

Also In This Issue:

City faces important decisions on power generation

Excerpts from Al Cross presentation on politics and the media

Dental Clinic meets pressing needs

AmericaSpeaks founder heads new institute

Citizens examine the obesity epidemic

Since October, on more than 50 occasions at a dozen sites around Owensboro-Daviess County, citizens concerned about the increasing occurrence of obesity came together to learn more about the problem, the consequences, and what we as a community can do about it.



TO WIN, WE HAVE TO LOSE.

THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION

CONFRONTING AMERICA'S OBESITY EPIDEMIC



Citizens examine the obesity epidemic

Since October, on more than 50 occasions at a dozen sites around Owensboro-Daviess County, citizens concerned about the increasing occurrence of obesity came together to learn more about the problem, the consequences, and what we as a community can do about it.

Participants watched a four-part documentary “The Weight of the Nation.” Four years in the making, the highly acclaimed film is a presentation of HBO, Institute of Medicine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and Kaiser Permanente.

The project was organized and supported by the Green River District Health Department, Owensboro Medical Health System, Healthy Horizons, Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, OMHS HealthPark, Junior League, Lawrence and Augusta Hager Educational Foundation. Citizens Health Care Advocates, and Daviess County Board of Education.

A societal problem

- More than two out of three U.S. adults are overweight or obese.
- During the past 30 years, adult obesity rates have doubled.
- The diet industry is a \$69 billion industry and growing.
- The food industry spends \$30 billion annually on advertising.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture spends \$220 million on nutrition education. That's two percent of what the food industry spent marketing to kids.
- In 2010, preschool kids were exposed to 50 percent more ads for energy and soda drinks than in 2008.
- Kids see almost 7,600 ads per year, 98 percent of which promote foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
- Obesity reduces productivity and costs employers more than \$70 billion.





The project was coordinated by the following committee:

Shelly Nichols, Public Life Foundation; Debbie Fillman, Green River District Health Dept.; Collette Carter, Debbie Zuerner Johnson and Isaac Coffey, OMHS HealthPark; Ed Allen and Belinda Abell, We the People Leadership Council; Dr. Don Neel, pediatrician; Merritt Bates-Thomas, Daviess County Board of Education; Marisa Reynolds and Patti Martin, Junior League; and Keith Sanders, Lawrence and Augusta Hager Educational Foundation; Cyndi Sturgeon, Owensboro Parks and Recreation, retired.

The four film segments focused on: (1) Consequences (2) Choices (3) Children in Crisis and (4) Challenges. Following each public viewing, volunteer facilitators and recorders led group discussions to solicit impressions and ideas for community action.

Interested citizens who were unable to participate in the public viewings and discussions have been encouraged to watch the films online (www.theweightofthenation.hbo.com) and to share their reactions (info@plfo.org).

When the sessions are complete in January 2013, committee members will review and analyze public comments for inclusion in a Community Health Plan led by Green River District Health Dept. and Owensboro Medical Health System.

A crisis with our youth

- Childhood weight problems can lead to elevated blood pressure and cholesterol, joint problems, type 2 diabetes, gallbladder disease, asthma, depression and anxiety. (The risk of developing asthma increases by 52 percent.)
- Obese children are more likely to become obese adults.
- Since 1980, obesity in children ages two to 19 has more than tripled.

Diet and nutrition

- Americans consume between 150 and 300 more calories a day than 25 years ago.
- Soda, sports and energy drinks are the third largest source of calories among American children and adolescents ages two to 13.
- Under current school regulations, French fries qualify as a vegetable.
- A 20-ounce bottle of soda can contain as much as 17 teaspoons of sugar.

Activity and exercise

- One in four adults gets no moderate or rigorous physical activity at all.
- The average American adult spends 4.5 hours a day watching TV and 2.5 hours a day online.
- In the U.S., four percent of elementary schools, eight percent of middle schools, and two percent of high schools provide daily physical education.



Community faces important decisions on power generation

The Science Application International Corporation (SAIC) study and Owensboro Municipal Utilities (OMU) ten year Integrated Resource Plan are expected in May. When these reports are released, the City of Owensboro, owner of OMU and the Elmer Smith Power Station, will consider recommendations from SAIC consultants and OMU staff.

The OMU board and its municipal owner must decide on the future of the Smith station given our community’s power needs, the age and condition of the facility, replacement or refurbishing costs, downward pressure on prices, concerns about operating deficits, rate increases for commercial and residential customers, impact on economic development and jobs, compliance to health and environmental regulations and more.

Options for public dialogue. What should the City do with the Smith Station? What are the options? Will we make it a point to inform and engage the public in meaningful dialogue before important decisions are made?

Apparent options:	
1	Continue to operate and upgrade the Elmer Smith Station to meet environmental regulations.
2	Repower one or both of the Smith station boilers with natural gas.
3	Build or buy a natural gas generation facility to replace all or part of the Elmer Smith Station.
4	Retire the Smith station and purchase power from other providers.
5	Transition to one or more renewable energy sources.
6	Some combination of the above.

For each of these options, there are costs, pros and cons, consequences and trade-offs.

A valuable community resource. OMU is not only an important power generator for our community. The utility has 250 employees, purchases locally mined coal that supports additional jobs, transfers more than \$8.5 million per year to the City of Owensboro budget, and provides free electric service, and street and traffic light services to city facilities.

OMU electric customers pay approximately nine cents per kilowatt hour – among the lowest rates in the nation. This is an important selling point in retaining and recruiting employers.

Is the age of the Smith Station an issue? A typical operating span of a coal-fired power plant is 50 years. The older of the two Smith Station units is 48 years old. Some analysts claim that these plants can operate on an unlimited basis as long as degraded or failed components are replaced.

The age and condition of the Smith Station may have contributed to past rankings that pointed to operating inefficiencies and excessive emissions. However, OMU countered by spending \$175 million on emissions control and gaining efficiencies to record production levels. The utility anticipates significant increases in environmental regulations that could

be costly given the age of the facility compared to other power supply options.

There are more than 700 coal-fired power plants in the U.S., and our region has one of the highest concentrations of those plants. Many facilities that were under construction have been cancelled, and more than 200 are scheduled for retirement.

Health and environmental concerns. Coal-fired power plants contribute to asthma attacks, heart attacks, chronic bronchitis and more. Harmful emissions create smog, endanger fish populations, increase acid rain and greenhouse gases that affect climate change.



Unique opportunity? Given these circumstances, trends and challenges, considering the municipal ownership of OMU:

- Should Owensboro be a leader and innovator in carbon reduction technology, conservation, efficiency, and cutting edge energy development?
- Are OMU's customers willing and able to pay for such innovation?
- Will Owensboro embrace unique opportunities to be a national-international model for power generation?



EXCERPTS FROM AL CROSS PRESENTATION ON POLITICS AND THE MEDIA

October 16, 2012



Prior to the November election, the Public Life Foundation partnered with the Owensboro Women's Coalition and other sponsors to present Al Cross, veteran *Courier-Journal* political editor and founder of the University of Kentucky Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues. The program attracted more than 80 people and was held at the Wendell H. Ford Government Education Center in the Owensboro Museum of Science and History. Cross shared his perspectives on the changes and influence of the media and its effect on political campaigns. Here are excerpts from Cross's presentation.

"The messages you are getting from candidates and the media who carry their water are straying farther from the truth than they have since our modern media environment developed after World War II."

"Never has it been easier to lie outrageously and get away with it." (quoting Charles Pierce, *Esquire*)

"In a democracy where properly informed voters are essential, that's a problem."

"...the mainstream media have never been as liberal as they have been painted by...critics, and the academic research has generally proven that."

"...there are some really good journalists at Fox News, including Chris Wallace and Owensboro's own Caroline Shively. But I think the talent pool there is shallower than at other networks, and when a lack of journalism skills leaves a vacuum on a story, the prevailing ideology of the place can fill it."

"THE MARKET FOR OPINION IN THIS COUNTRY IS INCREASING, THE MARKET FOR FACT IS DECREASING, AND AT SOME POINT THAT BECOMES A PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE ON OUR DEMOCRACY."

"...people of different parties and ideologies gravitate to the shows that support their beliefs."

"...a highly fractionalized media environment...makes (traditional news outlets) more inclined to give their readers, viewers and listeners what they want instead of what they need...and what they want, all too often, is not useful knowledge about public affairs, but entertainment."

"...the modern media market gives us...too much opinion and not enough fact."

“...most of the metropolitan newspapers like the *Courier-Journal* have abandoned rural and small-town America.”

“UK’s College of Communication ...tracked the four Lexington TV stations from the beginning of September through Election Day, and found that they sold more than \$3 million worth of ads that consumed 115 hours of air time, but gave their viewers less than four hours of news coverage: a ratio of almost 30 to 1, and it was even more in the last two weeks of the race...”

“...we did not find one single example of a TV station analyzing a political commercial like the newspapers did.”

“...we have many more ads, because we have lots more money, because the Supreme Court says money is speech and billionaires can write multi-million checks for ads that are rarely held accountable.”



“...network TV affiliates ... where the most money is spent... had done no analysis or fact-checking of presidential campaign ads.”

ONE POLLSTER SAID THIS SUMMER, “WE’RE NOT GOING TO LET OUR CAMPAIGN BE DICTATED BY FACT CHECKERS.”

“We need more fact checkers.”

“...some voters ... develop a tendency to forgive the home team fibs... and inhabit information bubbles in

which they are less likely to hear their world view contradicted.”

“...today’s young people have countless more cultural influences because they become almost constant consumers of media before they enter the first grade.”



“...in the latest poll by the Pew Research Center, the percentage who called the news believable dropped to 56 percent, from 71 in last year’s survey.”

“...people sometimes fail to distinguish between paid media and what the consultants like to call earned media: the news.”

“We (American journalism) need to do a better job of explaining our principles, and living up to them – and criticizing our brothers and sisters who fall short.”

“IF YOU THINK THAT YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPERS OR BROADCAST STATIONS ARE NOT DOING AN ADEQUATE JOB OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES, THEN YOU NEED TO TELL THEM SO, AND GET YOUR LIKE-MINDED NEIGHBORS TO DO THE SAME.”

“Many...folks in the news business ... are ground down (by) smaller staffs and lesser resources.”

“Our technology has brought us much more information, but little more knowledge.”

“...the (following) sources ... have been proven reliable: Politifact.com...Fact Checker (Glenn Kessler)... Fact-Check.org

Dental Clinic meets pressing needs

The Community Dental Clinic was established in 2009 to address unmet oral health needs of the community. The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro is proud to have had a leadership role in establishing the clinic.

The clinic serves low-income patients without a dental provider using a sliding-scale fee schedule based upon income. The clinic also accepts patients who qualify for Medicaid managed care programs.



Dr. Brandon Taylor is the Clinical Director. The staff also includes a full time associate dentist, part-time dentist, hygienist, office manager, three dental assistants, and a part-time grant writer. The clinic provides a wide range of services including exams, oral health education, preventive care, fillings, root canals, and extractions.

Governed by a volunteer board of directors chaired currently by Ken Stein of RiverValley Behavioral Services, the clinic is a private, nonprofit charitable 501(c)(3) corporation. The board includes two dentists, representatives of Owensboro Medical Health System, Green River District Health, plus a certified public accountant, attorney, educators, social workers and others.

Since its opening, the clinic can point to impressive results:

- **More than 6,000 patients** treated (approximately 30 percent are children)
- **\$2.2 million** of care
- **\$1.3 million** of charitable care
- **More than \$650,000** in community support through fundraising
- A recent (2012) **\$150,000 expansion/renovation** doubled the clinic's available treatment rooms from three to six

"We expect to surpass a million in charity care in 2013," Dr. Taylor said.

Young Patient Treated at the Community Dental Clinic in 2012

(Patient received 4 root canals and numerous restorations)

Before treatment:



After treatment:



Child from Owensboro

(currently in treatment at the Community Dental Clinic)



AmericaSpeaks founder heads new institute



The National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD) at the University of Arizona recently selected Dr. Carolyn Lukensmeyer as its new executive director. Dr. Lukensmeyer previously served as founder and president of AmericaSpeaks, a Washington DC-based nonprofit that promotes nonpartisan initiatives to engage citizens and lead-

ers through the development of innovative public policy tools and strategies.

During Dr. Lukensmeyer's tenure, AmericaSpeaks engaged more than 165,000 people and hosted events in all 50 states and throughout the world. Among its work were two 21st Century Town Meetings in Owensboro in 2007 and 2010. Dr. Lukensmeyer recently released the book, "Bringing Citizen Voices to the Table: A Guide for Public Managers."

"An excellent example of creating new networks to sustain participation can be found in the work initiated by the Public Life Foundation... (and its) We the People AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting initiative... that brought 650 people representative of the Owensboro and greater Daviess County communities together to deliberate about regional challenges, such as slow economic growth, underperforming schools, and environmental degradation. At the end of this deliberation, more than 300 participants signed up to be members of action groups..."

Carolyn Lukensmeyer

Author of "Bringing Citizens to the Table," 2012

The author praises the work of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro in civic dialogue and deliberation.

The NICD is a nonpartisan center for the research and advocacy of civility in public discourse. Chaired by former President George H.W. Bush and former President Bill Clinton, the institute engages in educational initiatives to advance understanding of civil discourse among elected officials and candidates running for public office. NICD promotes awareness of the importance of civil discourse to democracy and effective government.

Among the distinguished roster of advisory board members:

Tom Daschle, Honorary Co-Chair, former Senate Majority Leader

Sandra Day O'Connor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Madeline Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State

Katie Couric, ABC News Special Correspondence

Trey Grayson, Director, Harvard University's Institute of Politics

Richard Lugar, former U.S. Senator, Indiana

General Colin Powell, Former U.S. Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Richard Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor

Bill Richardson, former Governor, New Mexico

Alan Simpson, former U.S. Senator, Wyoming

Olympia Snowe, former U.S. Senator, Maine

Dr. Lukensmeyer will work from the NICD's Washington office.