the keynote speaker and lead facilitator for the St. Clair County Health Policy Summit on November 12th -13th.

Mark is an entertaining, persuasive, and knowledgeable walking advocate. He has worked with numerous communities across the United States in their efforts to develop and implement policies for active living and healthy eating. At this year's annual partnership event, Mark led the group of over 150 participants through a two-day series of engaging presentations and focus group activities to accomplish the following objectives:



- ✓ Gain insight about opportunities and challenges for increased physical activity and healthy eating.
- ✓ Explore opportunities to deepen existing and develop new community partnerships.
- ✓ Learn how other communities have used "environmental and policy change" strategies to reduce chronic health conditions.
- ✓ Gain practical strategies for ways to make a difference as an individual and/or within an organization.
- ✓ Help frame the next steps for creating healthier communities.

The Summit participants consisted of local mayors, legislative and county elected officials, school administrators, principals and teachers, city planners, business leaders and other community and faith-based organizations who resolved to work together over the next ten years (and beyond) to create 'built environments' and policy changes that facilitate active living and healthy eating. This ongoing effort is just part of the County's *Get Up & Go!* Health and Fitness Campaign and the Commission's 20/20 Vision to become the Healthiest County in the United States.

The event was co-convened by members of the Health Care Commission, the Get Up & Go! Campaign and the Willard C. Scrivner, MD, Public Health Foundation. Facilitation and funding was made available through the St. Clair County Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative sponsored by the CDC and the Y-USA.