



Media Contacts: **Susan Hagen**
Director of Communications,
Common Ground Health
585.576.5945 (cell) 585.224-3156 (office)
susan.hagen@commongroundhealth.org

Media Contact: **Kerry VanAuken**
Senior Public Health Educator
Seneca County Health Department
(315) 539-1920
kvanauken@co.seneca.ny.us

June 12, 2018
for Immediate Release

Share your health story

Residents' survey answers will help improve the region's health

Your personal health story can help improve lives.

That's the message that the Seneca County Health Department and Common Ground Health are sharing with residents.

"We are asking residents to answer questions about their experience with health through a 10 minute online survey at MyHealthStory2018.com," explained Trilby de Jung, chief executive officer of Common Ground Health, the region's health research and planning organization. "These stories will help identify health-related needs and reveal where programs and policies can make our communities healthier."

Vickie Swinehart, MS, RN, Public Health Director for the Seneca County Health Department said, "The Seneca County Health Department places a high value on hearing directly from our residents about their health experiences and strongly encourages Seneca County residents to take the survey at MyHealthStory2018.com." "The collective responses from our residents are critical to helping us assess our county's health needs." Swinehart further added, "The health department will use the data collected from the survey to complete our Community Health Assessment." "The Community Health Assessment is required by the New York State Department of Health and serves as a blueprint to be used by local health departments to guide local public health work." According to Ms. Swinehart, "Residents' responses collected from surveys and focus groups will be used to prioritize Seneca County's health needs and concerns and will ultimately help us to develop a comprehensive plan to improve the lives and health of our residents."

Through recent analysis of health care data, Common Ground Health identified numerous troubling trends in chronic illness and early death in our region. For example, analysts discovered that early death rates are as high in some rural communities as they are in poorer urban neighborhoods, that African Americans struggle with dramatically higher rates of heart disease than other groups and that opioid overdose rates have soared among all populations.

"To better understand what is driving these and other issues, we need to hear directly from residents about what helps and what stands in the way of living long and healthy lives in our region," de Jung said.

The results will be incorporated into a series of studies focused on health equity in the Finger Lakes region and help county health departments develop strategies for addressing public health priorities, such as reducing tobacco use, improving nutrition and encouraging active living.

The survey asks about a wide range of topics from access to medical and dental care to perceptions of personal safety and satisfaction with work. To capture each individual's unique story, many questions are open-ended with an opportunity for unstructured feedback.

"For the findings to be meaningful, we need to gather health stories from as many residents as possible," says de Jung. "Please tell us your story through the survey and share the link with friends and colleagues."

The survey is available in English at MyHealthStory2018.com and in Spanish at MiHistoriadeSalud2018.com. Share the survey on social media, through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Participants can complete the survey anonymously, or enter their name and email for a chance to win a \$500 gift card to a local supermarket or gas station. See official rules [here](#). If you are unable to complete a survey electronically, call the Seneca County Health Department at (315) 539-1920 and request a copy be mailed to your residence.

About Common Ground Health

Founded in 1974, Common Ground Health is one of the nation's oldest and most effective regional health planning organizations. Located in Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts, the nonprofit serves the nine-county Finger Lakes region. We bring together health care providers, insurers, consumers and other partners to find common ground on health challenges. Using the region's most comprehensive health data, together we hammer out strategies for better care, smarter spending and healthier people. Learn more about our community tables, our data resources and our work improving population health at www.commongroundhealth.org.

#