

Chambers of Commerce Case Stories

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Action Collaborative on Business Engagement in Building Healthy Communities & FTI Consulting

Local and regional chambers of commerce play varied roles in the building of healthy communities. This is one of a series of case stories about chambers that are active participants or leaders in promoting community health and well-being.

Each story shares insights about what motivates engagement and explains successes, and lessons learned that can inspire and instruct others.

If you would like to share your Chamber's story you can do so [here](#).

Longview, Texas, Chamber of Commerce

Tomorrow's Workforce is on the Playground Today

Submitted by: Kelly Hall, CEO/President Longview CoC.



What is the role of the Chamber of Commerce in improving community health in Longview?

The Chamber champions the idea of building a culture of health. The role of the Chamber is to engage, educate, and drive transformation. In the fall of 2015 the Chamber's board of directors finalized the development of the organization's 5-year Strategic Plan, succinctly outlined as R.E.A.C.H. (redevelopment, education, advocacy, collaboration, and health). The board believes it plays a key role in driving the discussion to address each of these areas including building a culture of health.

Why did the Chamber decide to engage in community health?

"Leading People - Leading Prosperity" is our purpose. As the predominant business organization in Longview, our sphere of influence allows us to lead sustainable transformation in creating an environment that allows individuals and companies to thrive. We believe that healthy communities thrive. As leaders, we compel and influence the decisions that make our community healthy through transportation, housing, environment, safety, and education. The ongoing comprehensive planning in Longview is a prime example of business leaders, elected officials and citizens working together to create the blueprints for the community they wish Longview to become. Healthy communities attract talent and drive business development. We recognize that tomorrow's workforce is on the playground today, and our two key strategies to engage in improving community health are Every Child Has Access and HealthyVIEW.

Every Child Has Access is a collective impact project that seeks to address the overall well-being of students during non-school hours, in an effort to create a continuous environment conducive to learning and health. Our process began with a three-pronged approach.

First, we brought together public and private schools to identify the challenges and needs of area students by focusing on after 3:00pm and before 8:00am during the school year as well as weekends, holidays and the summer break.

Second, we convened key business and community stakeholders to develop a shared vision and action plan.

Third, we knew we needed a quick victory project. In response to the conversations with Longview schools, we compiled and published a master resource guide that includes all organizations that offer after-school programs, summer school, jobs programs, career fairs, tutoring/mentorship, and provided them to all public, private and home school organizations. We are currently printing our third [resource guide](#) for the 2018-2019 school year.

HealthyVIEW is an initiative under development to serve as the catalytic driver to convene key stakeholders in order to share information and pool resources. With the introduction of HealthyVIEW, while still in its infancy, we have observed a widespread willingness to engage. Organizations from across industry sectors are seeking proven tools to help promote well-being with a return on investment as well as a value on investment. Through HealthyVIEW we aim to advocate for real, tangible solutions to create a culture of health for our community. The critical areas that have been identified encompass: (1) Physical Health, (2) Emotional & Spiritual Health, (3) Financial Health, (4) Career & Workplace Health, and (5) Community Health.

We are organizing monthly workshops called “SMART Series” launched in July. These programs are designed to drive discussions around the 5 critical areas outlined above.

What was the chamber seeking to address by engaging in community health and well-being?

Our vision statement is “To be recognized as an effective resource, providing relevant, innovative, and impactful programming that ensures a healthy business climate and an enhanced quality of life for Longview and Gregg County.” Ultimately, the vision is about “Creating a community where individuals can live their dreams.” Children who are healthier learn better, and children who are educated are healthier. Healthier and more resilient children become healthier and more resilient adults, and are a richer talent pool for employers. So improving educational attainment and health outcomes for our children is critical to ensuring a more talented and productive future workforce.

How and why did the chamber develop these two programs?

According to the County Health Rankings, Gregg County ranks 190th out of 242 for health outcomes and 227th out of 242 for health behavior measures like smoking, obesity, and inactivity. We scored 53rd on the 0-100 AARP livability index, which includes health-relevant measures such as housing, transportation and environment. Clearly, our health is at risk, and we have plenty of room for improvement.

We need to redefine health. For too long we have defined healthy as simply “not being sick,” but now we have come to recognize it is so much more. Complex social factors have a powerful influence over our well-being, and to improve the health of our community, a collective impact approach engaging all sectors is required.

On May 4, 2018, we introduced our collective impact approach to HealthyVIEW. Numerous tools for improving health and well-being already exist, but there is not a centralized source for us to learn from and better partner with one another as we work toward the same goals. HealthyVIEW will serve as the catalyst and convener to share information and pool resources together and help connect those dots for our community.

Through HealthyVIEW we aim to advocate for real solutions that will help us create a culture of health for our community. In addition, Longview ranked number 17 in the nation in terms of opioid abuse (Castlight Health Report 2016). These critical health metrics require urgent attention if we are to continue toward building a thriving community.

Who are the stakeholders in this work?

Healthcare providers, education partners, faith-based and non-profit community, and industry sectors (mining, manufacturing, information, financial, profession and business services, leisure and hospitality, government).

How does the chamber work with stakeholders to drive the vision and its programs?

The Chamber staff led discussions with health agencies and employers. Together we agreed on the following principles:

1. Healthy employees are good business. Workplace wellness programs help attract and retain talent, build morale, combat absenteeism and reduce health care costs for employers.
2. Healthy communities thrive. We are the ones who determine whether Longview is a place where people want to be and companies want to do business. As leaders, we drive and influence the decisions that make our community healthy – transportation, housing, environment, safety, education. The comprehensive planning underway is a prime example. Healthy communities attract talent and drive business development.
3. Tomorrow's workforce is on the playground today. Children who are healthier learn better, and children who are educated are healthier. These healthier and more resilient children become healthier and more resilient adults and a richer talent pool for employers. So improving education attainment and health outcomes for our children is critical to ensuring a more talented and productive future workforce.

How do you approach the decision-making process?

The Chamber's DNA is to take on the role of leadership in those areas impacting the business community where critical issues are experiencing a vacuum in moving forward. In 2012, the Chamber began leading inter-city trips where business leaders and elected officials visit communities whose best practices are ones that we wish to emulate. The Chamber staff and key community stakeholders are continuing to study organizational models that may serve as the tool to formally develop the "structure" of our future. In 2016, the Chamber established a foundation which is used to help attract unlikely partners and funders to the collective impact coalition. Currently, the Chamber serves as the agency leading this work.

Our hierarchy is membership/investor driven. The member investors elect a Board of Directors who then elects the Executive Board of Directors. The Board hires the CEO/President who is charged with running and operating the Chamber. The CEO hires staff and trains and develops them to work with community influencers to accomplish the strategic plan adopted by the Board of Directors.

How is the program financed? How has it evolved over time?

The operations of the Chamber are as follows: 28% Membership/investors; 50% investor driven based on customer priorities; 3% Rental Income; 3% Investment Income; and 16% Subscription to products/services. The Chamber Foundation has a MOU with the Chamber for staff support and operations. The Foundation volunteers, area public schools, and Chamber staff are securing grants and donations. Funding for the collective work around education is now well over \$1.5 million between the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber Foundation for 2018-2019. Sources include grants and private investment. Grants are restricted to the projects within the Foundation, e.g., \$1.1 million for the East Texas Advanced Manufacturing Academy. Private investment is raised from area companies who believe in this body of work.

The private investment is restricted to support administration, overhead, and specific projects/initiatives.

The formal funding request for HealthyVIEW funding begins this summer. Learning how to secure sustainable funding for the initiative and demonstrating its value for businesses is challenging. There is no seed money for this work therefore, it is critical we clearly make the case in order to secure funding. All funds raised for the work will support administration, operations, and specific work related to the initiative. No grants have been secured yet for this work.

Do you have an evaluation strategy?

The Chamber conceived this initiative in August 2017 after attending a Healthy Communities workshop hosted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). The work is in its infancy and has not established metrics. Both Kelly Hall, President of the Chamber and Jennifer Ware, CHRISTUS Good Shepherd Health System, have been asked and have agreed to participate in a new fellowship with ACCE and RWJF that begins this fall. Much is to be learned on how to lead and measure success.

What lessons would you say are most important for others seeking to engage with community health efforts?

1. Know the local predicament. Learn what specific challenges are facing your local community, and tailor your efforts to fit those needs.
2. Deal with facts and data. Know your numbers and use them as a tool to show others (and entities), why focusing on health matters and how it affects everyone's bottom line.
3. Create dreams together. Get to know what matters most to your stakeholders and help them find those common points of interest. Move to establishing a shared vision for your community and then lead by taking Action.

What has been particularly challenging? How did you overcome the challenge?

Health care is a messy arena when taking into account the areas of medical care, public health, and social/community services. Discovering new ways to align these systems to reduce inequalities, increase efficiencies and costs, with the outcome of providing an increased successful health experience for the U.S. population can be overwhelming. Many health care providers embrace the vision for change, but convening and aligning the various providers can be challenging. Market forces and regulations impede the collaborative effort resulting in an established silo system. However, we believe when a champion emerges to carry the torch the conversation can move forward leading to a collaborative foundation. Engaging stakeholders in this conversation is key to solving the intricate tapestry of issues impacting a healthy workforce and, inevitably, the community.

What has been a surprise?

The passion and willingness to embrace and improve our local circumstances has been overwhelming at times. We understand that building a community of health is our moral authority. If we choose to look the other way and apathetically continue down the path in our current environment, communities will die.

**This case story was submitted by Kelly Hall, the perspectives and opinions presented here are solely those of the author.*

About the collaborative: The [Business Collaborative's](#) purpose is to catalyze and facilitate private sector partnerships and actions of business, health, community, and public sectors to work together to enhance the lives of workers and communities by improving the nation's health and wealth. Read more in the collaborative framing document. The Collaborative is an ad hoc convening mechanism under the auspices of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Roundtable on Population Health Improvement. The Collaborative is a flexible and action-oriented group that welcomes all interested organizations and individuals. Any products and activities associated with this collaborative do not necessarily represent the views of any one organization, the Collaborative, the Roundtable, or the National Academies and has not been subjected to the review procedures of, nor are they a reports or products of, the National Academies.