

## In the Spotlight – Thomas County



*by Kasiah Rothchild, Administrator  
Thomas County Health Department*

The Thomas County Health Department located in Colby, serves a population of approximately 7,700. They have two registered nurses on staff; Amy Knipp and Kathy Ryan who conduct the clinic services, education and lactation program. Angie Gaede serves as the biller and is beginning her second year at the health department. Kendra Glassman handles the medical records and manages client intake. Kasiah Rothchild is beginning her fourth year as administrator at the health department. The agency has several part time staff include the Healthy Start Home Visitor; Joyce Schroeder, Family Planning Nurse Practitioner; Juanita Gatz translator; and Lucy Wood.

The Thomas County Health Department offers Family Planning Services, Maternal and Child Health, Immunizations, Chronic Disease Risk Reduction Program, Lab Services, KanBe Healthy Physicals, STD Treatment, disease investigation, lactation services and a Breastfeeding Boutique.

A major push of the health department in the past few years has been to build community relationships. This has been accomplished through holding school clinics, conducting mass dispensing exercises, education programs and collaborating with local partners. Staff members have been active in several committees and groups. The Certified Lactation Consultant, Kathy Ryan, educates at the hospital birthing classes and also conducts community education. Through the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction grant the

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health department became involved with the Thomas County Coalition and has been witness to how a coalition can truly impact a community and be an example for others.

One major accomplishment of the coalition is their progress towards a community walking trail. Over twenty years ago a committee convened to try to get a walking trail in the community, however, because of lack of support from policy makers the proposal failed. With the addition of a new aquatic park the Thomas County Coalition and other community members decided to conduct community meetings to inform the public of the need and vision of the Colby Walking Trails. After two community meetings a community member challenged Colby to match his \$25,000 to go towards a walking trail. In less than a month's time the community had raised close to \$113,000. A Walking Trails Committee was created to plan the phases and manage the implementation. Jarrod Spencer, healthy community's coordinator for the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction Grant, has utilized technology to its full extent during the campaign through Facebook, texting and GoldMail. A grand opening of the trail is scheduled for Oct. 8 in conjunction with a Healthy Lifestyle Expo. The community has truly let its voice be heard and will soon have a half mile cement trail that can be used in coordination with public health programs. Through the trail development process we will be able to apply for further funding towards future phases of the Thomas County trail and make Colby the Most Walkable Community in Kansas.