

Red Wagon Kids Community Plan



**Community action making a difference in the lives of
young children in Springfield/Greene County, MO**

redwagonkids.net

Executive Summary

Vision – Every child grows up safe, happy, healthy and successful.

Mission - Become a “Community of Promise” for our children so that every child experiences caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education and opportunities to help others as they grow up.

Why is this important – Research indicates the more children experience the “5 Promises,” the more likely they will grow up to be healthy, happy, and successful adults.

The Start

Springfield/Greene County’s selection for the past three years by the America’s Promise Alliance as one of the “100 Best Communities for Youth” is a tribute to those individuals who work hard to help kids. However, the assessment of our community’s strengths and weaknesses, completed as part of each annual application for this award, also acknowledges that significant challenges exist in ensuring that our children grow up to be healthy and successful adults. Far too many children suffer the lingering effects of poverty, as highlighted in each *Community Focus Report*.

The Process

In 2008, over 160 people worked to create a community-driven plan, spearheaded by the Mayor’s Commission for Children (MCC), to improve the lives of young children (birth to 8 years) in our community. Child advocates Brian Fogle and Sr Lorraine Biebel co-chaired the planning process overseeing efforts of six volunteer groups representing the business, education, faith, health, policy, and service sectors. Collectively these groups contributed 1600+ hours to identify initiatives that would most help our youngest children. In late spring 2008, each group proposed several initiatives to be implemented over the next three years. Over 630 community members provided feedback and critique of the proposed recommendations.

The Plan

MCC developed the final Red Wagon Kids Plan after reviewing committee recommendations, community feedback, feasibility of each recommendation, and the potential support within the community. This plan focuses initially on the youngest children and strives for considerable community involvement over the 3-year period. Some examples of the recommendations are briefly described below. To view the rest of the recommendations, visit www.redwagonkids.net.

The Health Group recognizes that there are many organizations working to provide health care services for children and acknowledges that in spite of the best intentions, many children do not receive adequate health care. The process involved defining the attributes of a healthy child and finding ways to support children with a healthy start. Encouraging parents to make sure their children receive basic health (before the age of 3) and dental (before the age of 1) screenings are logical choices.

The Education Group proposes that we initiate a comprehensive feasibility study to explore expanding affordable and accessible high quality pre-school offerings to all children who would like to attend. The effort would be a public/private sector project utilizing current daycare providers as well as federal and state early childhood programs and public school programs.

The Business Group understands that as employers, it is in a great position to reach the parents of these young children. Developing family-friendly work place policies (such

allowing parents to attend parent-teacher conferences) and creating a process for employers to refer employees to agencies that can help with certain issues benefits both parties.

The Faith Group reviewed a sampling of children's programs and services offered throughout the faith community and determined that building a database documenting these activities will allow for sharing of information throughout the faith community. Replicating successful programs guided by experienced mentors will make implementation more efficient and less costly for others to start.

The Policy Group studied successful family-friendly cities throughout the nation. One prevalent indicator is that those successful in promoting family-friendly policies developed and adopted a city and/or county platform in support of families and children. Developing a local legislative children's task force will ensure that our local policy wishes for children are represented at the State level.

The Services (Agencies) Group will use their collective marketing network (via emails, newsletters, presentations, trainings, etc) to send coordinated unified educational messages to their constituents. This powerful educational effort has the capability to reach thousands of people in the community on a monthly basis at minimal cost.

Next Steps

The MCC does not provide direct services to children; rather, it is charged with making the community aware of children's issues and mobilizing the community to improve the lives of children in Springfield/Greene County. Its role with respect to the RWK recommendations is 1) to provide support to individuals, groups and organizations that are already implementing the RWK recommendations and 2) to help identify champions who will undertake the recommendations not currently being implemented and provide guidance and support to those individuals, groups and organizations. Structure to keep RWK moving forward is detailed below.

Role of the Steering Committee

Steering Committees (SC) are identified for each of the six sectors represented by the work groups. Their charge is to ensure that sector recommendations are being implemented. They have the freedom to add members and to recruit organizations and groups to help implement the recommendations. They are responsible for making regular progress reports to the MCC.

Role of the Mayor's Commission Liaison

At least one member of the MCC will serve as a liaison between the Steering Committee and MCC. That liaison is responsible for information flow between the Committee and the MCC and for letting the MCC know in what specific ways the MCC can support the work of the SC.

Role of the Champions

Champions are individuals, groups, or organizations that actually implement the Red Wagon Kids recommendations. They may be existing groups and organizations, or they may form as *ad hoc* groups specifically to work on particular recommendations. Several champions emerged throughout the RWK process who volunteered to take on one or more recommendations. Champions have the expertise and commitment to make the recommendations happen.

Public Rollout

Unveiling of the Red Wagon Kids Plan to the community is scheduled for Feb 2009. A city/county resolution will be available to those organizations and groups who wish to sign in support of the Red Wagon activities. Progress of RWK activities and achievements will be communicated on the *redwagonkids.net* website as well as via other media.

Red Wagon Kids

A community driven project designed to benefit young children and families in Springfield/Greene County MO.

Planning (Nov 2007 – Dec 2008)

Implementation (January 2009-2012)

The Honorable Mayor - City of Springfield, MO

Mayor Tom Carlson

Red Wagon Kids Initial Planning Committee

Brian Fogle Sr Lorraine Biebel
Dottie Mullikin Roseann Bentley
Mayor's Commission for Children

Red Wagon Kids Community Chairpersons

Brian Fogle Sr Lorraine

Red Wagon Kids Work Group Co-Chairs

Roseann Bentley, Greene Co Commission, (Policy)
Melissa Haddow, Community Partnership, (Services)
Dr David Hockensmith, Council of Churches, (Faith)
Sandy Howard, Spfd Chamber of Commerce, (Business)
Dr Byron Klaus, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, (Faith)
Mark McNay, SMC Packaging, (Business)
Dr John Mihalevich, Cox Health, (Health)
Dr Peggy Pearl, Missouri State University, (Education)
Dr Norm Ridder, Springfield Public Schools, (Education)
Cindy Rushefsky, City Council, (Policy)
Dr Jim Sammon, Pediatrician, (Health)
Dr Paul Thomlinson, Burrell Behavioral Health, (Services)

Mayor's Commission for Children Board – 2008 & 2009

Dot Atkinson	Roseann Bentley	Annie Busch
Jerry Clark	Dr Sandy D'Angelo	Dr Dave Dixon
Dr Gloria Galanes	Dr Judith Gonzalez	Conrad Griggs
Sandy Howard	Jennifer Kennally	Veronica Lowe
Dr Arthur Mallory	Dr Bernie McCarthy	Andrea McKinney
Morey Mechlin	Doug Pitt	Dr Norm Ridder
Jim Rives	Bob Roberts	John Rush
Cindy Rushefsky	Randy Russell	Dr Jim Sammon
Dr Karen Scott	Kimberly Shinn-Brown	Dr Mark Skrade
Becky Spain		