

Letter to Editor by Ken Johnson, Administrator, Monona County Public Health

Dear Monona County Residents:

It seems obvious that health is related to where people live. People spend 50% or more of every day inside their homes. Consequently, it makes sense that the housing environment constitutes one of the major influences on health and well-being. For example, lead-based paint and dust may contribute to lead poisoning in children; water leakage and mold may contribute to asthma episodes; improper use and storage of pesticides may result in unintentional poisoning; and lack of working smoke, ionization, and carbon monoxide alarms may cause serious injury and death.

To help ensure that Monona County housing is safe and healthy, a group of concerned citizens formed a Healthy Homes Committee approximately 18 months ago. The purpose of the committee was to develop and promote a practical approach for reducing environmental health hazards in homes while preserving affordable housing. After much thought, and a good deal of homework, the committee recommended housing ordinances be implemented for the unincorporated county sections. In turn, these model ordinances could be used by incorporated town / cities to determine applicability to their own community.

These ordinances would contain standards (including inspections & enforcement) which would adequately maintain a living environment that contributes positively to healthful individual and family living. It is also important to note that while wishing to maintain high standards for housing, the committee has also emphasized the importance of “reasonableness.” For example, when immediate health or safety hazards are not involved, it is often wise to attempt to create a reasonable timetable for accomplishing necessary modifications so as not to create undue hardships for some individuals.

The Monona County Board of Health, the Monona County Zoning Commission, and the Monona County Board of Supervisors are sponsoring a public meeting at the Onawa Community Center from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on April 23, 2014. Please plan on attending – your input is important and valued.

Model ordinances (Chapter 300 Building Codes, Chapter 310 Rental Housing Code, Chapter 320 Abatement of Dangerous Buildings, and Chapter 330 Property Maintenance Code) can be viewed at the Monona County Zoning/Environmental Health and Public Health offices, or can be found on the Monona County official website: www.mononacounty.org.