



# NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 24, 2017

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## **Health Department Partnership leads to Fitness Program Pilot for Individuals with Developmental and/or Intellectual Disabilities**

*Special photo and interview opportunity at Advocate BroMenn Health and Fitness Center on Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m.*

**BLOOMINGTON, IL-** Something special is happening right now in McLean County and most people don't even know it. Earlier this month, the McLean County Board for Care and Treatment of Persons with a Developmental Disability (377 Board) and the McLean County Health Department in partnership with Advocate BroMenn Health and Fitness Center, Advocate Bromenn, and the Advocate Charitable Foundation began piloting an integrated, preventive health care project for individuals with Developmental Disabilities/Intellectual Disabilities from Marcfirst. The pilot partnership is creating opportunities for individuals to have access to holistic health care services offered through the medically-based Advocate BroMenn Health and Fitness Center.

Health department Behavioral Health Division Manager, Laura Beavers, explains, "Both the 553 Board and the 377 Board have been exploring wellness opportunities since research shows that individuals with developmental/intellectual disabilities and/or behavioral health challenges often die 25 years earlier than the general population. Both populations are not only impacted by their disability, but also by many chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure. We knew that, in order to address these concerns, we needed to forge partnerships that could have a wellness impact and long-term sustainability."

The pilot program includes capacity for 41 adults; so far, 40 have enrolled in the program. The group spent the first two weeks of April completing health assessments to facilitate the creation of customized exercise prescriptions. With medical considerations taken into account, wellness and exercise experts then met with each participant to walk through their individualized fitness plans.

Pilot participants will go through the assessment and customized plan process every 12 weeks to document, identify, and augment improvements to their overall health and wellness. Additional guidance concerning topics like nutrition and healthy eating, stress management and healthy lifestyles will also be presented by staff members from the Health and Fitness Center during the one-year pilot program.

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Says 377 Board member Vern McGinnis, “This program resonated with us because we know some individuals with disabilities find it more difficult to eat healthy, control their weight, and be physically active than those without disabilities; plus, they often experience physical or program barriers that limit or prevent them from using available local health and wellness programs. This program seeks to balance the opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and it’s caught the attention of the Advocate Charitable Foundation; so, if it is as successful as we think it will be, there is potential for private support to be available to help sustain it beyond the pilot period.”

By the end of April, all pilot participants will have received their individualized fitness plans and should be ready to begin their journey to improved health and wellness. Says Beavers, “Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to live like those without disabilities. This newly designed preventive health care pilot project is one way we can help provide access to holistic health care services to improve lives and reduce health care costs.”

The McLean County Health Department has worked to improve the mental health of McLean County residents since its leaders began a Mental Health Coordination program in July of 1975. Then, as now, rather than provide direct services, the health department provides funding; helps develop plans for services for those with mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse problems; and, works in close cooperation with state agencies to better meet the needs of McLean County residents. For more information please call, 309-888-5450.

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