

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Owensboro woman named to Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky board
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Renee Beasley Jones
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Marianne Smith Edge has been selected to serve on the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky board of directors.

Edge is the first Owensboro resident in about 12 years to serve on that board.

She is a registered dietitian who founded The AgriNutrition Edge, a communications consulting firm that helps food and agriculture companies navigate the complex consumer food environment. She also owned MSE and Associates, a consulting firm for food and health-care companies.

She is a sixth-generation farm owner, who speaks internationally about consumer insights and food systems issues. Edge is the former president of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics and has held high-level positions at the International Food Information Council in Washington, D.C. Edge has served two terms on the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics advisory board. She's a former member of the University of Kentucky board of trustees.

This is a strategic time to address health issues in Kentucky, Edge said. She referenced a recent national report that ranked the state 45th for overall health outcomes.

According to the report, Kentucky led the nation for physical inactivity among adults, preventable hospitalizations and cancer deaths. Also, the state ranked 49th for the percentage of adults who smoke, 48th for frequent mental distress and 47th for drug-related and premature deaths.

The state ranks high in the areas of obesity and diabetes.

"I'm thrilled to be part of (Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky)," Edge said. "At this stage in my career, I appreciate the opportunity to use my experience and to work collaboratively on some of these health issues in my own state."

Edge said she looks forward to a time when Kentucky sits in the Top 10 of the most healthful states instead of at the bottom.

"We need to look at ways we can reduce known risks to health," she said. "It will be of continued importance to look at policies and collaborations that can be done through grassroots efforts."

The foundation was founded in 2001 by an endowment and has invested nearly \$28 million in health policy research, advocacy and demonstration project grants across the state. It exists to address unmet health needs by developing policy, improving access to care, reducing health risks and disparities, and promoting health equity.

“Marianne's expertise in nutrition and food systems, her business leadership experience, and her communications savvy will significantly enhance the board's ability to evaluate and convey the impact of food and agriculture policies on health in Kentucky,” Mark Carter, foundation chairman, said in a press release.

Edge earned a bachelor's degree in dietetics from UK and a master's degree in public health and nutrition from Western Kentucky University.

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