

THE CENTERPIECE

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This is a special issue of The Centerpiece highlighting the results of the recently completed Sangamon County Citizen Survey.

- A majority of Sangamon County residents believes things are generally on the right track, according to the results of the **Sangamon County Citizen Survey**. Main findings of the survey were released June 28th at the Citizens' Club Policy Breakfast by **Dr. Ashley Kirzinger**, director of the Center's Survey Research Office, who oversaw the research. The survey, which is to continue several more years, seeks to establish benchmarks and evaluate changes in residents' assessment of the quality of life in the county. This year's survey involved complete interviews with 524 residents during March and April, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.2 percent.
- While 59 percent of residents overall think things are on the right track, those 25 to 34 years old are slightly more optimistic, with 68 percent agreeing things are on the right track in the county. More than two-thirds of survey respondents rate the county as either an excellent or good place to raise children, and 82 percent of parents who responded say that the quality of education their child receives at a local school is either excellent or good. Most parents also indicated that they believe their child is safe in the local schools.
- When asked about their support of different forms of tax increases to assist various projects (infrastructure, education, transportation), support for local schools received the highest backing. Twenty percent of respondents report that they would support an increase in property taxes and 38 percent report that they would support an increase in local sales taxes to help local schools. Overall, 58 percent of respondents support a tax increase to assist local public schools.
- More than three-fourths of respondents believe pre-k programs are very important for the community, and 84 percent of respondents say the same thing about post high school institutions. Most respondents also say that increasing workforce/employment training programs and local apprentice training programs is a priority.
- One in five respondents report that at least once in the past 12 months they were unable to afford food or healthcare. Although only 7 percent of respondents report being unable to afford housing, the number of individuals in the community struggling daily to meet basic needs for themselves or their family members is concerning. The survey finds that these insecurities are disproportionately affecting individuals with disabilities, those

without high school diplomas, younger people, and African-Americans. For example, 48 percent of African American respondents report not having enough money in the past 12 months to afford food, compared to only 18 percent of White respondents.

- The survey also includes items from the General Social Survey, a project that has been monitoring social change in the United States since 1972. Compared to the national average, a higher percentage of Sangamon County residents think that, in general, people are trustworthy and helpful.
- The survey finds that 52.4 percent of Sangamon County residents feel Sangamon County has weak leaders. This is most common among individuals earning less than \$15,000 a year (75 percent) and African-American respondents (61.4 percent). Despite this, 57.7 percent of respondents are confident that local leaders can effectively address local problems. Confidence is slightly lower in local elected leaders with 51.7 percent of residents reporting that they are confident in local elected leaders to effectively address problems.
- The Citizen Survey is a collaboration between the **Center for State Policy and Leadership**, the **Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln**, and the **United Way of Central Illinois**. Topics addressed in this year's survey were developed with the help of a community-based steering committee. Periodic surveys and related data analysis will be carried out over the next decade, so that government, community, and civic leaders have necessary information in making decisions to improve conditions in the county.
- The full report of the **2013 Sangamon County Citizen Survey** is available at: http://cspl.uis.edu/SurveyResearchOffice/documents/final_full.pdf

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