



NEWS RELEASE

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Weighty Problem in the Fox Valley: Bad News, Good News ***Local Partnership Helps People Achieve, Maintain Healthy Weight***

What: Weight of the Fox Valley will be releasing to the public the results of new body mass index (BMI) data that reveals that the Fox Valley community is heavier than we thought. This data comes from a collaboration of the 3 major healthcare systems; Ascension, Aurora, and ThedaCare, working together to share de-identified patient records to help Weight of the Fox Valley to address this major health issue.

When: Friday, February 9th at 8:45 a.m.

Where: Bridgewood Conference Center, 1000 Cameron Way, Neenah WI

Highlights:

- Over 100 community partners will be in attendance for Weight of the Fox Valley's quarterly breakfast meeting. (Keynote speaker for earlier part of meeting is David Lee, [Feeding Wisconsin](#), talking about Healthy Food for All.)
- Representatives from all 3 healthcare systems, Appleton Health Department, and Weight of the Fox Valley will be available to answer any questions, including:
 - Dr. Thomas Zoch, Vice President of Care Management-Clinical for Ascension Wisconsin
 - Paula Morgen, Director – Community Health, ThedaCare
 - Kurt Eggebrecht, Health Officer, City of Appleton
 - Sarah Wright, Program Manager, Weight of the Fox Valley

New data reveals some troubling news for the Fox Valley community; we're heavier than we thought. The hard truth is that 3 out of 4, or 75% of Fox Valley adults have a body mass index that classifies them as overweight or obese, according to this newly released data. This is significantly higher than the 64% value used previously to represent this population. Why such a big difference? The 75% value was obtained through the **actual measurement** by healthcare professionals of heights and weights of over 91,000 adults from Calumet,

Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties. The 64% value was based on **self-reported** height and weight data; obtained through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), where about 1,600 adults from these 3 counties were randomly selected, telephoned and asked numerous questions about their health, including height and weight. Worth noting is that the 91,000 represents only adults who visit their healthcare providers.

Research shows that by nature, people tend to underestimate their weight, and overestimate their height when asked to provide this information. Think about what people typically report on their driver's license, for example. Considering this fact, leaders from Weight of the Fox Valley (WOTFV), a local collaborative partnership aimed at helping people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, considered options to find better data to assess the true health of our community. Among the ranks of the WOTFV Leadership Team are representatives from the three major Fox Valley health systems, Ascension, Aurora, and ThedaCare, who recognized that they already measure heights and weights in their patient populations. These health systems united in support of Weight of the Fox Valley (WOTFV) to create a system to pool their de-identified patient record data to determine the actual extent of the weight problem in the community. "This is truly a unique partnership of our health systems, and reflects our recognition of the seriousness of this problem in our community," said Dr. John Newman, Chief Medical Officer and President of Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh, and member of the WOTFV Leadership Team.

According to Dr. Imran Andrabi, President and CEO of ThedaCare, "Our mission is to improve the health of the communities we serve. We are committed to working together with this important partnership to help our patients and their families achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle."

"This new data becomes even more concerning when we consider the health risks associated with being overweight, including increased risks for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, osteoarthritis, fatty liver disease, and even potential problems with fertility and pregnancy," said Dr. Thomas Zoch, Vice President of Care Management-Clinical for Ascension Wisconsin, and co-chair of the WOTFV Leadership Team. For example, about 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese. "We know that losing just 5 to 7 percent of your body weight may prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes," said Dr. Zoch.

The new healthcare data reveals that 28% of youth in the tri-county area are overweight or obese; a fact that is particularly concerning when considering the potential impact on the health of our children now and throughout their lifespan.

When considering weights and heights directly measured by healthcare professionals compared to self-reported numbers, it is not uncommon to find discrepancies in the data. Other communities who have done this

have had similar results, according to Kurt Eggebrecht, Health Officer for City of Appleton and WOTFV Leadership Team member. “Having access to this new data helps us to recognize the extent of this public health problem in our community. It is also a wake-up call to mobilize resources to address it,” said Eggebrecht.

The good news is that Weight of the Fox Valley is set up to do just that. This multi-sector partnership of Fox Valley organizations from healthcare, public health, non-profits, business, education, local government, and coordinated by United Way is working to turn this health problem around. WOTFV formed in late 2013, when these same leaders from healthcare and public health recognized the public health crisis related to obesity and associated chronic diseases in the Fox Valley. WOTFV utilizes an approach fashioned after the Wisconsin Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity State Plan to address healthy living across the various settings in which people live, work, learn, and play. Getting kids off to a better start in terms of developing healthy eating and physical activity habits at a young age is a major goal of Weight of the Fox Valley. “This collaboration addresses the health needs of the community and provides the energy to help make this project successful,” said Peter Kelly, President and CEO of United Way Fox Cities, which, along with Oshkosh Area United Way, provide backbone support for the initiative.

To learn more about your weight status, visit the Centers for Disease Control web site to use the quick BMI calculator at:

www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html. Eating more vegetables and less sugar, and being more physically active can help people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It’s important to know what’s in the food you eat, and to watch out for things like hidden sugars. Many people benefit from journaling to keep track of their food intake and physical activity. Many more strategies can be found at www.cdc.gov/healthyweight or on our website, www.weightofthefoxvalley.org. Weight of the Fox Valley is a community health initiative working with partners to create a community where all people have an opportunity to live healthy and achieve and maintain a healthy weight at every age. To learn how you can support these efforts or get involved, contact Sarah Wright, WOTFV Program Manager, at sarah.wright@unitedwayfoxcities.org.

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