

INTERFAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES **HEALTH AND WHOLENESS PROGRAM FOR CONGREGATIONS**

Ours is a culture that separates body, spirit, and mind, fragmenting our sense of and care of ourselves. People in our society also struggle with high costs and difficult access to health care, with managed health care, and with a fragmented health care system.

Health and wholeness programs centered in faith communities are a rich opportunity to re-connect faith and health. Congregations can be centers of healing, enhancing “whole person health” for their members and larger communities, reaching people who fall through the cracks. What better places than our houses of prayer and worship to integrate the spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational aspects of personal and communal health?

With this in mind, Interfaith Community Services is initiating our ***Health and Wholeness Program***. We aim to assist faith communities start or expand their own health programs, thereby increasing peoples’ access to health advocacy and education and to community resources. This project builds on our award-winning Health Advocacy program, by which we provide advocacy, education, and referrals for people navigating the health care system.

There are several components to our *Health and Wholeness Program*:

- Expand health and wholeness programs within faith communities, helping people gain access to a wide range of health and community resources.
- Encourage networking among volunteers and leaders working in congregational health and wholeness programs.
- Identify and provide technical assistance to faith communities.

Here is a small sampling of programs that congregations can implement to promote health and wholeness:

- Personal health assessments
- Blood pressure screenings
- Spiritual formation classes
- Visiting those who are sick
- Conflict management workshops
- Services of prayer and healing
- Nutrition classes
- Widow/er support group
- Presentations for caregivers
- Liaison to community resources

Several elements are necessary for the success of a congregation health and wholeness program:

- A theological foundation for the connection of faith and health.
- The support of the clergy/spiritual leaders.
- A health committee to oversee the health and wholeness work.
- A professional or lay person or team to implement the work.
- An understanding of the congregation’s and/or community’s resources and needs.

ICS looks forward to assisting any congregation in starting or expanding health and wholeness programs. Interested faith communities can contact Karen MacDonald: 297-2738 ext. 221; kmacdonald@icstucson.org.

Interfaith Community Services, founded in 1985, provides services to seniors, disabled people, and disadvantaged families. We do this with the support of 45 diverse faith communities and more than 600 volunteers.