



NEWS RELEASE

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The Fox Valley Community is Getting Heavier *Call to Action to Reverse This Trend!*

What: Weight of the Fox Valley will be releasing to the public body mass index (BMI) data trends from 2013 – 2017, which reveal that the Fox Valley community keeps getting heavier. If current trends continue, **half of our adult patient population** will be at a weight that is considered “**obese**” by 2025, compared to current obesity levels of 44%. This means that in less than 7 years, **one out of every 2 Fox Valley residents over the age of 18 will be obese!** In Wisconsin, 41% of adults and 15% of children are obese, which is about average among states. Most troubling is the fact that obesity significantly increases the lifetime risk of diabetes, heart disease, and many other chronic and debilitating illnesses. Still, there is reason for hope. Weight of the Fox Valley is embarking on a re-visioning process to determine how we can collectively foster a vision for creating a healthier Fox Valley; where the culture and environment make it easy to lead a healthy lifestyle and more of our residents live longer, more vibrant, and healthier lives. (Note: 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 address this major health issue.)

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

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

Who: Data will be presented by Mark Jenike, Ph.D., Lawrence University, and member of the Weight of the Fox Valley Leadership Team

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 [Dr. Jenny Thomas](#), Aurora Healthcare, talking

about the importance of starting children off right with optimal nutrition through breastfeeding to promote lifelong health.)

- Representatives from all 3 healthcare systems, Appleton Health Department, and Weight of the Fox Valley will be available to answer any questions, including:
 - Dr. John Newman, Chief Medical Officer and President of Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh
 - Dr. Jennifer Frank – Chief Medical Officer, ThedaCare
 - Kurt Eggebrecht, Health Officer, City of Appleton
 - Mark Jenike, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Lawrence University
 - Peter Kelly CEO United Way Fox Cities and Weight of the Fox Valley Leadership Team

A critical message for the people of the Fox Valley: Despite our efforts as individuals and a community to live healthier, we continue to get heavier. We now know that 3 out of 4, or 75% of Fox Valley adults, and 29% of youth age 3 – 17, have a body mass index that classifies them as overweight or obese. Perhaps even more troubling, is that in 2017, 44% of adults and 13.9% of children in the Fox Valley were obese, compared to 41.2% and 13.02%, a mere five years earlier. At this pace, 50% of adults will be obese by 2025; just 7 years from now. That's one out of every 2 Fox Valley residents over the age of 18!

These BMI results were obtained through the **actual measurement** by healthcare professionals of heights and weights of over 109,000 adults and over 28,000 youth from Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties who visited a healthcare clinic at Ascension, Aurora, or ThedaCare. The data further reveals that weights are going up in all adult age groups, with the biggest jumps from the *18–24 year-old* to the *25-34 year-old* age groups (Median BMI jumps from 24.19 to 28.05) and another jump from the *25-34 year-old* to the *35-44 year old* age group (from 28.05 to 29.44). For youth, the biggest jump in the percentage of overweight & obesity is between *6-9 year olds* to *10-13 year olds* (25.52% to 30.73%). Not only are we getting heavier, it's happening younger and younger.

About 10% of patients and over 10,000 people in our 3-county area have grade III obesity, or a BMI over 40, and this rate is also climbing. Grade III obesity for a 5'10" adult would be a weight of more than 278 pounds. The direction of weight trends for men and women are similar, but whereas 28% of women fall in the normal weight category, only 18% of men do, with correspondingly higher rates for men than for women of overweight (36% vs 28%) and obesity (46% vs 43%).

The impact on the health of individuals increases with higher weights and associated BMI. Most troubling is the fact that obesity significantly increases the lifetime risk of diabetes and heart disease; conditions that can significantly impair function and reduce quality of life for years or even decades. In fact, obesity is the leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes. When we consider the financial burden on individuals and society of obesity-associated disease, the story continues to get worse. For example, the average medical cost in the United

States for a person with diagnosed diabetes is \$16,750 per year (cdc.gov). In Wisconsin, about 356,000 adults and 6,500 children have been diagnosed with diabetes. If we do the math, that's an annual cost of over \$6 billion in Wisconsin.

The good news is that even small amounts of weight loss can lead to big gains in health. "Losing even a little weight can greatly improve heart and vascular health," according to Dr. Thomas Zoch, Co-Chair of the WOTFV Leadership Team. Losing just 5 to 7 percent of body weight can help to prevent type 2 diabetes in people with prediabetes. The problem is, weight loss is difficult for people when we live in an environment that encourages just the opposite. Our culture and environment can make or break weight loss efforts. "Weight is not just about willpower," said Mark Jenike, Associate Professor and Nutritional Anthropology expert from Lawrence University. "The culture of eating in our area is obesogenic, with the proliferation of foods that are high in fat and sugar, large portion sizes, and the inclusion of food in so many everyday activities that do not directly involve eating. In order to shift the behaviors of people in our community, healthy choices need to be the easy and obvious choices," said Professor Jenike.

Weight of the Fox Valley is set up to do just that; to turn this health problem around by making healthy living the norm. This multi-sector partnership of Fox Valley organizations from healthcare, public health, non-profits, business, education, local government, and coordinated by United Ways of the Fox Cities and Oshkosh, 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. United Way Fox Cities and Oshkosh Area United Way together provide backbone support for the initiative. "Weight of the Fox Valley, through its amazing partnerships, has demonstrated success towards creating a healthier community; however, the current pace and intensity leave us challenged to bring about significant change in a timeframe that can turn the curve now. WOTFV is currently engaged in a re-visioning process with the goal of scaling up this work in order to create bigger, bolder, more sustainable change," said Sarah Wright, WOTFV Program Manager.

Ascension, Aurora, and ThedaCare 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 unique partnership with WOTFV and all of our community health systems reflects Aurora's recognition of the seriousness of this problem and our dedication to help improve the well-being and health of our communities," 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 create a culture of healthy living in order to help our patients and their families live healthier, longer and better.”

Having access to this new data helps us to recognize the extent of this public health problem in our community and monitor the direction and impact over time. It is also a wake-up call to mobilize resources to address it.

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 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.

References:

1. <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/30/6/1562>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3250069/>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3066828/>
4. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/diabetes/index.htm>
5. <https://www.med.wisc.edu/wisconsin-partnership-program/meet-our-partners/wisconsin-obesity-map/>