

Madison County CHA: Themes & Strengths

Community Health Assessment: Focus Groups

As part of the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment, the Madison County Department of Health, Community Memorial Hospital, Oneida Healthcare along with community agencies hosted 8 community meetings in different towns across the county. The purpose of the focus groups were to gather information on what community members think about overall health in Madison County. A total of 40 Madison County residents participated.

In addition to the discussion, focus group participants were asked to complete the Community Themes & Strengths survey. The purpose was to identify any significant differences in answers as well as understand the demographics of the residents who participated.

Location	Number of Participants
Cazenovia (Public Library)	0
Chittenango (Clear Path for Veterans)	4
DeRuyter (United Church of DeRuyter)	15
Oneida (Karing Kitchen)	9
Morrisville (Cornell Cooperative Extension)	1
Hamilton (Public Library)	3
Canastota (Office for the Aging)	8
Brookfield (First Baptist Church)	0
TOTAL	40

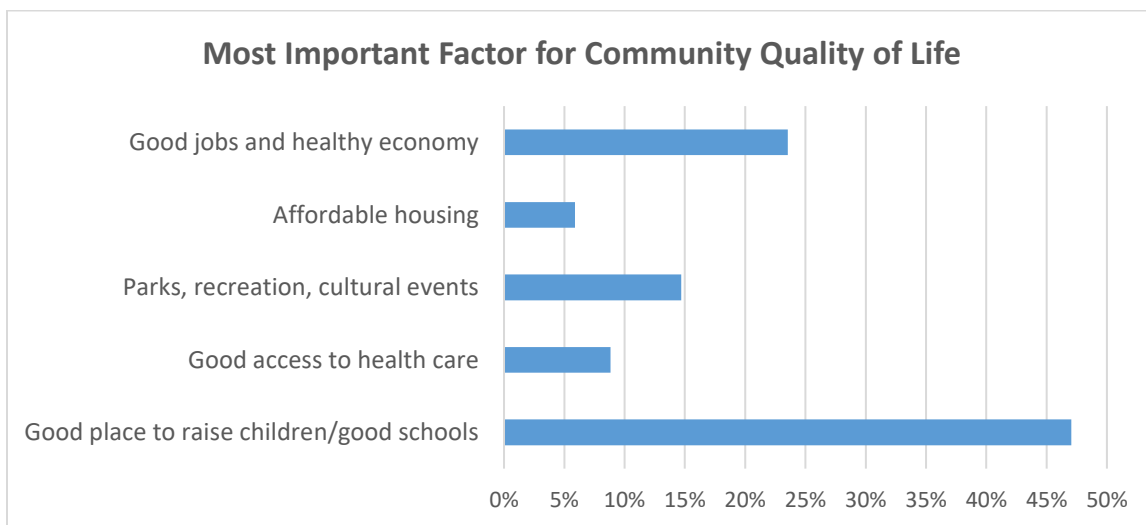
A total of 36 surveys were collected. The majority of participants were 65 years or older (54%), followed by 30-64 years (42%), and 1 participant was between 18 and 29 years. Of the participants, 62% identified as female. Only 20% of

Household Income Group	Percentage
Below \$20,000	18.8%
\$20,000 – 29,999	15.6%
\$30,000 – 49,999	15.6%
\$50,000 – 74,999	25.0%
Above \$75,000	25.0%

participants had children (<17 years) living in the household. The vast majority (91%) of focus group participants were White or Caucasian. Most participants pay for their healthcare with health insurance (63%), followed by Medicaid and Medicare (20%). Nearly half of focus group participants had a college degree or higher (44%). Finally, the participants were evenly split among the income group survey options.

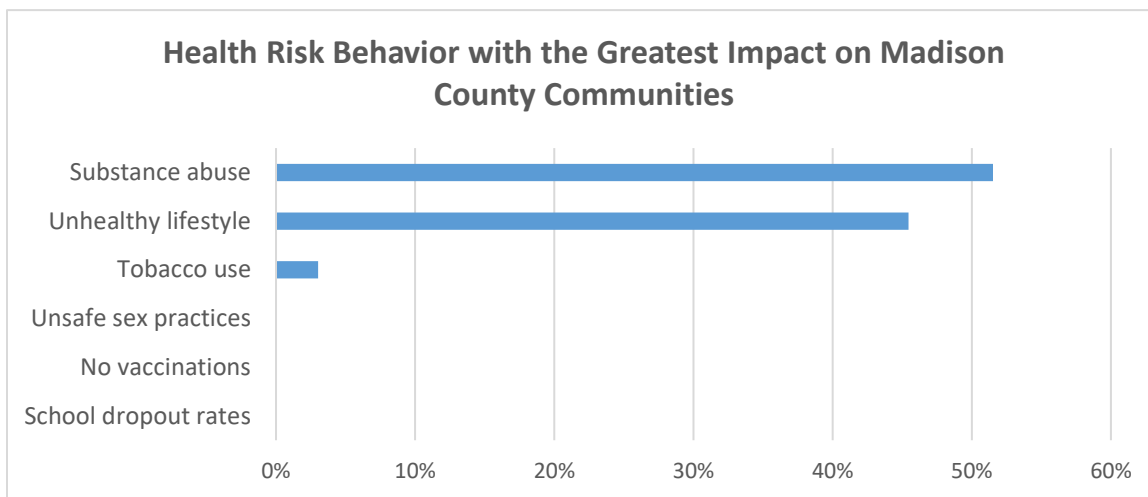
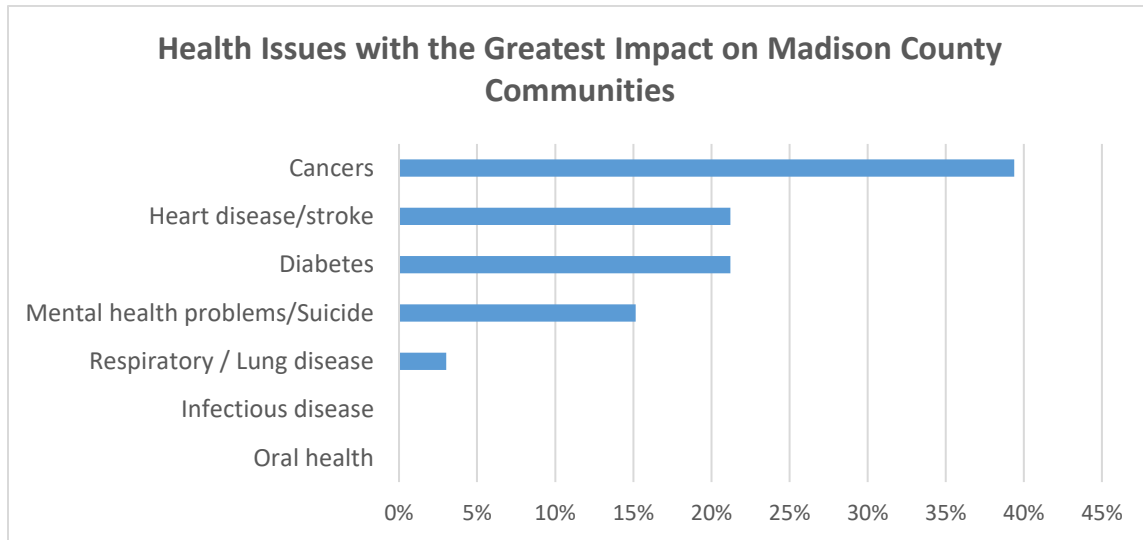
Survey Results

Overall, 86% of focus group participants are *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the quality of life in their community. Nearly 90% of focus group participants rated their personal health as *very healthy* or *somewhat healthy*. The following charts reflect on the participants' answers regarding the most important factor for quality of life as well as the health problems and risky behaviors with the greatest impact on the community. Consistent with the phone survey results, the two most important factors for quality of life are *good place to raise children/good schools* and *good jobs and healthy economy*.



Phone survey respondents and focus group participants viewed *cancers* as the most significant health issue in Madison County. However, focus group participants felt that *heart disease/stroke* and *diabetes* were the next two health issues

with the greatest impact on county residents. Both groups of respondents agreed that *substance abuse* and *unhealthy lifestyle* were the two risk behaviors with the greatest impact on county residents.



Overall Themes:

Community Strengths

Focus group participants were asked how they would describe their community to someone not from Madison County. In another question, they were prompted by the question of what makes their community healthier. Two themes that reflected on the strengths of the community were identified.

Strength	Explanation
Close-Knit Communities	<p>Many participants reflected on the close-knit or caring communities that make up Madison County and recognize their social organizations as assets (e.g. Lions Club, religious groups, PTO, senior center)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Schools give communities a sense of pride and promote friendly competition ❖ Libraries host different activities ❖ Volunteerism (e.g. Clear Path for Veterans, EMT services in DeRuyter) ❖ Active church community
Events/Spaces for Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Local programs, including Monday Miles / Walk with a Doc, Bone Builders, Geri Fit ❖ Bike/walking trails are paved for greater accessibility, including the Canal Path ❖ Community runs (e.g. DeRuyter Tromptown Run)

Healthcare system

There was a dichotomy between residents in their perception of healthcare depending on their location. On one hand, some groups spoke positively about the healthcare system in Madison County or within reasonable distance. Community members in both Oneida and Hamilton reflected that they have good access to primary care and specialty care doctors, while both Morrisville and Oneida participants mentioned that they have adequate mental health services.

“I appreciate this community because of Family Counseling Services... you don’t have to go to Wampsville for mental health.”
–Oneida Focus Group Participant

The participants at Clear Path for Veterans in Chittenango were all affiliated with the Veterans Affairs (VA) and pleased with their medical services. In contrast, focus group participants in DeRuyter felt isolated from health care and social services provided in the County. Morrisville only has one doctor’s office and no specialty care or urgent care options for community members, while Hamilton does not have mental health services. A few community members also expressed an interest in lifestyle medicine options that encompass nutrition education.

Whether in the City of Oneida or more isolated parts of the County, nearly every group mentioned transportation as a barrier to seeking health care or attending medical appointments. Many groups also mentioned that the most vulnerable groups to access issues were seniors, low-income families, and individuals without insurance. When asked about where participants get their health information, most people stated physicians and pharmacists as their preference, followed by family members, internet sources (e.g. Web-MD), and media.

Health Issues

“...I hear about the kids that [my daughter] knows that are drinking, [using] drugs...and they’re setting themselves up for a very unhealthy lifestyle.” –DeRuyter Focus Group Participant

Health Issue	Number of Focus Groups	Explanation
Substance/Alcohol Abuse	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Opioids, Meth❖ Underage drinking/vaping among youth❖ Alcohol use among adults – center of social gatherings
Obesity/Chronic Diseases	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Obesity – abundance of processed foods/high sugar options, lack of nutrition education❖ Stroke/heart disease/diabetes
Mental Health/Toxic Stress	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Need more education, diagnosis, and treatment resources for mental health, particularly to prevent suicides❖ Lack of resiliency on both ends of the income spectrum
Cancer	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Perception of uptick in breast and prostate cancers

The focus groups discussed factors that have a negative impact on the health of residents. Over the past decade, there has been a decrease in industry throughout the County contributing to a loss of jobs and lower access to basic needs (i.e. clothing, food). In addition, there are limited opportunities for trade school. Both grocery stores and health centers have left the area due to decreasing population. Dental health services are not provided in all schools. Lastly, the increase use of social media has increased social pressure and the spread of inaccurate information.

“A lot the businesses are closing up, there’s been grocery stores, Peebles, Payless...places you can get shoes and clothing are all disappearing.” -Oneida Focus Group Participant

Opportunities for Improvement

Suggestion	Explanation
Increase access to health/social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase awareness of county-wide services (e.g. Mobile Crisis Unit) ❖ Promote telehealth for primary care and mental health services ❖ Implement a traveling physician program in the southern half of the County ❖ All school children without a pediatrician or insurance should receive a physical exam at school (vision/hearing included) ❖ Home healthcare for older community members ❖ Increase number of social support groups in more isolated communities
Decrease sedentary lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Community center – all ages, workshops, place for social and physical activity ❖ Create public access to gyms, workout spaces, walking trails (kid-friendly preferably)
Increase social connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase socialization opportunities for people with limited transportation (i.e. day programming for senior residents) ❖ Summer enrichment programs for children of low-income families
Increase access to healthy foods and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Farmers markets (accept SNAP benefits) ❖ Community farm-to-table events with nutrition education ❖ Utilize community venues and college students to deliver health education on nutrition
Improve housing stability & conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Housing codes need to be enforced in single family homes and rental units ❖ Homeless shelter