

Community Health and Wellness: Rural Library Practices, Perspectives, and Programs

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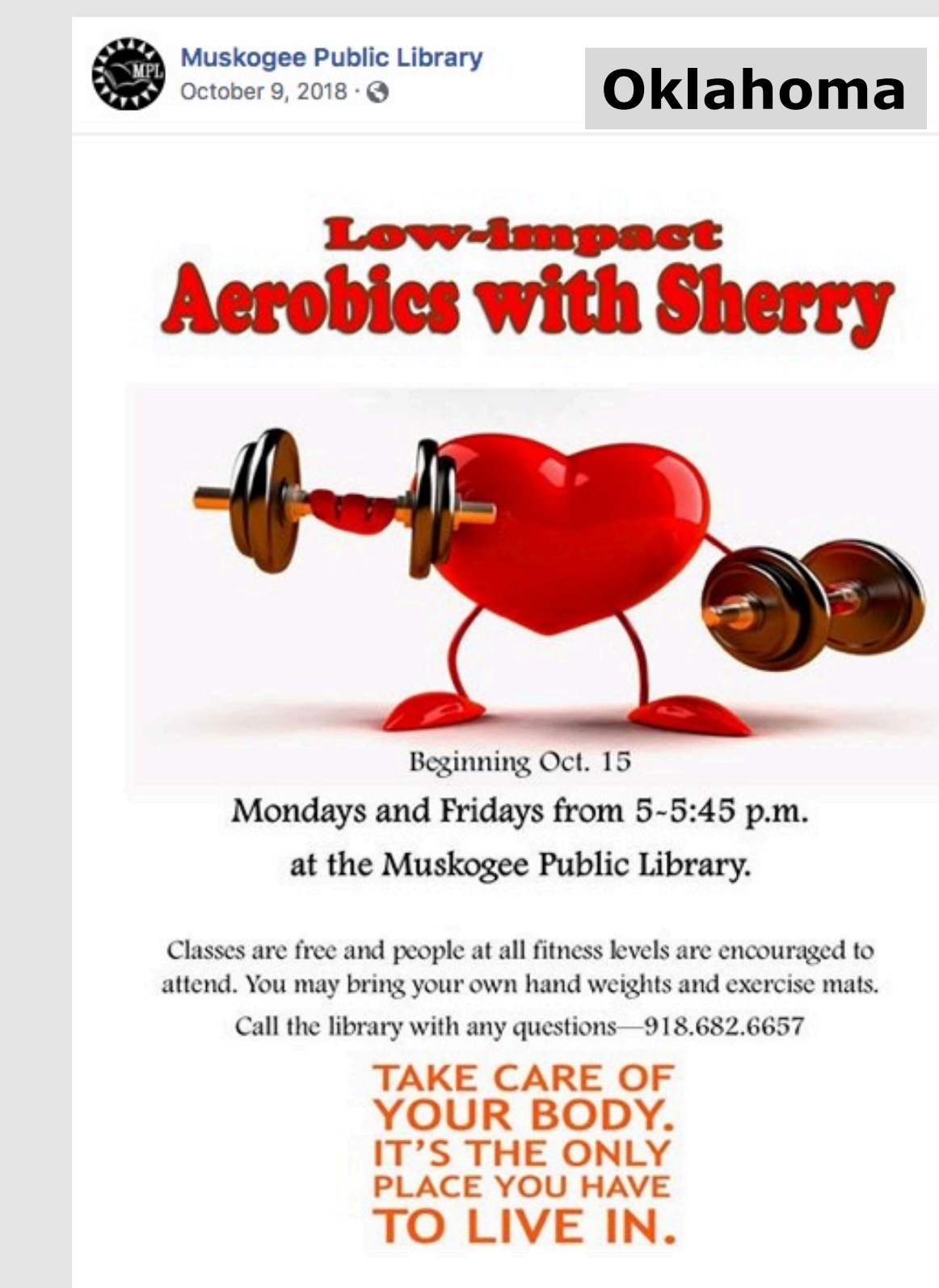
INTRODUCTION

In the face of increasing disinvestment in rural communities and their access to health care, public libraries are developing innovative programs to support and promote health and wellness in their communities.

WHAT WE KNOW

- ❑ 1 in 5 people live in rural U.S.¹
- ❑ 77.2% of rural counties have shortages of health professionals.²
- ❑ Rural hospitals are closing and that trend is “accelerating”³
- ❑ Public libraries are important “Partners for Health” because they are open to all and sites of community engagement.⁴
- ❑ Our personal health and wellness is intimately connected to the “places we live, learn, work, and play.”⁵
- ❑ Analysis and documentation of health and wellness program development and assessment in public libraries is lacking.⁶

Public libraries promote health and wellness programs via Facebook



RESEARCH STUDY + OUTCOMES

OVER-ARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION

How do small and rural public libraries address health and wellness through public programs?

RESEARCH DESIGN

- 3-year project – data collection, analysis, dissemination of results
- At least 16 case studies at small and rural public libraries in 4 states that serve populations vulnerable in terms of health and wellness: Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Vermont; sites selected with help of state library agencies
- Observation and interviews with library staff, patrons, community partners at each library

OUTCOMES/DELIVERABLES

Final report freely available via institutional repository with Creative Commons license

Model to serve as a resource for public libraries

Webinar in collaboration with OCLC/WebJunction and NNLM

Colloquia to bring together scholars and practitioners to discuss results and explore next steps

Scholarly articles and publications in professional trade media

CONTRIBUTIONS

Areas of impact: Policy, practice at libraries, LIS programs in terms of curricula and practica development

REFERENCES

- 1 <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/collections/rural-health-in-america.html>
- 2 <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org/advocacy/files/content/pdfs/Rural%20paper%2007-31-2017.pdf>
- 3 <https://www.hrsa.gov/enews/past-issues/2017/october-19/hospitals-closing-increase.html> and <https://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/>
- 4 https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2018/17_0392.htm
- 5 <https://www.rwjf.org/en/our-focus-areas/topics/social-determinants-of-health.html>
- 6 <http://www.ala.org/tools/programming/research/NILPPA>