



## Spectrum Health Healthier Communities Department

Our May 16, 2018 LEAD Learning Session featured the Spectrum Health Healthier Communities Department. Dr. Ken Fawcett, Vice President of Healthier Communities, and Terri Kirkpatrick, a certified Community Health Worker with the Maternal Infant Health Program, shared the amazing work they are doing to respond to the needs of our underserved patients within the West Michigan community.

Dr. Fawcett shared how Healthier Communities works with a team of dedicated professionals whose goal is to further improve West Michigan's most pressing health issues including helping at-risk adults prevent and manage chronic diseases, improve children's health and reduce infant mortality. To achieve these goals, there are many programs within the Healthier Communities Department such as Strong Beginnings, the Maternal Infant Health Program and Core Health to name a few. Healthier Communities also partners with many community partners who are also trying



to improve the health of our community including the Community Food Club, Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan and Cherry Health. In addition, Terri shared her powerful story of dealing with life's struggles and successes after getting pregnant at a young age, finishing school, and going on to become a community health worker who works with new moms who are living on the edge. Her story was of inspiration and hope for all the underserved patients and families we serve throughout all of our Healthier Communities programs.

The goal of Healthier Communities is to continue its work on increasing access to quality health care, focus on education for our underserved community members so they can adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors, and identify and remove barriers that are perpetuating the cycle of poverty including housing, education and access to healthy food.

Spectrum Health has dedicated \$6 million each year for community health programs since it was established in 1997. These operational funds are augmented by grants and other resources to create direct-service programs that support our community. They have done an excellent job of effectively using these funds to improve population health, but need your help to further their reach. Please consider allocating your LEAD gift for 2018 to the Healthier Communities Department and help reduce infant mortality, improve children's health and help at-risk adults prevent and self-manage chronic disease.