

Springfielders explore wellness during the first Wellness Week

BY KAREN ENGDAHL

The Shopper

SPRINGFIELD, Vt. - With more than 30 presentations available during Springfield's first Wellness Week, participants were invited to think of wellness as much more than just "Eat your vegetables and get enough rest!" In addition to traditional topics such as diet and exercise, workshops and lectures covered a spectrum of wellness issues including health benefits of volunteering, financial health, community dialogue with high schoolers, emergency planning, and spiritual health.

Rev. George Keeler of the North

Springfield Baptist Church, working with a panel of clergy and lay volunteers from the Association of Springfield Area Churches, led sessions on Spiritual Wellness with community groups at two Wellness Week sessions, one at the town library and one at the Turning Point Recovery Center.

"From the beginning of discussions about having a Wellness Week, we knew it would be important to include the spiritual dimension," he explained. "More and more, experts are recognizing that physical health is dependent on emotional and spiritual health."

Panelists working with Keeler

explored spiritual health elements such as prayer and meditation, worship, study of spiritual texts such as the Bible, and service to others. Representing a variety of Christian congregations in the Springfield area, the panelists were united in emphasizing the importance of community and the health value of worshipping and working with others to do good.

"Our message is simple," said Carla Kangas, senior warden at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. "Come to church - try it! We are open and welcoming. You don't have to believe 100 percent

a lot of people are willing to meet you where you are."

The message of belonging to community was a consistent thread throughout the week of wellness presentations. From the need to find more visible and meaningful ways to support high school students to the benefits of gathering with others to create music or play games, Springfield residents were encouraged to join together to make positive changes in their own health as well as the health of their town.

Ponnie Derby, recently hired adult services coordinator at the Springfield Town Library, summed up the feelings of many working with the Wellness Week effort. "We're so excited to show people all the resources available," she said. "This week is a great time for people to start making the connections. I'm new to town and have learned so much about what's available. I hope people are using these presentations to start making changes in their own wellness."

Other events during Wellness Week included tours of Shaw's grocery store and the Springfield Food Coop, "Walk with a Doc" to discuss lifestyle medicine with Scott Durgin, M.D., yoga and Tai Chi sessions, a crockpot cooking competition, and open swim sessions at the Edgar May Health and Recreation Center.

The week's events were coordinated by the Vermont Dept. of Health, Springfield Medical Care Systems, Edgar May Health and Recreation Center, Windham and Windsor Housing Trust, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Town Library, and Claremont Savings Bank.



Carla Kangas and panelists discuss Spiritual Wellness at Springfield Town Library presentation.

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