

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

2012 “Friend of Public Health Award” Recipient

Public Health Accomplishments and Collaborations

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission exemplifies the definition of Friend of Public Health by using their area of expertise to do work that aligns with the mission of the Berrien County Health Department: to prevent disease, protect health, prolong life, and promote an optimal quality of life. The field of planning is concerned with optimizing community infrastructure and organization. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission exemplifies a planning commission making marked progress to improve the quality of life and the health of the community members. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission has risen to the challenge of enhancing the community as demonstrated through the strength of their own organization, as well as their thriving partnerships with the Berrien County Health Department and others. They have repeatedly proven the importance of a cooperative relationship between the fields of public health and planning. Some examples include:

- Provides key perspective as a vital member of the “Health Equity Alliance” (HEAL).
- Provides key perspective as a vital member of the “Building Healthy Communities Coalition”.
- Was instrumental in the success of the Health Department’s “Complete Streets Project”.
- Participated as an active member of the steering committee for county-wide obesity reduction initiative.
- Promoted Public Health through its non-motorized Transportation efforts (i.e. “Bike to Work Promotion”, etc.).
- Conducted community survey on septic systems that was later used to support and promote the Health Department's point of sale initiative in the Environmental Health services area.
- Addressed transportation challenges faced by community members that lead to an established fixed route bus system.
- SWMPC has demonstrated that proper land use and community infrastructure can have a significant impact on the public’s health.
- SWMPC has always been extremely helpful by sharing their extensive community data with not only the Health Department, but all of their community partners.

Through each of these activities, along with countless others, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission demonstrates their vital role in helping Berrien County Health Department ensure that all of Berrien County’s residents realize their most optimal level of health and quality of life.