

HFI Success Story: Zac Mago Heart Screening Clinic at Kouts School

On Saturday, November 4, the Porter County Health Department, in partnership with the Zac Mago Foundation, Community Healthcare Systems, Valparaiso University, and Kouts School, organized a youth heart screening clinic. Originally planned for 60 registrations, the clinic quickly expanded to accommodate 80 individuals as the community continued to sign up for appointment times. Saturday's event saw 78 individuals between the ages of 10 to early twenties receive life-saving heart scans from local echo techs who generously volunteered their time.

The primary objective of these screenings is to identify and address any heart-related issues, such as irregular heartbeats, heart chamber size and position and signs of damage. Possible problems that can be detected include arrhythmia, myocarditis, and abnormal electrical activities that may impede blood flow through the heart.

As a non-profit organization, the Zac Mago Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness, providing education, and offering tips on preventing Sudden Cardiac Arrest to the public. Due to the success of this week's screening clinic, the Porter County Health Department, Zac Mago Foundation, and Community Healthcare Systems will partner with Discovery Charter School to host another screening on 12/02/2023.

Porter County Pedals Forward with Successful Bike Program

The Porter County Health Department, along with Leo's Mobile Bicycle Service in Valparaiso, is making a difference in Northwest Indiana. The Porter County Health Department's bicycle program offers a solution for residents struggling with transportation.

Eligible individuals receive a bicycle, helmet and lock to help them get to work, the grocery store, healthcare appointments and more. Carrie Honeycutt, Care Coordinator at the health department, works to connect residents with this program.

Recently, Carrie received a referral from Three20 Recovery, a non-profit in Chesterton, for a resident named Bobbi who was not able to use a regular bike due to health reasons. The program took on the challenge and found a special solution for her needs.

On June 6, Bobbi received a newly refurbished tricycle. This new set of wheels means Bobbi can now get to the store, necessary appointments and Three20 without having to rely on ride-sharing apps or asking family for rides.

"I can finally go to the store and other places I need to without having to bother others for help," Bobbi says. "There's even a community bike ride tonight, and I can join in now, thanks to this program!"

Since launching in March 2024, the program has provided more than a dozen bikes to Porter County residents in need.

Porter County Health Department's Inaugural Summer Kick-Off Health Fair a Resounding Success

On June 14, the Porter County Health Department hosted its first-ever health fair at Central Park Plaza in Valparaiso, Indiana, marking a significant milestone for the community. The event drew nearly 1,000 attendees and featured a vibrant atmosphere with several food trucks and dozens of vendors from both local areas and across the state.

The fair provided various essential health services, including preventative heart screenings, back-to-school physicals, dental exams, and free haircuts. One of the highlights of the day was the distribution of more than 200 backpacks filled with school supplies, ensuring that children in the community are well-prepared for the upcoming school year.

The fair also offered more than 50 free haircuts, making it a comprehensive event catering to various needs. This large-scale initiative, the first of its kind in Porter County, received an overwhelmingly positive response from attendees and participants alike.

By bringing together community resources and providing valuable services, the event underscored the department's commitment to enhancing the health and well-being of Porter County residents.

Porter County Health Department and Powers Health Team Up to Tackle Diabetes

The Porter County Health Department and Powers Health have joined forces to address diabetes risk and prevention through the Reducing Undiagnosed Diabetes Initiative (RUDI). This program, supported by the Powers Health Ask the Nurse Program and HFI funding from the health department, is making a significant impact in the community. This program helps identify undiagnosed cases of prediabetes through on-site A1C testing, education and immediate referrals for those at risk.

Since mid-October, five screenings have been held, evaluating 39 individuals. Among those screened, ten were considered as prediabetic, and one young adult in their 20s showed indicators of having diabetes. More than 900 residents have also received valuable diabetes education through the initiative.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), an A1C level of 6.5% or higher indicates diabetes. An A1C level of less than 5.7% is considered normal, while 5.7–6.4% is considered prediabetes.

Screenings are designed for individuals aged 18 and older who are overweight or obese and meet specific criteria, such as not having a recent A1C blood test or prior diagnosis of diabetes or prediabetes. So far, eight additional screenings are planned for the winter and spring, with nine more locations in the scheduling phase.



Porter County Health Department Expands Food Security Initiatives

The Porter County Health Department has teamed up with the Foodbank of Northwest Indiana to enhance food security initiatives within the county. Since March, the partnership has distributed essential items such as diapers, wipes and sanitary napkins to five local food pantries. To date, more than 480 packages of diapers, 370 packages of wipes, and more than 50 packages of sanitary napkins have been provided to families in need.

Additionally, PCHD, in collaboration with the Foodbank of Northwest Indiana and Northwest Indiana No Child Hungry, offers a weekend backpack snack program for four local school districts. This program has successfully distributed nearly 3,000 snack bags since it began in June.

These vital initiatives are made possible through funding provided by Health First Indiana.



Porter County's ASK Initiative Empowers Youth with Community Support

Porter County's Adolescent Support & Knowledge (ASK) Initiative is a collaborative effort bringing together several organizations to empower and uplift local youth through education, prevention and restorative programs. The initiative serves all seven public school systems in the county, as well as local charter schools, under the guidance of a dedicated School Liaison/Health Educator.

ASK unites the efforts of the Porter County Health Department, Porter County Hub Coalition, Positive Approach to Teen Health, Porter County Juvenile Justice Services and the Tobacco Education & Prevention Coalition for Porter County. Together, these organizations provide key resources to inspire young people to make positive, informed decisions that foster overall wellness and resilience.

“Our shared mission is to create a safer and healthier environment for every young person in our community,” said Jamie Pauley of the Porter County Health Department. “By working together, we maximize our ability to support youth and provide them with the tools they need to thrive.”

For more information about the ASK Initiative, contact Jamie Pauley at jamie.pauley@porterco.org.



Adolescent Support & Knowledge Initiative (ASK)

Porter County Health Department Partners with Chesterton Fire Department to Distribute ROTH ID Tags

The Porter County Health Department has partnered with the Town of Chesterton Fire Department to bring ROTH ID TAGS to Porter County. These tags enhance child safety by providing essential emergency contact information. In the event of an emergency, the tag detaches from the car seat and becomes a wristband for the child, ensuring first responders have immediate access to critical details.

In September 2024, the Chesterton Fire Department participated in the Community Partner Grand Giveaway, a contest aimed at increasing public access to ROTH ID TAGS through local government agencies. Among thousands of nominations, the department secured 237 votes, making them one of 18 winners. As a result, they received 100 assembled ROTH ID TAG kits for distribution throughout Porter County.

The Porter County Health Department has been instrumental in distributing ID tags and promoting their importance for child safety. Thanks to funding from Health First Indiana, the department has secured additional tags to begin ensuring that every Porter County resident with a car seat has access to one.

