

# SUCCESS STORIES 2020



**Ohio**

Department  
of Health

## **Dear Colleagues and Public Health Partners,**

It is our pleasure to share the 2020 Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Success Stories. Funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CHC is working to increase opportunities for physical activity and improve access to and affordability of healthy food in 23 Ohio counties.

A new five-year grant cycle began in 2020. Over the course of the year, CHC coordinators across the state activated and engaged community coalitions to accomplish objectives and ensure sustainability. Though COVID-19 presented unprecedented barriers, many successful interventions were completed. Across Ohio, CHC programs implemented food service guidelines, built community gardens, installed bike infrastructure, renovated parks and playgrounds, and so much more. In 2020 alone, the CHC program impacted more than 450,000 Ohioans and leveraged nearly \$4 million to support these sustainable changes. In this booklet, you will find information about our statewide initiatives as well as a success story from each of our 23 funded counties. We hope you enjoy reading about how CHC is making the healthier choice the easier choice where Ohioans live, work, and play.

Thank you for your continued support of the CHC program.

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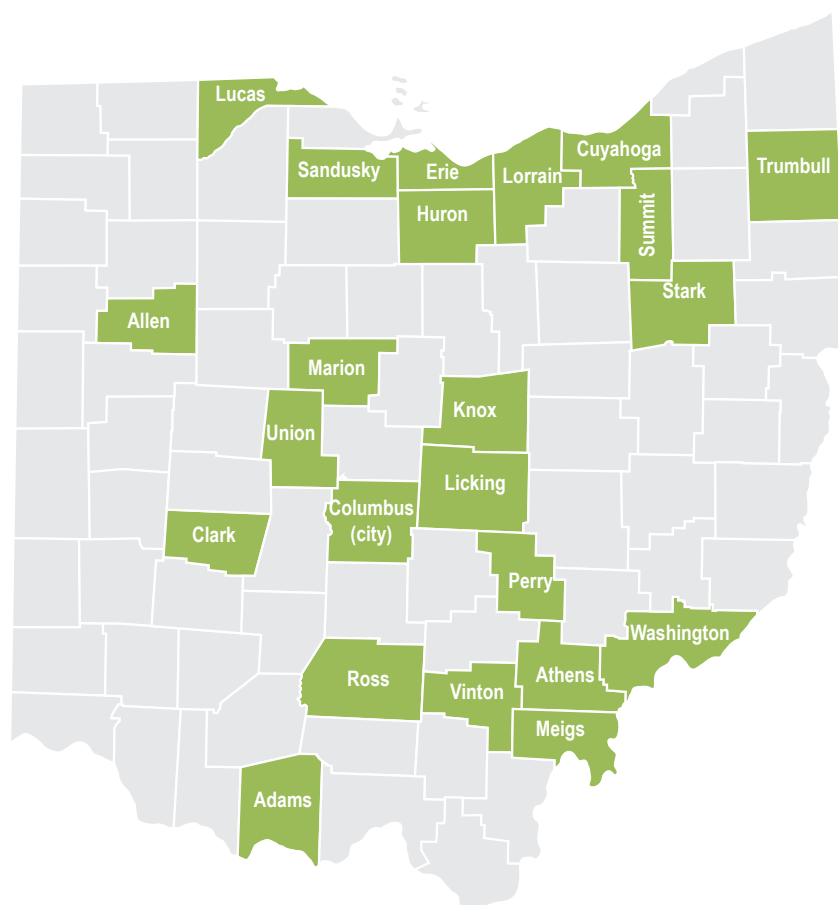
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# CHC Funded Communities 2020-2024



## **Vision:**

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

## **Mission:**

Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) is committed to preventing and reducing chronic disease statewide. Through cross-sector collaboration, we are activating communities to improve access to and affordability of healthy food, increase opportunities for physical activity, and assure tobacco-free living where Ohioans live, work, and play. By implementing sustainable evidence-based strategies, CHC is creating a culture of health.

## **Commitment to Equity:**

Health equity is achieved when all people in a community have access to affordable, inclusive, and quality infrastructure and services that, despite historical and contemporary injustices, allows them to reach their full health potential.

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# Training and Technical Assistance



## All-Project Meetings

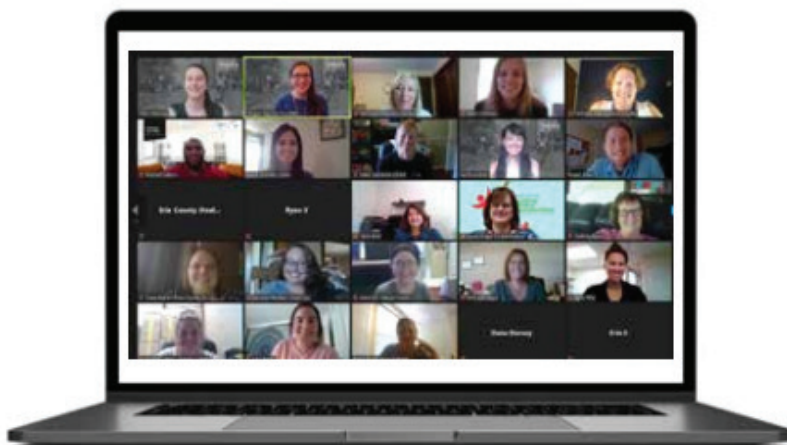
Due to COVID-19, CHC did not organize any in-person trainings in 2020. Instead, trainings moved to virtual formats such as Zoom meetings with breakout rooms for small group discussion, and independent, self-paced learning modules.

### August Topic

Physically Distant  
Community Engagement

### November Topic

Complete Streets,  
Complete Communities



CHC participants at the August all-project meeting

### Agenda

- Roll Call
- CHC Program Information
- Questions/Discussion
- Active Living Services: Toole Design
- Program Evaluation: Professional
- Questions/Discussion

### How partners are addressing health equity

- **Prioritizing populations** disproportionately affected by chronic disease and populations farthest from justice.
- **Building relationships** and **power** with communities.
- Implementing strategies that **increase access** to healthy living opportunities.
- **Raising awareness** of how to advance health equity.

## Monthly Webinars

State staff hosted monthly webinars to highlight local successes and barriers, hear from subject matter experts, and provide updates on statewide initiatives. Webinar topics from 2020 covered disability inclusion, leveraging funds, COVID-19 challenges, active transportation, food service guidelines, health equity, program evaluation, and more!

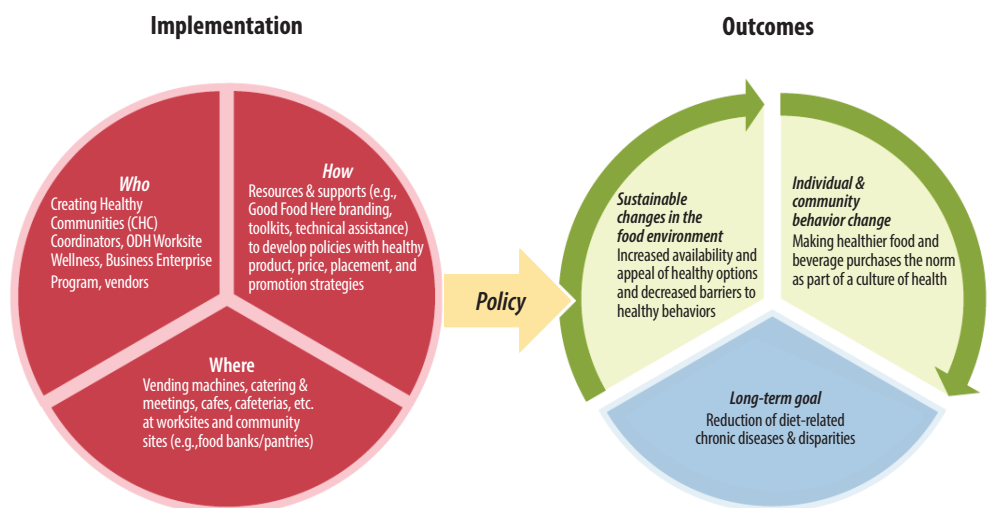
# Statewide Healthy Eating Initiatives

## Food Service Guidelines

In 2020, ODH partnered with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) in the adoption of Ohio's Good Food Here (GFH) nutrition standards. Commissary menus at all 28 ODRC locations will now feature a symbol indicating which foods and beverages meet the nutrition criteria. The GFH program at ODRC will also include nutrition education and promotion, impacting nearly 50,000 inmates. To educate and promote food service guidelines (FSG) to stakeholders, the team collaborated with Professional Data Analysts and developed an implementation model to demonstrate how FSG work contributes to reducing diet-related chronic diseases and disparities. State staff also created a list of healthier snacks and beverages that meet the nutrition standards — this list is now being used by CHC coordinators, vendors, and other food suppliers to help inform healthier choices when stocking vending machines, micro-markets, and other places where food is sold and offered. To address food insecurity during the pandemic, the team has pivoted to support the adoption of nutrition standards at food banks and pantries.



## Food Service Guidelines (FSG) Implementation & Outcomes Model



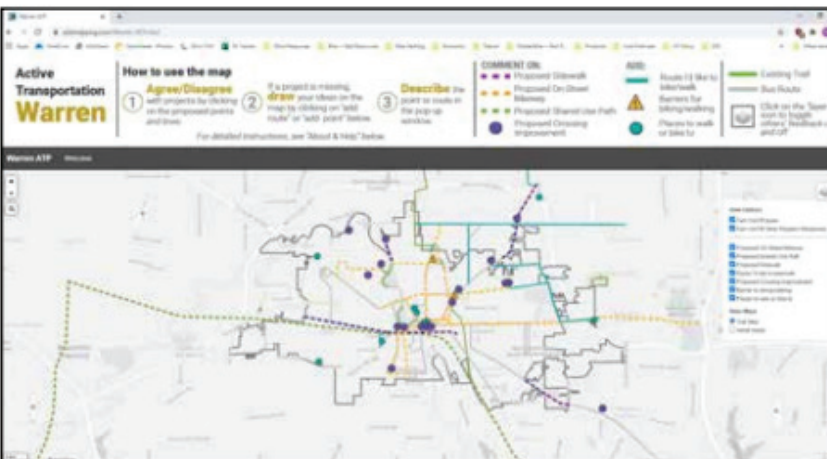
## Produce Prescriptions

In 2020, ODH, in partnership with national non-profit Wholesome Wave, completed a two-year Produce Prescription pilot program with two federally qualified health centers: Community Health and Wellness Partners of Logan County and Hopewell Health in Athens. Due to the risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, nutrition education classes were held virtually, and participants received vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables in the mail. By the end of the pilot, more than \$200,000 in fruit and vegetable vouchers were redeemed at local grocery stores and farmers' markets by approximately 200 participants and their families. Many participants enrolled in the program experienced a decrease in biometric data, including hemoglobin A1C (a measure of pre-diabetes) and body mass index.

# Statewide Active Living Initiatives

## Active Transportation Action Institute

In 2020, four CHC Communities (Huron, Licking, Ross, and Trumbull counties) participated in the Ohio Action Institute (OAI) to receive assistance in the development of local active transportation (AT) plans. The 2020 OAI consisted of two workshops, one in May and one in August, with intentional, guided community engagement during the summer months. Each community formed a multi-disciplinary team and completed pre-OAI assignments prior to the first virtual workshop. During the first workshop, participants learned how to analyze existing conditions for active transportation and how to engage communities. Teams developed a draft active transportation network, engagement messaging, and a summer action plan. The teams reconvened in August to integrate community feedback into their final AT plans while learning how to begin implementation. Across the four participating communities, the OAI teams collected 490 resident surveys and 493 comments on draft network maps from community members, which informed the final recommendations contained within each AT plan. The teams collectively planned 342 potential linear miles of sidewalk, on-street bikeway, and shared use paths, plus an additional 80 spot improvements, such as crosswalks. All four communities are moving toward adopting their AT plans within their local jurisdictions and implementing priority projects.



Online map of comments from City of Warren in Trumbull County.

## Planned Improvements

**46** MILES  
**SIDEWALK**

**173** MILES  
**ON-STREET  
BIKEWAY**

**123** MILES  
**SHARED USE  
PATH**

**80**  
**SPOT  
IMPROVEMENTS**





# 2020 Local Impact



- 13** Food and Beverage Guideline Policies
- 13** Community Gardens
- 7** Food Pantries
- 5** Farmers' Markets
- 3** Healthy Food Retail Improvements
- 2** Produce Prescription Programs
- 1** Community Supported Agriculture Project
- 1** Safe Routes to Healthy Food Project



- 12** Parks or Playgrounds
- 6** Bike Infrastructure Improvements
- 4** Active Transportation Plans
- 2** Complete Streets Policies
- 2** Multi Use Trails
- 2** Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements
- 1** Safe Routes to School Project
- 1** Public Transit Improvement



Total Impacted: 456,918 High Risk Ohioans

# Adams County

## Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy!

'Good Food Here' at Adams County Regional Medical Center's Trace Café

### Challenge

Ninety-five percent of staff members who eat at the Adams County Regional Medical Center (ACRMC) Trace Café reported that having healthy options to choose from influenced their food purchases. However, 35-40% reported purchasing sugar-sweetened beverages, baked goods, and high fat or fried foods often enough that they didn't want to see them removed from the menu. The adult obesity rate in Adams County is 30%, but making healthier food choices can help reduce obesity. Evidence shows that food marketing positively affects food choices. Use of food labels, convenient packaging, and visibility enhancements makes selecting the healthy choice the easy choice.

### Approach

Food accessibility, presentation, and nutrition education can influence what consumers eat. Through the ACRMC Trace Café initiative, changes were made to enhance the food and beverage choice experience. Working with the Adams County CHC Program, a Healthy Food & Beverage policy and a Water First policy were passed to demonstrate the medical center's commitment to their staff, visitors, and patients. Studies find that nutrition labels on foods do affect people's food choices, so nutrition labels have been added to all grab & go foods. ACRMC also decided to offer free, fruit-infused water in the café and at all catered events, employee functions, and meetings to help make water the easy, appealing, first choice. Good Food Here marketing materials are helping to promote these new initiatives!

### Results

The Trace Café is accessed by 280 staff members and as many as 1,250 visitors each month for grab & go items, vending items, or meal services. Adopting the new food service guidelines at ACRMC ensures that everyone has access to healthy food options that are labeled, packaged, and presented in a way that makes the healthy choice the easy choice. While not "taking away" less healthy menu items, nutrition education and unique marketing methods have led to a 73% satisfaction rate with the new offerings and a 20% reduction in the number of people who reportedly buy fried foods, deli meat, cookies, and other sweets. These policy changes in the Trace Café contribute to increased access to healthy food for more than 15,000 customers a year.



### At A Glance

Access to healthy foods is often challenging in Adams County. Obesity and obesity-related disease rates are high. The Adams County Regional Medical Center (ACRMC) partnered with the Adams County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Program to implement food service guidelines to promote healthier food and beverages in their Trace Café. Due to nutrition labeling, unique marketing techniques, and nutrition education, the healthy choice is now the easy choice. More than 15,000 annual visitors to the Trace Café now have access to healthier food choices and free water.



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# Allen County

## Bicycle Parking Encourages Cycling in Village of Bluffton

### Bike Racks Support Exploring the Village on Two Wheels

#### Challenge

Despite there being many activities and several local groups that support bicycling and improvements to the Village of Bluffton's infrastructure to provide safe and convenient active transportation, there is a lack of support for bike parking. Many downtown businesses are hesitant to make accommodations and give up vehicle parking spaces for bicycle parking. Some are also hesitant to provide space for bicycle parking in alleyways in fear of losing the space for vendors at festivals and other events in the downtown area. It is common to see bicycles around the downtown area on a typical day, so access to bike parking is important.

#### Approach

In a continual effort to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure in communities throughout Allen County, Allen County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) works with the Allen County Bike and Pedestrian Task Force to identify goals to improve the built environment. One priority is to increase the number of bike friendly communities. The Village of Bluffton has the infrastructure in place to advance toward this goal, but first needs improved bicycle parking. The village administrator, the Bluffton Pathways Board, and Bluffton Lions Club worked to devise a plan for bike rack placement in the downtown area in coordination with the ongoing improvement plan for biking and walking paths surrounding the entire village. This includes a U.S. Bike Route that will go through the downtown area. As the project unfolded, the focus turned to village-owned property locations to help promote a bike parking program to businesses along Main Street in the next couple years.

#### Results

With the assistance of the Allen County CHC Program and Bluffton Lions Club Foundation, 17 additional bike parking spaces have been installed in the Village of Bluffton. Each rack has been installed on a cement stamped pad, including recognition of partnering entities on the project. The racks provide parking for residents and visitors at several businesses in the Downtown area. Locations include: Bluffton Town Hall (one rack with three spaces); Presbyterian alley (two racks with four spaces); Edward Jones alley on North Main (one rack with five spaces); and Book ReViews alley (one rack with five spaces). Signage has been placed in storefront windows of nearby businesses pointing customers to the bike racks. The Village of Bluffton contributed to the project and signage was donated from Masterpiece Signs. More bike racks are planned for installation next year as a continuation of the project, focusing on businesses along Main Street, working with the Bluffton Chamber of Commerce.



#### At A Glance

The Village of Bluffton will be the second community in Allen County to apply for Bike Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists. The village is working to provide safe accommodations for bicycling and encouraging people to bike for recreation, as well as for transportation. Most recently, 17 bicycle parking spaces were created along the Main Street business district. Bike racks were provided by the Allen County Health Department's CHC Program to provide residents and visitors with safe, secure, and accessible bike parking. Making bicycling safe and convenient are keys to improving public health, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and improving quality of life.



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# Athens County

## Veggie Van Rolls Out Fresh Produce for Trimble Township

Donation-Based Model Offers Affordable Produce Options

### Challenge

Athens County has experienced one of the highest food insecurity rates in the state of Ohio for many years. According to Feeding America's Mind the Meal Gap 2019 study, Athens County has an 18% food insecurity rate, affecting an estimated 11,980 residents. Additionally, USDA's Food Access Research Atlas indicates Trimble Township as having low-income and low-access census tracts, "where a significant number or share of residents is more than one mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket" (USDA, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated nutrition insecurity in Trimble Township, with lockdowns, physical distancing, and changes in the economy making it a greater challenge for residents to gain access to healthy food.

### Approach

Creating Healthy Communities partnered with Community Food Initiatives to expand food access in Athens County. The Veggie Van, a mobile produce stand, provided Trimble Township residents access to affordable, healthy food in a centralized location. Fresh food for the Veggie Van was purchased from local growers who sell at the Chesterhill Produce Auction. To improve accessibility, the words "donation" and "suggested" were written on the produce price lists, allowing patrons to pay what they can afford. The Veggie Van was located at Glouster Memorial Park and operated every Friday from 3:30-5:30 p.m., a time selected based on key informant interviews. COVID-19 protocols were strictly followed, and produce was safely displayed on tables and followed seasonal farming trends.

### Results

The Veggie Van coordinator, Ivan Orquera, cited pricing and location visibility as the reason for the success of the first season, as indicated by surveys and customer feedback. The Farmers Registry system indicated that 382 transactions occurred, cash sales eclipsed \$2,244, and 3,866 pounds of food were distributed to customers. The suggested donation asking price of produce was determined by the wholesale market rate, but patrons often offered above the bidding price. Orquera explained that the donation-based model of purchasing was successful because, "it gives people the opportunity to donate more or donate less, depending on what they have." And, despite a pandemic, many people visited the Veggie Van, and partners intend to expand the project into other communities in the region.



### At A Glance

Residents of Trimble Township experience limited access to fresh produce and foods. In 2020, the Veggie Van Project, in partnership with Community Food Initiatives, established a mobile produce stand that serves patrons every Friday at Glouster Memorial Park. Through a donation-based pricing model, patrons pay what they can afford to purchase healthy, local produce in their community. In its first distribution cycle, the Veggie Van was able to reach 160 patrons and provided nearly 4,000 pounds of food to consumers. Plans are underway to expand distribution to other parts of the county.



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# Clark County

## Porch Garden Project Brings Community Gardens Home

### Reimagining Healthy Food Access During COVID-19

#### Challenge

More than 20,000 residents in Clark County are food insecure, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. With 15% of the population not having adequate access to food, Clark County ranks in the bottom quarter of Ohio counties for food security. This issue was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as many people lost their jobs and other sources of income. Community gardens can be an important piece of the solution to food insecurity, but there are many challenges that accompany community gardens, such as a person's proximity to the garden and the garden's ability to distribute the food that is grown. During 2020, the pandemic further impacted residents' abilities to congregate at community garden sites.

#### Approach

The Clark County Combined Health District partnered with Springfield Ohio Urban Plantfolk (SOUP), Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB), and the Springfield City School District Office of Hispanic Outreach to bring "porch gardens" to Springfield residents. The project was promoted by placing 250 flyers into the food boxes of SHFB pantry clients. The "porch gardens" consisted of four vegetable plants (tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, and cucumbers) in 5-gallon containers, distributed to community members via drive-thru -distribution. To negate technology barriers, registration for the gardens was done by leaving a voicemail on a Google voice account.

#### Results

Distribution of the porch gardens took place on June 13, 2020. Seventy of 75 registered households arrived to pick up their garden plants SOUP's greenhouse. The leftover plants were later distributed to patrons of SOUP's summer farm stand at Perrin Woods Elementary school. Participants were contacted six weeks post-distribution and offered a survey to provide feedback on the project. Of 70 participating households, 28 opted to participate in the survey. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and participants were happy to share their gardens' successes. Many participants expressed the desire to see the project done again on a larger scale. SOUP has plans to engage with 1159 South, a community development corporation made up of South Side residents, to duplicate and expand this project in 2021.



#### At A Glance

To help alleviate Clark County residents' limited access to healthy foods, the Clark County Combined Health District (CCCHD) partnered with Springfield Ohio Urban Plantfolk (SOUP), Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB), and Springfield City School District (SCSD) Office of Hispanic Outreach to bring "porch gardens" to Springfield residents most in need. Seventy households picked up "porch gardens" via drive-thru distribution. Because of its success, SOUP has plans to engage with 1159 South, a community development corporation made up of South Side residents, to duplicate and expand this project in 2021.



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# City of Columbus

## Linden Community Comes Together Around Biking

Partners Leverage Efforts to Engage Residents in Biking Opportunities

### Challenge

The South Linden neighborhood in the City of Columbus is a community with a high incidence of chronic disease and obesity. According to 2017 data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, — 15% of Linden residents have diabetes and 66% are overweight and/or obese. Biking can be a fun and useful way to get active, but perceptions around safety and the stress on Linden roads cause residents to view biking unfavorably. COVID-19 has posed additional challenges, such as business closures and isolation, leading to increased mental health stress in the community.

### Approach

Biking as a means of active transportation can positively impact physical and mental health. Through the Active Linden Coalition, partners leveraged their efforts to bring education, skill building, and resources to the community around biking. Local organizations, including Remember Us Urban Scouts and the local Safe Routes to School program delivered 'How We Roll' train-the-trainer trainings to youth in Linden. CoGo, the local bike share partner, provided education and engagement opportunities around the new CoGo stations in Linden via the Bikes and Barbers program. Bikes and Barbers facilitated discussions around transportation and biking and gave free CoGo passes to residents. Social workers were also involved, hosting 'Rides for Resilience' to explore Linden by bike, showcasing the bike share stations, and sharing valuable resources.

### Results

As a result of leveraging efforts among the Active Linden partners, 15 youth engaged in the 'How We Roll' training and gained valuable knowledge and employable skills. During Bikes and Barbers, 50 CoGo passes were distributed at House of Style and Dreamers. Residents learned how to use CoGo and voiced their excitement and concerns with biking. More than 50 community partners joined in the Rides for Resilience, toured the community on CoGo bikes, and learned about valuable local resources.



### At A Glance

Linden residents face many transportation barriers and high rates of overweight and obesity. Biking could be a viable remedy to both challenges, but perceptions around safety and accessibility make it difficult for residents to get started. The Active Linden Coalition teamed up to encourage, educate, and provide opportunities for residents to safely bike in their community. Together the partners reached more than 100 residents via the local bike share, educated 15 youth on the rules of biking on the road, and engaged more than 50 residents in community bike tours.

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# Cuyahoga County

## Euclid Coalition Organizes for Basketball Courts and Youth Engagement Coalition Leverages Resources to Improve Access to Recreation

### Challenge

Communities such as Euclid, Ohio experience disproportionate rates of obesity and associated chronic diseases that may be related to environmental, economic, and social conditions. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “PLACES” data, the City of Euclid’s obesity rate is 39.8%, compared with Cuyahoga County’s rate of 34.9%. Access to safe parks and green spaces can play a major role in reducing these disparities by increasing opportunities to be physically active. Euclid residents have expressed a need for more active living opportunities for youth — while also expressing concern about crime in the neighborhood. Although Euclid has beautiful parks and green spaces, some lack the amenities most relevant to youth, which may limit physical activity opportunities among this group.

### Approach

The Creating Healthy Communities program at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health helped to organize a coalition that includes Euclid residents, the mayor, a city council representative, and the city’s recreation and planning departments to implement a public basketball court to increase access to physical activity and help support youth development and leadership among the players. The proposed location is outside Bluestone Elementary School and serves a lower income neighborhood. To determine feasibility of the location, the coalition engaged Euclid City Schools and leadership from Imani Church, which is adjacent to the school. Neighborhood residents were asked to provide input and invited to public forums to discuss the project details. To raise additional funds for the project, the coalition applied for a Community Development Supplemental Grant.

### Results

The coalition secured a commitment from Euclid City Schools to donate land adjacent to Bluestone Elementary School for the installation of a public basketball court. The project received formal approval from Euclid City Council as well as a letter of support from the Cuyahoga County Health Commissioner. Community members also provided input and support after a door-knocking campaign that reached approximately 200 residents who lived in proximity to the school. The coalition subsequently was awarded \$50,000 through the Community Development Supplemental Grant, enabling more resources for the installation of the basketball court and better access to safe, active-living opportunities for youth. The basketball court is set to break ground in April 2021 with the goal to complete within 90 days.



### At A Glance

Access to safe and relevant recreation in low income neighborhoods is important to address disparate health outcomes. A coalition formed to install a public basketball court in a lower income Euclid neighborhood. The coalition listened to feedback from the neighborhood, secured \$50,000 in grant funds and collaborated with the schools on donating land. The coalition also designed programming for youth to improve safety and social connectivity within the neighborhood.



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# Erie County

## Actively Paving the Way!

### Erie County Completes 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan

#### Challenge

According to the 2019 Erie County Community Health Assessment, 75% of adults and 33% of youth in Erie County are overweight or obese. Lack of physical activity is a contributing factor to rising obesity rates. Only 53% of Erie County adults met Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for physical activity, and 26% of adults do not participate in any physical activity. Only 48% of Erie County residents believe that adequate transportation services are available, and only 41% stated that sidewalks are prevalent and accessible. Addressing barriers to active transportation will expand opportunities for physical activity across Erie County.

#### Approach

Long-term planning for active transportation infrastructure guides city planners and local government decisions about when and where to invest in infrastructure to increase the appeal of active transportation for all people. Erie County Health Department staff gathered public feedback by administering surveys of disability advocates and facilitating focus groups so they could share a list of road improvement and active transportation recommendations to the Erie Regional Planning Commission. Active transportation measures based on this public feedback were included in the 2045 Erie County Long-Range Transportation Plan, including Complete Streets initiatives and measures for improving and expanding sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike trails.

#### Results

Complete Streets initiatives, active transportation, and bike and pedestrian paths were included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan based on feedback provided by Erie County Creating Healthy Communities staff and disability advocates. In May 2020, more than 40 members of Erie County's Roots of Prevention Coalition attended an active transportation training, conducted in partnership with Toole Design, which focused on implementing active transportation strategies. The 2045 Erie County Long Range Transportation Plan was approved by the Erie Regional Planning Commission in July 2020. Implementation of the plan has progressed with the start of construction on the Sandusky Bay Pathway, an uninterrupted 13-mile-long waterfront route linking parks, piers, restaurants, and nature spaces.



#### At A Glance

In Erie County, 75% of adults and 33% of youth are overweight or obese. Physical activity and active transportation are key to improving health. Erie County Health Department Creating Healthy Communities staff gathered public feedback and provided a list of recommendations to the Erie Regional Planning Commission (ERPC) to include in the 2045 Erie County Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The updated LRTP was approved by the ERPC in July 2020. More than 40 coalition members were trained in implementation of active transportation measures, and plan implementation began, with construction underway on the Sandusky Bay Pathway.



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# Huron County

## New Community Garden Provides Fresh Produce for Norwalk Residents Expanding Healthy Food Access One Garden at a Time

### Challenge

According to the 2019 County Health Rankings, the percentage of Huron County adults who were obese was greater than the state average. Furthermore, according to the 2017 Huron County Community Health Assessment, two-thirds of adults were either overweight or obese, only 2% of adults ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and 79% dined in a restaurant or bought take-out in a typical week. The same assessment showed that most residents purchased their fruits and vegetables from a large or local grocery store. However, access to healthy food is scarce in many low-income communities located in food deserts like the western region of Norwalk.

### Approach

Limited access to healthy food and increased obesity rates illustrated the need for a community garden in Norwalk. The vision of Huron County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) for the garden was to provide equitable access to fruits and vegetables for those with access and functional needs through garden-harvested food pantry donations and direct consumer picking. The garden was thoughtfully designed for inclusivity to ensure use by all. Huron County CHC purchased supplies, materials, and labor for the project. Runkle Landscaping donated labor, plants, and mulch, and Custom Metal Works created and donated a custom entrance sign. The garden will be maintained by the Town & Country Garden Club.

### Results

Construction began in June 2020, and the Nourishing Huron County Community Garden was fully functioning by mid-July. The garden offers a concrete foundation, two raised garden beds with aisle spacing that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, two raised wall planters, two raised herb planters, three benches, and a shading pergola. Planted in the garden were tomatoes, peppers, muskmelons, apple trees, and flowers. The initial harvest produced nearly seven pounds of tomatoes and three muskmelons, which were donated to the Norwalk Food Bank. Residents of a low-income housing complex behind the community garden were also observed picking in the garden. Huron County CHC is hopeful that in future years the Nourishing Huron County Community Garden will produce bountiful quantities of fruits and vegetables and impact the lives of many at-need residents.



### At A Glance

Thanks to collaboration between Huron County Creating Healthy Communities, Huron County Public Health, and local businesses and donors, residents in Norwalk now have increased access to fresh locally grown produce. An unused green space at the public health agency building bloomed into a beautiful, community garden that provides access for all, including people with disabilities. The future for the Nourishing Huron County Community Garden is bright, with plans of growing and harvesting fruits and vegetables for donation to food pantries in Norwalk, as well as establishing healthy living programming to educate, promote, and encourage healthy lifestyles.



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# Knox County

## Active Living Encouraged in Rural Ohio

### Centerburg Village Adds Outdoor Seating and Bike Parking to Main Street

#### Challenge

Lack of physical activity is a risk factor for obesity and many chronic health conditions. More than two-thirds of Knox County's adult residents are overweight or obese (Knox County Health Assessment, 2018) and the built environment plays a key role in influencing the ability of rural residents to live active lives. Rural areas, such as Centerburg, were originally designed for vehicles, so the town lacks facilities that encourage walking, bicycling, or use of transit. Without these modes of transportation, it can be difficult to incorporate activity into daily routines.

#### Approach

Adding bike facilities to Main Street in the Village of Centerburg invites residents to include physical activity in their daily routines. Re/Max Peak partnered with Knox Public Health-CHC to install bike parking alongside seating areas in the village business district. The future site of the Heart of Ohio Trail (HOOT) Welcome Center is located a few blocks from Main Street. As part of the OH Bike Route 1 that runs from Cincinnati to Lake Erie, the HOOT attracts bicyclists, runners, and walkers of all ages and abilities. Adding facilities to create "Bike-Friendly Businesses" can help create more opportunities for residents to use the trail, increase physical activity, and explore the Village of Centerburg.

#### Results

Following installation, the owner of Re/Max Peak observed people using the transit facility almost daily. Its central location allowed them to park their bikes and walk to local eateries. Added seating provided a place to rest. A review of data, collected from HOOT trail counts estimates more than 2,300 individuals used the trail during two spans of three to four weeks in the spring and fall of 2020. This number is considered significant because the Centerburg population is 2,214 (2018 U.S. Census data). Village leadership plans to identify safe routes for trail users to travel from the HOOT's Welcome Center to the business district. Additional active transit facilities, such as wayfinding signage, bike lanes, and covered bike parking also will be considered.



#### At A Glance

Access to opportunities for physical activity is limited in the rural Village of Centerburg, putting residents at greater risk for overweight and obesity. Knox Public Health-Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) partnered with Re/Max Peak to install bike parking along with seating areas to create a more activity-friendly community and encourage usage of local trails. Upon installation, Re/Max Peak observed bicyclists using bike facilities, and approximately 2,300 people used the Heart of Ohio Trail (HOOT) over a period of three to four weeks. The changes increase mobility and make walking or biking to everyday destinations possible.



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# Licking County

## Licking County Develops Active Transportation Plan

A Brighter Future for Pedestrians and Bicyclists in Newark and Heath

### Challenge

According to the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 11.8% of households in Licking County are below the federal poverty level, with higher poverty rates in the cities of Newark (20.5%) and Heath (13.3%). Transportation is a significant challenge in the county, especially for residents who live in poverty. Approximately 7% of households in the county are without a vehicle, sixty percent of those are in Newark. In addition, there is currently no fixed-route public transit system and a lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to desired destinations. Barriers to transportation contribute to health disparities and poorer health outcomes for low-income residents in Newark and Heath.

### Approach

In 2020, Licking County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) and the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) team participated in two workshops as part of the Action Institute hosted by Toole Design Group. The first workshop consisted of creating base maps, assessing current conditions, mapping proposed networks, and planning community engagement. In-person engagement was more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so online platforms were primarily used. The Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS) website housed information about active transportation, Facebook was used to promote the ATP to the community, and emails were sent to a wide network of local partners. The second workshop focused on analyzing the survey and map data to prioritize projects for the final ATP and plan for implementation. Between the two workshops, an interactive online WikiMap was distributed to the community for feedback. To ensure priority populations were reached, paper surveys were randomly mailed to households in low-income neighborhoods. In total, 150 responses were received. When asked about improving walking, 30% said "adding sidewalk where there are gaps" was a priority, 25% prioritized sidewalk repair and maintenance, and 24% wanted more shared use paths and trails. Similarly, 23% of bicyclists also had a desire for more shared use paths and trails. Another 26% wanted "continuous bike routes" to connect them to their desired destinations.

### Results

Survey results were considered in the final ATP, which resulted in 84 proposed projects. The projects included 21.43 miles of sidewalk, 11.82 miles of on-street bikeway, 44.37 miles of shared use path, and 20 spot improvements. A final ATP was completed and approved through a resolution signed by the LCATS Board in November 2020. CHC, the City of Newark, and LCATS plan to work on one of the pedestrian projects from the ATP in 2021.



### At A Glance

Having access to infrastructures that support walking and biking can impact how a person gets to everyday destinations. This is especially true for households without a vehicle or access to reliable transportation. An ATP is the first step in ensuring these infrastructures exist and provide mobility options to meet everyone's needs. For residents in Newark and Heath, having options for active transportation is especially important for accessing everyday destinations safely and comfortably. Thanks to a collaborative partnership between Licking County CHC, LCATS, the cities of Newark and Heath, and Hull & Associates, LLC, an Active Transportation Plan was developed to begin prioritizing active transportation for Newark and Heath.



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# Lorain County

## Walking and Bicycling in the City of Elyria

Residents and Leaders Plan for More Walking and Biking Opportunities

### Challenge

Sixty-nine percent of adults in Lorain County are overweight or obese, according to the Lorain County Community Health Assessment (2018). Between 2016 and 2020, there were 122 bicycle and pedestrian crashes in the City of Elyria, of which 23 crashes were serious and two crashes were fatal. A lack of safe and accessible routes in the community can limit opportunities for physical activity of residents and access to vital resources like fresh foods, healthcare, education, and job opportunities. Healthy community design strategies help increase rates of physical activity and reduce motor vehicle fatalities involving pedestrians and bicyclists, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Built Environment and Health Initiative.

### Approach

Healthy community design that encourages safe walking and bicycling needs the input all of community members. In March 2020, through partnerships with the city administration, Elyria City School District, the local Metropolitan Planning Organization, and community partners, CHC staff leveraged \$30,000 to kick off the official active transportation planning process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, planning approaches had to be creative. To reach the community in a safe way, public meetings were conducted virtually. Paper, telephone, and digital survey options were also distributed through local websites, social media, and community food distributions.

### Results

More than 60 people joined the first two virtual public meetings and offered their experiences and perspectives on active transportation in Elyria. While planning efforts are still underway and scheduled to be completed in 2021, 50 infrastructure changes have been identified within the community, as well as nearly 20 policy and systems changes. Multi-sector participation in the planning process has forged new partnerships, which kickstarted the implementation of programs to encourage and support safe bicycling and walking. Through warmer summer months, Elyria supported Wednesday Bicycle Nights, during which residents could participate in numerous bicycle giveaways and guided rides through the city. Afterschool bicycle safety and maintenance education programs, like Girls in Gear and Boys BMX, reached 20 middle school students



### At A Glance

Regular physical activity is a key component to maintaining a healthy weight and preventing chronic diseases. Improving community design to encourage safe walking and bicycling makes it easier for residents to choose active transportation and incorporate physical activity into everyday activities. Lorain County Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program partnered with the City of Elyria and community partners to create an active transportation plan, which identified potential safe walking and bicycling routes in the city. Planning is the first step to securing support and funding to create an improved network.



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# Lucas County

## Toledo Offers Pop-Up Farmers' Markets During COVID-19 Pandemic

Providing vulnerable populations with access to affordable, healthy foods

### Challenge

Limited access to affordable healthy food options, such as fresh produce, is a major issue in underserved areas of Lucas County. According to Feeding America's Map and Meal Gap, Lucas County in 2018 had a food insecurity rate of 15.9%, which translates to more than 68,000 individuals in 2020. Many of these individuals lack reliable transportation to and from supermarkets, creating roadblocks to obtaining nutritious food options. The COVID-19 pandemic has added many new challenges for Americans, threatening their lives and livelihood. According to Feeding America, food insecurity in the U.S. was the lowest it had been in more than 20 years prior to the pandemic and is likely to rise. It is projected that Lucas County's 2020 food insecurity rate was 21.2%, which is a 5.3% increase over the 2018 rate.

### Approach

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), farmers' markets have been named an essential service due to their role in providing communities access to fresh, healthy food during the pandemic. To help address the issue of safely accessing affordable, healthy food options, Lucas County Creating Healthy Communities CHC collaborated with the Toledo Farmers' Market, local farmers, Produce Perks Midwest, the Ohio State University Extension, Live Well Greater Toledo, and Safe Kids Greater Toledo. The collaborative determined that one pop-up farmers' market a month would take place from July to October in food deserts around the City of Toledo. Each market had the opportunity to register shoppers for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) coupons, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Produce Perks vouchers. As payment for fresh produce, farmers accepted Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) farmers' market coupons, Senior Nutrition coupons, SNAP/double up vouchers, TANF coupons, and Pandemic EBT (PEBT). Safe Kids Greater Toledo, Ability Center, Child Maternal Health, and Buckeye Health Plan were also present at the markets, providing services and giveaways to customers. Marketing occurred through a news release, Facebook posts, newspaper articles, media coverage, and community partners.

### Results

The four pop-up markets reached more than 14,500 residents total. The farmers' markets distributed 124 TANF booklets (worth \$4,960), \$361 worth of SNAP, and \$356 worth of Produce Perks. The farmers' market made \$361 from customers using SNAP and \$356 from Produce Perks. The markets also redeemed \$450 of Senior Nutrition, \$285 of WIC coupons, and \$1,135 worth of TANF coupons. Surveys conducted at the farmers' markets revealed that customers were thankful for having the markets close to where they live, especially during the pandemic.



### At A Glance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers' markets are providing healthy affordable options to low-income, food insecure neighborhoods while allowing for greater social distancing than a grocery store. The CDC has deemed farmers' markets as essential services and instituted safety guidelines allowing them to operate responsibly. Lucas County (CHC) collaborated with the Toledo Farmers' Market and local farmers to provide four pop-up farmers' markets in different underserved areas of Toledo. Organizers at each market observed high redemption rates of TANF coupons, WIC Farmers Market vouchers, Senior Nutrition Coupons, SNAP and Pandemic EBT (PEBT).



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# Marion County

## Strong Partnerships Prevail in Midst of Pandemic

Coalition Partners Fill Gap in Public Health Staffing During Pandemic

### Challenge

Like so many health districts around the nation, the COVID-19 virus left public health in a staffing crisis. The Marion County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) coalition has a long-standing history of engaging diverse populations to address emerging health issues in the community. This coalition framework proved to be especially useful when the critical need arose for additional public health workers.

### Approach

During the past 10 years, the Marion County CHC coalition has invested in community relationships and built a network to develop reinforcing and collective strategies that improve the lives of county residents. The coalition relies on sustainable evidence-based approaches to improve access to healthy foods and create safe spaces for residents to be physically active. This diverse and collaborative framework helps to ensure commitment to health equity, with inclusion and community context prioritized. In an effort to understand resident needs and community health issues, coalition membership includes neighborhood residents, school districts, elected officials, city planners, and others.

### Results

With a membership of nearly 50 partners and community organizations, the CHC coalition was well positioned to attract new emerging health leaders to the team at Marion Public Health, a small rural health department. Two past coalition partners emerged, one who served on the coalition as a youth and another who also served as a college intern in city planning. The mutual trust, relationship, and public health foundation allowed for a smooth transition as these new health professionals were brought on board in the midst of a health crisis. Broad understanding of local demographics, resident health needs, local resources, and assets helped in this transition.

*"I am extremely fortunate and honored to come back home to the town I grew up in to serve the community. I truly believe some of those early lessons while serving on the coalition in high school better prepared me for my career in public health. While it has been a challenge to start in public health during a global pandemic, this will better equip me to understand and serve our community moving forward."*

—Cory Pierce, Marion Public Health, Health Equity Specialist



### At A Glance

With limited resources and staffing, public health departments are stretched thin in non-emergent times. Circumstances are especially exacerbated when faced with a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continued, existing relationships and partnerships helped to identify emerging health personnel and fill critical staffing needs at Marion Public Health. The small, rural health department found that the partnerships and relationships cultivated during the past 10 years through the Marion County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) coalition proved to offer a solution to staffing during this public health emergency.



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# Meigs County

## Park Improvements Inspire Increased Physical Activity

Improvements Create Connectivity, Safety, and Inclusion

### Challenge

Nearly 32% of adults in Meigs County report they participate in zero leisure-time physical activity, according to the Meigs County 2019 Community Health Assessment. The Village of Syracuse's walking path lacked safe connectivity to the Syracuse Municipal Park and ballfields. Because of this, it was less appealing to use the path, and more appealing to drive to the park. Along with the lack of connectivity, the park was not functioning at full capacity. The public batting cages lacked ground surfacing, making them difficult to use after inclement weather. These two factors made physical activity appear unsafe and unappealing to residents.

### Approach

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states developing healthier behaviors is possible when proper and safe resources are available. The Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with the Village of Syracuse to plan and implement park updates. With community feedback, plans were made to resurface the current batting cages to increase use, and to construct an alternative route connecting the park, ballfields, and current path, in lieu of the main road. More than 4,000 square feet of concrete was poured for the updates. The new route is compliant with requirements in the Americans with Disabilities Act, making it easier for those with mobility devices to venture the area. Donations were made to the village by the contractor in the form of three entryways to the path and cages, and four slabs beside the bleachers for safe parking of mobility devices. Syracuse Village has agreed to upkeep for longevity and continual use for future years.

### Results

Syracuse has a residential population of 819 (United States Census Bureau), but park updates have potential to benefit members of multiple communities. The location includes a park, playground, and ballfields, attracting people outside Syracuse Village. According to the Syracuse Youth League Association, one game can attract up to 50 visitors to the park. The addition of the path, with resurfacing of the batting cages, makes the location safer, more inclusive, and more appealing to residents and visitors to inspire increased physical activity. Community members have provided positive feedback regarding the improvements in the area. One Syracuse resident is "very pleased to be able walk on the sidewalk rather than the edge of the street during my walks." The updates have improved community morale and also sparked interest from people who do not reside in Syracuse.



### At A Glance

Developing healthier behaviors is easier when the proper resources are available. The Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with the Village of Syracuse to provide updates to Syracuse Municipal Park, addressing physical inactivity in Meigs County. Updates included more than 4,000 square feet of concrete for batting cage resurfacing and a walking path that complies with requirements in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The updates provide a safer, more inclusive, and appealing area for residents and visitors to become more physically active.



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# Perry County

## Perry County Unveils New Bike Park for Preschool Children

### City Council Donated Land to Encourage Active Play

#### Challenge

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 28% of Perry County residents report no physical activity. High rates of poverty and low rates of physical activity have resulted in poor health outcomes for Perry County residents. There are few opportunities for active living because sidewalks have fallen into disrepair and there are no extensive walking or biking paths. Perry County is geographically challenged by miles of twisting, rural two-lane highways in the foothills of Appalachia. The roadways are difficult to travel without a vehicle and separate small communities that were left isolated by the ending of the mining era. Active transportation infrastructure can reconnect these isolated communities while giving community members an opportunity to be physically active.

#### Approach

Due to the lack of an existing bike path, the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program at the Perry County Health Department made the decision to invest in a one-of-a-kind bike park for preschool children. The park is located centrally within the county on property donated by the New Lexington City Council. Community partners quickly contributed resources to the project. When bids for the work came in higher than expected, the Perry County Engineer's office donated in kind labor and resources to level and prep the site. Tunnel Hill Partners provided funding for gravel needed before surfacing, and the Shelley Company joined the project to provide pavement at a discounted rate. A local artist enlisted the aid of high school students to create a cityscape mural depicting community partners. By combining resources toward a shared vision, a previously underused space will now be one of New Lexington's largest attractions.

#### Results

The park has garnered more than \$59,000 of donated funding. More than 5,000 square feet of paved surface has been installed in the park to provide a safe learning environment for people of all ages to learn how to use bicycles. Upon its completion, the park will include signage to provide youngsters with road safety education, a guardrail provided by the Ohio Department of Transportation to enhance the authenticity, and play 'destinations' to encourage social interaction, such as a storefront and a gas station. A 54-foot-wide mural painted by a local artist and high school students beautifies the area to attract more visitors. The completed project will be named and presented to the community in the spring of 2021.



#### At A Glance

The Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program at the Perry County Health Department joined with local partners to develop a bike park for children on tricycles and training wheels. It is intended to renew interest in the New Lexington-based village park while creating a one-of-a-kind experience for Perry County's youngest residents. The park provides children a safe area for biking while encouraging family members to visit other park amenities. Family friendly attractions ensure that everyone has the chance to explore, play, and be physically active.



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# Ross County

## Growing a Partnership with the Chillicothe Farmers' Market

### Healthy and Safe Food Access During a Pandemic

#### Challenge

The United Nation's Development Program says, "The coronavirus pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War II." Since its emergence in December 2019, COVID-19 has claimed more than a million lives globally. Not only is the virus taking lives, it has greatly impacted everyday living as well. This impact has not escaped Ross County. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ross County had several concerning health issues, such as a 14% diabetes prevalence, 37% adult obesity rate, and 15% of the population facing food insecurity. Additionally, poverty remains a major social determinant of health in this region of the state. More than a quarter (26%) of children in Ross County are living in poverty.

#### Approach

A partnership between the Ross County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program, Ross County's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC), Ohio State University's (OSU) Ross County Extension Office, and the Chillicothe Farmers' Market increased access to healthy food options within the county. This collaboration established an online ordering system for farmers' market customers that also allowed for a safe, low-contact pick-up option. Furthermore, customers attended a virtual nutrition education and cooking demonstration series hosted by OSU's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) providers. Participants who completed the series were provided with cooking preparation materials and an insulated bag. The cooking materials assisted participants in preparing healthy meals and the bag helped customers transport fresh produce from the market.

#### Results

Innovative teamwork and the support of an engaged community allowed the Ross County CHC program to help the local farmers' market facilitate an effective online ordering system. In less than two months, there were nearly \$14,000 in online sales. Fruits, vegetables, and spices contributed to nearly a quarter of these sales, and more than \$800 was spent in Electronic Benefit Transfer funds. Thirteen families successfully attended the SNAP-Ed virtual cooking demonstrations and received cooking preparation materials.

*"Thank you so much. I would've never tried a recipe with mainly cauliflower before this course and it's built my confidence in cooking different things and encouraged me to try more things with my family so that we can enjoy a greater variety of foods and make some healthier meal choices!" —Virtual cooking class participant*



#### At A Glance

There is always a need to have not only access to healthy food choices, but also the ability to prepare nutritious meals. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, both food insecurity and poverty plagued Ross County. Seventy-six percent of children in Ross County are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. To enhance access to and knowledge of healthy food choices, the Ross County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program, along with several other community programs, partnered with the Chillicothe Farmers' Market to implement a safe online ordering system and virtual cooking classes.



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# Sandusky County

## Public Housing Complex Gets a Playground Facelift

Playground Improvement Provides Opportunities for Physical Activity

### Challenge

According to the 2019 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment, 20% of children were classified as obese and 14% were classified as overweight by body mass index (BMI) calculations. In the United States, obesity is a significant public health issue, and rates in both adults and children have steadily risen during the past few decades. Being obese can increase the risk of developing health conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease at a younger age. A strong recommendation to prevent or reduce the incidence of childhood obesity is to be physically active on a regular basis. Providing opportunities for children to be physically active contributes to the improvement of health-related quality of life.

### Approach

A lack of an accessible area for children to be physically active at the Day Woods public housing complex in Fremont was a concern identified by the Sandusky County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coalition staff in 2018. Years of collaborative efforts between the Sandusky County CHC staff and the Sandusky Metropolitan Housing Authority to improve health outcomes at Day Woods set the stage to begin discussions for the project. A committee was formed and data was collected by completing a site audit of the existing playground equipment and conducting a survey with residents. Thirty-eight percent of 30 respondents rated the playground “very poor” and 90% reported they would use the playground more if improvements were made. Planning was set in motion to design a playground where children living in the area could play in a safe environment.

### Results

This playground facelift was possible with funding from the Sandusky Metropolitan Housing Authority and the Creating Healthy Communities program. Several setbacks related to the COVID-19 pandemic did not stop the project from reaching completion in late 2020. Improvements included soft surfacing and installation of new playground equipment for children ages 2 to 12 years. Those items included a swing set with two regular seats, a toddler seat and an accessible swing seat, two motion play spring riders, two seesaws, a spin cup that allows young children of all abilities to sit in the cup while other spin them, and an upright spinning whirl that accommodates multiple children. These free-standing pieces of equipment challenge and stimulate children to be more active. In addition, a bench and trash receptacle were installed on site to support parent involvement and encourage a clean and safe play area. The official opening will be in 2021.



### At A Glance

In Fremont, the Sandusky County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coalition and Sandusky County Public Health collaborated with Sandusky Metropolitan Housing Authority to provide opportunities for young residents at the Day Woods housing complex to be physically active. The playground at Day Woods was in need of improvements to meet safety standards. The renovation included replacing existing unsafe equipment with new free-standing structures, adding soft surfacing, and making the playground inclusive.



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# Stark County

## StarkFresh Opens Grocery Store in Downtown Canton

A Taste of Freshness in a Food Desert

### Challenge

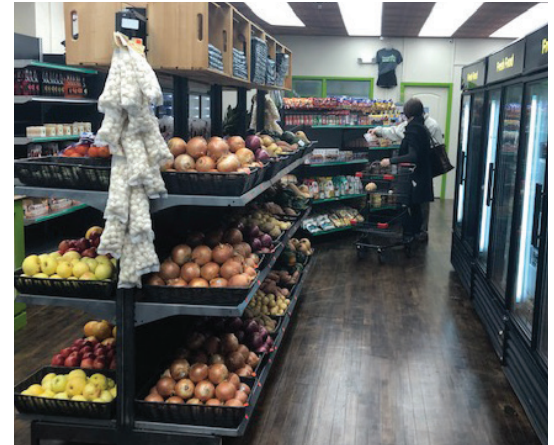
The food insecurity rate in Stark County is 14.2% of the total population, and the child food insecurity rate is 20.5%, according to data collected from the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank (2020). These rates may correlate with Stark County's seven food deserts, which are defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as low-income communities where people live more than a mile from a grocery store. Downtown Canton, especially the southeast quadrant, has not had a local grocery store since the construction of Route 30 decades ago. COVID-19 has revealed even more of a divide in people's access to food. From lengthier lines at food banks and an increase in unemployment, people with lower socioeconomic status are largely feeling the effects.

### Approach

StarkFresh partnered with Stark County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) and numerous local organizations to renovate an 880-square-foot, 100-year-old appliance store into a grocery store. Located on the Food Justice Campus in Downtown Canton, this project was made possible by funds provided by the Hoover Foundation grant, CHC funding, and small-dollar community donations. StarkFresh sought to build on its popular mobile grocery store, dubbed the "Veggie Mobile," that delivers food and fresh produce to food deserts and to community members with mobility challenges. The StarkFresh Grocery Store is located only two blocks from a main bus terminal, making it easily accessible to residents who do not own or drive a personal vehicle.

### Results

The StarkFresh Grocery Store is the newest addition to the Food Justice Campus. In addition to the grocery store and the Veggie Mobile, the campus also houses many other programs that help those in need, including a community supported compost program, a shared kitchen space, and education opportunities, such as a food business program and food safety trainings. The grocery store opened in early October 2020 and now serves approximately 2,071 patrons in a half-mile radius. To cater to all income levels, a variety of forms of payment are accepted, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/ Electronic Benefit Transfer (SNAP/EBT). Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) payments will be accepted beginning in July 2021. A recent StarkFresh community initiative provided grocery store gift certificates to nearly 900 community members to help with their holiday dinner shopping.



### At A Glance

Nearly a third of Canton City residents live in poverty, with a majority of the city qualifying as a food desert. StarkFresh teamed up with Stark County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) and other local organizations to open the StarkFresh Grocery Store. It is located in Downtown Canton, one of the seven food deserts in Stark County, to bring access to fresh, quality produce and other groceries all within a two-block walking distance of the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority's (SARTA's) main bus terminal. The fresh produce and fair prices help provide access to healthy food choices for lower income families and people who work in the area.



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# Summit County

## Middlebury Neighborhood Builds an Inclusive Place to Play

### Run-Down Playground Revitalized and Made Accessible to All

#### Challenge

According to the 2018 Summit County Community Health Assessment, 44% of middle schoolers and 42% of high schoolers do not meet the recommended level of physical activity, increasing their risk for obesity and associated chronic disease later in life. Within the Middlebury neighborhood specifically, only two public parks exist that provide a cost-free area to exercise and play. Both go underutilized because they are viewed as run-down, unsafe, and non-inclusive by the local neighbors. With 35% of neighborhood's 4,000 residents younger than 18, the lack of safe places to play causes many to stay indoors and inactive. Coupled with the neighborhood maintaining a poverty rate of 49.5%, more than six times the total Summit County rate, this equates to a neighborhood at high risk for obesity and chronic diseases.

#### Approach

In 2020, Summit County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) coalition members representing Habitat for Humanity, Akron Parks Collaborative, City of Akron, and Summa Health, rose to the challenge of addressing barriers to physical activity in Middlebury. The coalition worked together to explore options for environmental change and determined that Adams Park would make the strongest impact. The park already contained many beneficial features, including a basketball court, a large green space, and connection to a trail. However, significant barriers to accessibility and safety, which deterred park use, were discovered during the park assessment. Addressing these limitations, including the much-needed replacement of the dilapidated play structure, became the coalition's main objectives for the project.

#### Results

The Middlebury community came together to help design and install new play structures, including ground-level play, tactile and auditory stimulating spheres, a saucer swing, and more. The City of Akron followed up by paving a path to the park and inserting curb cuts from the road, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. During the install, a 5-year-old girl watched eagerly and said that she was so excited to play there every day. The addition of this all-inclusive playground and walkway gave more than 1,000 residents within a half-mile radius access to a place to play and a public walking trail. Wayfinding signs were also installed to direct the local hospital's staff of almost 6,000 employees and their patients to the park. Many residents reported increased use of the park and trail connection. They noted that the heightened foot traffic and publicity has increased feelings of safety in the neighborhood. The installation of this park is one of many steps Summit County CHC will be taking to decrease the health disparities placing Middlebury at increased risk of chronic disease.



#### At A Glance

Residents of the urban neighborhood of Middlebury lack safe, inclusive, public areas to be physically active. With the physical inactivity rate of Summit County youth falling just below 50% and the many associated health risks, an intervention was needed. Summit County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) provided a forum to plan for ways to increase physical activity in the neighborhood. Community input was collected, and local neighbors installed an inclusive play structure with an accessible walkway in Adams Park. Now, more than 1,000 residents have access to a safe, inclusive playground and the connected trail.



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# Trumbull County

## Access to Healthy Produce Produces Healthier Outcomes

### Trumbull Continues to Expand Healthy Food Retail Initiative

#### Challenge

Food deserts can be described as geographic areas where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, is restricted due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance. Another characteristic of food deserts is socio-economic: They are most commonly found in low-income areas where many people don't have cars. Based on data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), approximately 67% of Niles city residents live more than a half mile from a supermarket, particularly those living on the west side of the city. A challenge for residents in Niles is that many don't have reliable transportation to and from a full-service grocery store. This makes it difficult to sustain a healthy diet consisting of fresh, unprocessed foods.

#### Approach

Cottage Market is a small store in a Niles neighborhood where many residents lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership (TNP) and Trumbull County Combined Health District's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coalition conducted a food assessment of the store to determine the store's current inventory and opportunities for improvement. By working with a local produce distributor, Flying High Inc., and using Good Food Here (GFH) promotional materials, Cottage Market began to market and sell healthy foods. Produce displays and GFH materials were implemented to catch the attention of customers.

#### Results

Cottage Market has successfully provided fresh produce and brought attention to other healthy items in the store. A variety of fresh produce is available, including squash, lettuce, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, apples, oranges, limes, and bananas. The initiative was so successful that Cottage Market sold out of produce in the first month of implementation. The market continues to be successful at selling produce, as Flying High Inc delivers to the store on a monthly basis. Through this project, a trusted partnership has been built with the local community store. Thanks to promotion by TNP, CHC, and local media outlets, the effort has opened the door for expansion into other Niles neighborhoods that would benefit from this initiative.



#### At A Glance

The City of Niles is considered a food desert. Residents who live there face a hurdle to access fresh, healthy foods. This lack of access to healthy foods can lead to negative health outcomes, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease. In collaboration with the Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership's (TNP) Food Access Coordinator, the Trumbull County Combined Health District's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coalition successfully began offering fresh and healthy choices, especially produce, to customers at Cottage Market, located on the east side of Niles.



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# Union County

## Union County Visitor's Bureau Helps Bolster Multi-County Trail Appeal

### Kurtis A. Tunnell Memorial Trail Project to Increase Park Interconnectivity

#### Challenge

According to the latest Community Health Assessment, 67% of Union County adults are overweight or obese. In addition, 14% of adults are not participating in any weekly physical activity, falling short of the American Heart Association's recommendation of at least 150 minutes per week. With more than 20 parks in Marysville, there are many opportunities for residents to explore and get physical activity, but there are very few connections for people to get from park to park. This lack of interconnectivity within the park and trail system could be a deterrent to physical activity in the community. Additionally, multi-county interconnectivity is important for many looking to connect to Dublin or Columbus or further south to Cincinnati.

#### Approach

Union County Parks and Trails Working Group (Let's Roll, Union County!) partnered with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) to engage the community with active living strategies and promotions through their websites and Facebook pages. Let's Roll, Union County! plans to convene partners and community members in the planning process to develop additional multi-use trails to help connect parks and trails of Union County and form interconnections to other central Ohio trail networks. Organizers of this effort, which is now part of the Union County Trails and Greenways Master Plan, hope it results in a measurable increase in physical activity by way of trail usage and improved connectivity to other trails within the trail network.

#### Results

The efforts of Let's Roll, Union County! and the CVB have led to the Kurtis A. Tunnell Memorial Trail Project. The proposed trail would be a 13.5-mile extension of the Heritage Trail from its current terminus near Plain City in Madison County. It would then lead westward through Union County to a new terminus in Champaign County in the village of Woodstock. While this project seeks to extend the Heritage Trail to Woodstock, future plans also include extending the trail further westward for connection with the Simon Kenton Trail. This trail connection would enable multiple opportunities for physical activity for Union County residents and provide a multi-county trail experience, with connections to Columbus, Marysville, Urbana, Springfield, Xenia, and Cincinnati.



#### At A Glance

The 2018 Community Health Assessment revealed 67% of Union County residents are overweight or obese, a burden which could be lessened by physical activity. During the past few years, the Union County Trails and Greenways Master Plan has been undergoing an update to help connect Union County residents and visitors alike to the parks and trails throughout central Ohio. The addition of the Kurt A. Tunnell Memorial Trail to the existing Heritage Trail would allow trail users to access Columbus as well as Cincinnati, providing more opportunities to be physically active and give trail users a multi-county trail experience.



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# Vinton County

## New Creating Healthy Communities Program for Vinton County

### Increased Access to Healthy Food to Help Improve Health Outcomes

#### Challenge

Vinton County has some of the worst health outcomes in the state. The 2019 Vinton County Community Health Assessment (CHA) Report, states that 15% of residents have diabetes, 8.3% have heart disease, and 37% are overweight. The CHA also reports that 29% of residents are physically inactive, 17% are food insecure, and 9% of people/households do not own a car. These statistics made the community more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these barriers, the Vinton County Health Department has launched the county's first Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program, which focuses on increasing access to healthy foods and encouraging active living for all. To address these health outcomes, CHC has partnered with Vinton Industries to launch several projects within the community.

#### Approach

The Vinton County CHC Coalition was established, consisting of local decision makers, business owners, and residents, to organize projects and carry out related tasks. The coalition agreed to collaborate with the Vinton Industries (VI) vocational training center to focus on healthy food access in 2020. The collaboration led to the initial implementation of three initiatives. VI began its partnership with CHC by establishing a vocational vending training program for clients. Further, the CHC Coalition purchased a beverage and a snack machine that VI will be installed in January 2021 at the McArthur location of Superior Hardwoods of Ohio to allow the worksite to offer healthy drink and snack options. VI also assumed management of the Vinton County Farmers' Market when the market's longtime manager retired in autumn 2020.

#### Results

Superior Hardwoods in McArthur was the first worksite to adopt a healthy vending policy. A taste test of healthy vending options was conducted at the site, and 90% of employees surveyed report they intend to use the machines regularly. These vending machines have met 50% compliance with the new healthy vending guidelines. Under the new management of VI, the farmers' market is expanding to a new location in 2021 and is seeking approvals to accept new produce incentive programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infant and Children (WIC) vouchers.



#### At A Glance

Amid a global pandemic, the Vinton County Health Department (VCHD) has successfully launched a new program for the county. The Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) grant focuses on "Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice." Vinton County has a long history of poverty, poor health outcomes, and limited food access. The CHC Coalition has established a partnership with Vinton Industries (VI), a local vocational training center, to increase the success of projects related to expanding access to healthy foods. This collaboration will help to improve upon the food access disparities within in the community and more.



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# Washington County

## Bike Marietta Emerges to Promote Physical Activity and Tourism

Local Advocates and Residents Team Up to Bring Bikes to Downtown Marietta

### Challenge

Washington County is located in Appalachian southeast Ohio. Like most Appalachian communities, Washington County residents experience poorer health outcomes compared with people living outside Appalachia. Mortality rates for diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and stroke are higher than state and national averages. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reported that rates of physical activity have been declining in recent years while rates of obesity continue to climb. To counteract these trends, partners in Marietta, the seat of Washington County, set out to make it just as easy to bike as it is to drive through downtown

### Approach

A group of residents formed the Bike Marietta bicycle advocacy group to encourage physical activity and tourism and create a culture and built environment supportive of biking for recreation and travel. Bike Marietta hosted two 'How We Roll' rides with local elected officials and engineers to educate decision makers about the importance of funding and prioritizing bicycle infrastructure. The Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) grant partially funded the development of a Marietta-specific cycling guide. Bike Marietta also began to coordinate with local businesses for a cycling incentive program

### Results

Cycling infrastructure has been added throughout downtown Marietta, and 50 bike racks have been purchased for installation in spring 2021 using Creating Healthy Communities grant funds. As a result of these initiatives, Bike Marietta will formally launch as an organization to continue building support for cycling in Marietta and greater Washington County. Local advocates hope the new infrastructure will draw new visitors to the Marietta River Trail, which runs through downtown.



### At A Glance

Washington County, located in Appalachian Ohio, has above average mortality rates for many chronic conditions. Alongside these health disparities, the 2020 County Health Ranking indicate declining rates of physical activity and climbing rates of obesity. In 2020, a group of residents used a grant from the Washington County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program to kick start several biking initiatives. To date, Bike Marietta has secured 50 bike racks for downtown Marietta, hosted two professional bike rides, and developed a local bicycling resource guide for residents and tourists.



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