

# To *Your* HEALTH *Fresno County*

**Highlighting public health issues and ways to improve personal, family, neighborhood and community health.**



## **Why We Need Eight Pillars of Public Health**

March 28, 2017

There is a prevailing belief in this country, founded in its very birth as a nation, that our individual health and well-being are our personal responsibility, a direct result of the sum of our behaviors and actions. Certainly this is true. However, to a larger or smaller extent for each of us, the opportunities for more healthful behaviors and actions, those more likely to lead to good health and well-being, are frequently unavailable.

Dependent upon the differing circumstances into which we are born, we will, each of us, wind up with different ideas regarding what health and well-being means to us, different thoughts on its value, and different knowledge as to how we should best achieve it.

These different circumstances include the financial, educational, environmental and social stability of the home and neighborhood in which we grow. These, in turn, determine such things as the:

- Opportunities we each have for regular, quality preventive medical and mental health care
- Quality of our child care and preschool experience
- Stability and quality of our formal education , and whether or not need for special assistance and guidance is discovered and rendered as early as possible
- Quality, persistence, and consistency of education in matters of health and well-being throughout our school years
- Readiness of access to quality healthful foods and areas for safe, aesthetic physical activity
- Safety and wellness of our working environments
- Quality of our air and water
- Psychological and spiritual support we receive from our neighbors

We know these as social determinants of health. I have painted a clear picture of their effect on health and well-being when they are inequitably applied in an article on my [To Your Health](#) Fresno County webpage.

For three years as Fresno County Health Officer I have worked with staff at the Fresno County Department of Public Health to develop a way of perceiving our, and our partners, respective roles in public health (our collective health and well-being) that encompasses the extremely important role of our personal responsibility, along with the very much equally important role society plays in ensuring our individual successes.

This concept we call the [\*Eight Pillars of Public Health\*](#). Visualize a healthy, vibrant Fresno County as a massive, but carefully crafted structure. It is easy to see that its construction, and on-going existence, is strictly dependent upon each of its pillars bearing equally the weight of the structure. I list these Eight Pillars of Public Health and what is required from each:

- **Individuals** must learn about, and adopt, regular physical activity, healthy eating habits, regular preventive care visits to medical providers, stress reduction, tobacco and drug avoidance behaviors, and alcohol moderation behaviors.
- **Families** must ensure a safe, loving, and supportive environment that fosters personal growth and individual self-sufficiency.
- **Employers** must adopt and emphasize safety and a culture of wellness and environmental stewardship in the workplace.
- **Retailers** must assure our community has ready and affordable access to healthful products and services, and limit marketing of unhealthy products and services.
- **Healthcare Providers** must offer their patients every preventive intervention available, and make access to care as convenient as possible.
- **Educators** must assure that each student understands the **full** meaning and value of health.
- **Community and Spiritual Leaders and Media Partners** must enhance partnerships to empower the members of their community to assess their health needs and implement actions to address those needs that are proven effective.
- **Public Officials** must assure that every decision and policy they make reflects a careful consideration of its public health impact.

Each of us live our own life, doing the best we can, as an individual, at any given moment in time. But all of this is done in the context of the sum of the resources (good, bad, or absent) made available to us over the course of our lifetime; in the home and family to which we are born; the neighborhood in which we grow up; the schools in which we learn and mature; the health care available to us; the churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples in which we find solace and spiritual renewal; the environment in which we work; and in the connectedness of the community that binds us together.

National Public Health Week is approaching (April 3-9, 2017). With it will come the annual ranking of the health of the nation's counties. We will again rank among the lowest in our state.

With strong, aligned Pillars of Public Health we can change this.

Here's to your health!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Bird", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ken Bird, Fresno County Health Officer

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Please join me on Facebook, where I will keep the community informed on all Public Health issues and ways to improve personal, family and community health.

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