

SUCCESS STORIES 2022



Dear Colleagues and Public Health Partners,

It is our pleasure to share the 2022 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 with local partners and community members to increase opportunities for physical activity and improve access to and affordability of healthy food in 22 Ohio counties. In this booklet, you will find information about our statewide initiatives as well as a success story from each of our 22 communities.

2022 was the third year of the five year grant cycle. Over the course of this year, CHC coordinators across the state have activated and engaged local partners and community residents through coalitions to accomplish objectives and ensure sustainability. Across Ohio, CHC programs renovated parks and playgrounds, built community gardens, installed bike infrastructure, and so much more. In 2022 alone, the CHC program impacted nearly one million Ohioans and leveraged more than \$4.7 million to support these sustainable changes. We hope you enjoy reading about how CHC is making the healthier choice the easier choice where Ohioans live, work, and play.

Our work would not be possible without the ongoing support of our organizational partners. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the enrichment that these partnerships bring to CHC. Two of our primary partners, Professional Data Analysts (PDA) and Toole Design, support the work of CHC through funded contracts. As you read these success stories, please be mindful that these named partners and many more unnamed partners helped to make this work possible.

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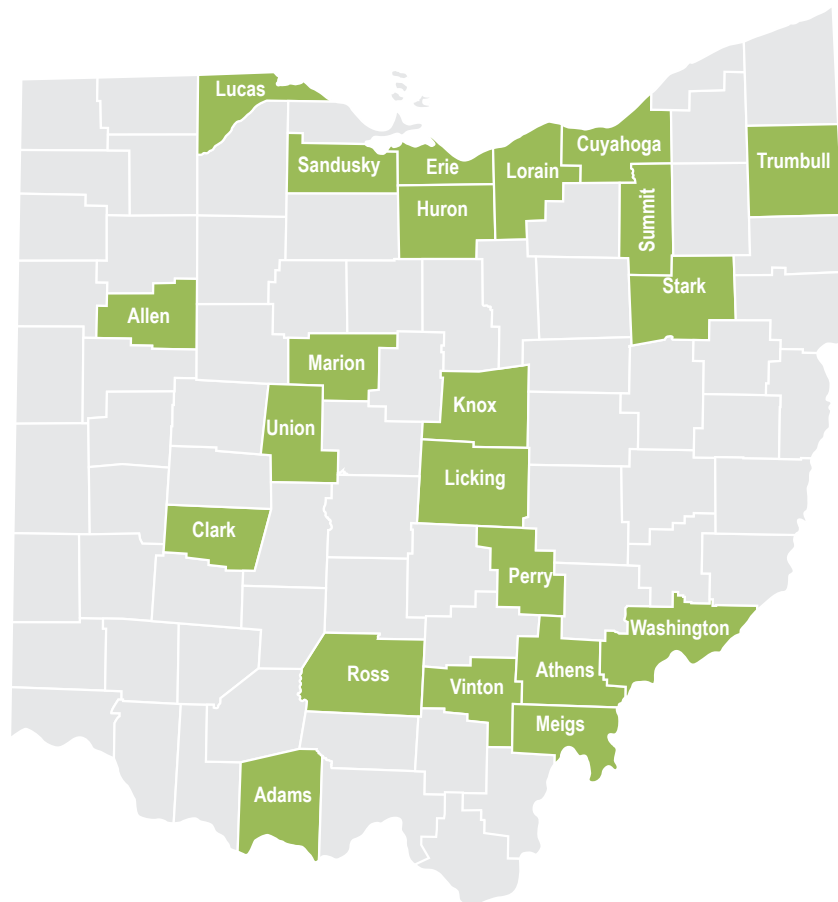
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CHC Funded Communities, 2022



Vision:

Vibrant Ohio communities where everyone has access to healthy food and opportunities for active living.

Mission:

Activating community-led solutions to create sustainable change in policies, places, and population 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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Mission and Vision

CHC has had the same vision and mission since 2014. As part of ongoing program evaluation, CHC worked with external evaluator, PDA, to gather input from CHC subgrantees and ODH staff to update CHC's vision and mission to be shorter, more easily understood by the general public, reflect the programmatic goals of the current grant cycle, and goals of Healthy People 2030.

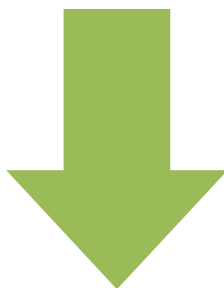
Previous

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 and increase opportunities for physical activity where Ohioans live, work, and play. By implementing sustainable evidence-based strategies, CHC is creating a culture of health.



Current

Vision:

Vibrant Ohio communities where everyone has access to healthy food and opportunities for active living.

Mission:

Activating community-led solutions to create sustainable change in policies, places, and population health.



Evaluation Principles

From 2020-2021, the CHC program embarked on a year-long process to revise the CHC principles. The program's external evaluator, PDA, facilitated this process.

What are principles?

Principles are statements based on values that provide guidance for decision making. They provide direction, but don't tell you exactly what to do. Principles reflect common values, norms, and experiences that describe how the CHC program is implemented in different contexts and situations. They point the way toward desired results.

SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE INVESTMENTS

CHC invests in policies, projects, places, and people to create and sustain equitable, inclusive opportunities for healthy eating and active living.

SELF-AWARENESS AND EMPATHY

Everyone involved in CHC prepares to engage in the work by strengthening self-awareness and empathy.

COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

Community members experiencing health inequities or social marginalization partner with CHC to amplify their collective power and lead solutions for their community.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Organizations partner with CHC to align with and direct resources toward community members' vision and priorities.

COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITY

CHC Coordinators approach their relationships and the work with humility, transparency, dependability

Why does the CHC program have principles?

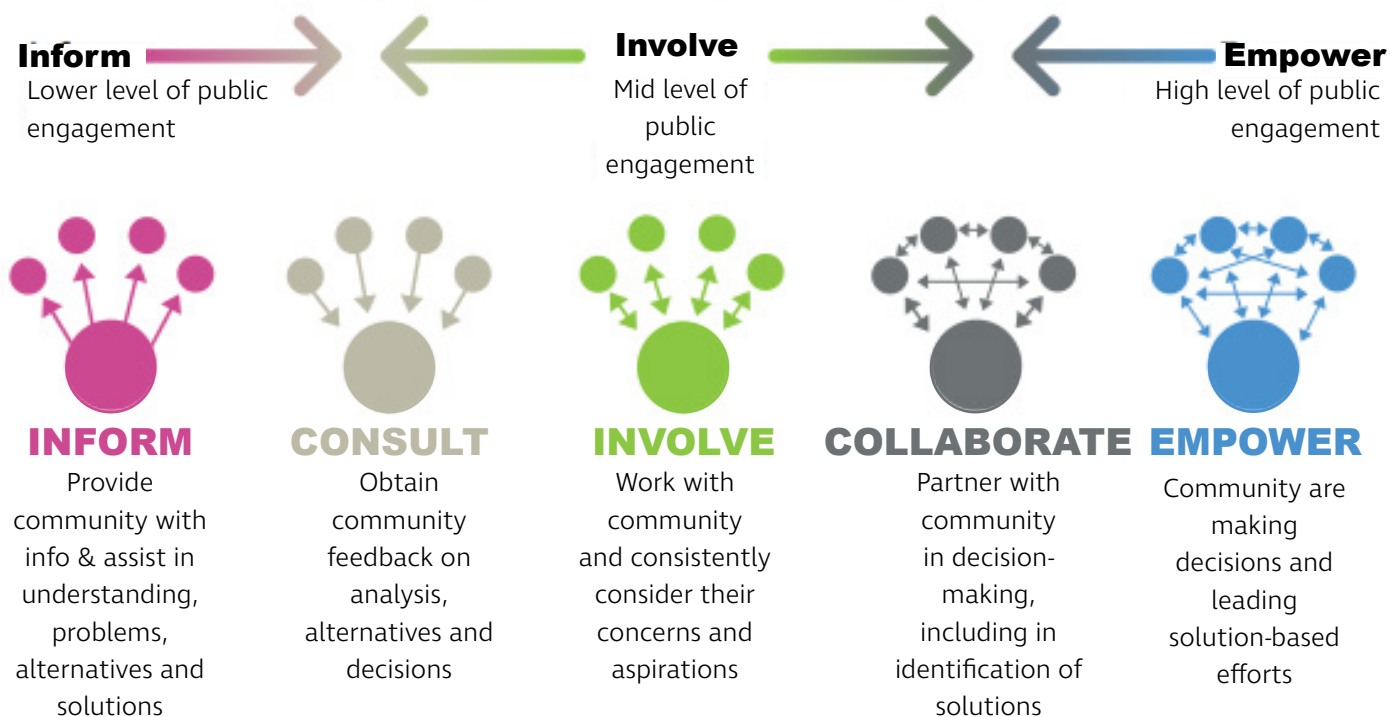
CHC is a complex program that is implemented at multiple levels (neighborhood, city/town, county, state) in many diverse contexts. While adhering to common program requirements and best practices, CHC is implemented uniquely across 22 sub-awardees and 66 priority communities based on the needs and assets of the communities, the strengths and interests of those engaged, and the broader political, social, economic, and cultural context at a given point in time. Because of this, a traditional evaluation approach fails to capture the complexity, variability, and shifting nature of CHC work and the results it produces. During the 2015-2019 funding cycle, the CHC program shifted to a principles-focused evaluation approach to better reflect the complex, dynamic nature of the work.



Community Engagement

In 2022, the CHC program put an increased emphasis on community engagement. As defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), community engagement is: "...the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (CDC, 1997, p 9 – published in CDC, Principles of Community Engagement Second Edition, 2011, p. 3)". CHC Coordinators have been focusing their work on the mid to high level of the community engagement spectrum, depicted below.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM



*Based on the IAP© Public Participation Spectrum, developed by the International Association for Public Participation, 2014
http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2org/resources/resmg/foundations_IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.PDF



Training and Technical Assistance

Site Visits Resumed!

In 2022, ODH staff were able to travel to each CHC County to learn more about projects implemented since 2020, attend local coalition meetings, tour the community, eat local food, and go on bike rides!



Monthly Webinars

State staff hosted monthly webinars to highlight local success and barriers, hear from subject matter experts, and provide updates on statewide initiatives. Webinar topics from 2022 included food banks and pantries, active transportation, evaluation, inclusive communication, success story writing, and more!

Full Day Trainings

CHC hosted two longer trainings in 2022 to help build the knowledge base and skill sets of local coordinators. The training in April focused on the food system and food access policy, systems and environmental changes. In October, training focused on community ambassadors and the opportunity to attend the Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network's Annual Stakeholder Meeting.



Community Engagement through Community Health Ambassadors

Sherry Ellem
CHC All Project Meeting
Thursday, October 13, 2022





Healthy Eating Initiatives

Food Service Guidelines (FSG)

Charitable Food System Action Institute

In April 2022, ODH submitted a successful application to the Integrating Nutrition and Intercultural Competency in the Charitable Food System Action Institute, conducted by the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE). ODH staff partnered with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, the West Ohio Food Bank, the Allen County CHC program at Allen County Public Health, and a local organization called Activate Allen County, to participate in three day long workshops. The main outcome of the action institute was the development of an action plan for implementing a new food pantry in Lima, Ohio. The action plan also included steps for developing and adopting a nutrition policy focused on procurement of healthier, culturally relevant foods. Throughout the rest of 2022, the local partners conducted significant community engagement to determine desire and need for a new food pantry and began the search for a permanent location that could house the new pantry.

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Good Food Here Toolkit Redesign

ODH staff collaborated with integrated communications firm Fahlgren Mortine to redesign their Good Food Here Toolkit. Since 2017, the toolkit has been an instrumental resource for CHC in implementing and promoting food service guidelines in a variety of settings including worksites, food pantries, and other locations where food is sold, served, or distributed. The refreshed look now includes diverse images of people connecting with foods and beverages to help foster excitement and fun when choosing healthier options. Updated promotional materials, which include posters, stickers, floor clings, table tents, aisle violators, and vending machine toppers, also contain new messages for use in a wider variety of settings.





Active Living Initiatives

TOOLE
DESIGN

Technical Assistance

ODH contracts with Toole Design to provide technical assistance to CHC counties on active living projects. Toole provides technical assistance in the form of phone calls, emails, local workshops, document review, policy review and analysis, background research, and countless other tasks that help meet the need of CHC's 22 funded communities. Toole also assists the statewide team in tracking and reporting performance measures.

Ohio Action Institute

In 2022, four CHC communities (village of Bluffton, city of Chillicothe, village of Fredericktown, city of Marietta) participated in the Ohio Action Institute to receive assistance in the development of local Complete Streets (CS) Policies. Teams participated in three interactive virtual trainings that covered the 10 elements of a CS policy, community engagement strategies, and how to write a strong policy. Teams then completed several writing workshops with their steering committees and engaged the public throughout the policy development. While Chillicothe, Fredericktown, and Marietta are working towards a final draft to present for adoption, Bluffton adopted their CS Policy in early 2023.



Professional Development Rides

One way to activate community leaders and introduce them to the world of active transportation is to take them on a Professional Development (PD) ride around their city, town, or village. Hosted by Toole Design, these three-hour rides take decision-makers on a variety of roadway designs and to common destinations. Each ride includes several stopping points where riders can discuss what was comfortable about the roadways and what could be improved. In 2022, six PD rides were conducted; four with CHC Coordinators, one with decision-makers in the Village of Richwood, and one for the ODH Health Promotion team. Overall, the PD rides reached 32 people.



Collaborations

Statewide Partnerships

ODH works with a variety of partner organizations and participates in a number of statewide networks and coalitions to ensure alignment of activities related to increasing access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living.



2022 Local Impact



- 4 Community Gardens
- 3 Food Service Guidelines Policies
- 3 Food Pantries
- 3 Farmers' Markets
- 2 Healthy Food Retail Improvements
- 2 Farm to Institution
- 1 Produce Prescription Program
- 1 Food Hub/Mobile Produce Van
- 1 Safe Routes to Healthy Food Project



Ohioans Impacted



- 15 Parks or Playgrounds
- 9 Bike Infrastructure Improvements
- 3 Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements
- 2 Complete Streets Policies
- 2 Multi-use Trails
- 1 Active Transportation Plan
- 1 Safe Routes to School Project



Ohioans Impacted

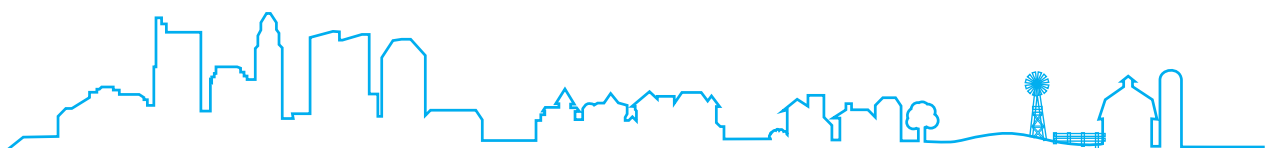
Total Impact: Nearly one million Ohioans



Leveraged Funds

In 2022, \$2.4M was awarded to the 22 funded CHC communities, who leveraged more than \$4.7M in return from additional grants and donations.

Strategy	\$ Amount Leveraged
Healthy Eating	\$282,437
Active Living (Parks)	\$2,180,170
Active Living (Bike/Ped)	\$2,197,708
In-Kind Labor	\$58,741
Workshops/Training	\$5,000
Coalition Building	\$25,590
	\$4,775,896



Adams County

A Garden Feeds More Than the Table; It Feeds the Soul

Homeless Shelter Starts Garden Program for Residents.

Challenge

The 2021 Adams County Community Health Assessment revealed that 20.6% of residents live in poverty, and drug abuse and addiction was mentioned as the leading health problem, with a score 67% higher than the second most commonly cited problem, mental health. Additionally, more than 17% of residents in Adams County worry they could run out of food before they would have enough money to buy more. According to Feeding America, 26% of children in Adams County experience food insecurity, which is higher than the state (19.6%) and national (17%) rates. People experiencing homelessness are known to have a higher risk of food insecurity than the general population.

Approach

At the Adams County Homeless Shelter, Director Char Brown integrated garden activities with residency placement. A small container garden had previously been in existence until used raised garden beds were donated to the shelter by a local school's vocational agriculture program. Working with the Adams County Creating Healthy Communities program and more than 20 community volunteers, a garden project was completed prior to the planting season in 2022. They used the newly obtained beds to create a sustainable space to grow vegetables and herbs to feed the shelter's residents. The Ohio State University Extension program provided cooking classes, recipe sharing, and nutrition education to the residents. At discharge to home from the shelter, every family received kitchen and porch garden supplies to continue these newly learned skills.

Results

Sixty-one residents experiencing homelessness, both adults and youth, participated in the garden project, which provided more than 820 pounds of fresh vegetables and herbs to the shelter's kitchen. Residents learned how to tend, harvest, prepare, and preserve the fresh vegetables and herbs for consumption, ensuring access to healthy, fresh food. Residents and staff reported that having a garden was a special and meaningful way to learn that effort, care and patience can help both people and plants thrive. According to Brown, residents come to the shelter experiencing low self-esteem, various mental health issues, stress, and anger. Participation in the gardening tasks certainly had a positive effect on their psychological well-being. "Our Garden isn't just helping us feed our guests at the shelter, it's also giving them hands-on experience and beneficial life skills needed to lead healthier lives when they leave here. This begins a foundation of self-worth and respect. The people here need that," reported Director Brown.



At A Glance

Sixty-one people living in the Adams County Homeless Shelter participated in a garden program, partnering with the Creating Healthy Communities Program and other community agencies to help combat the public health problem of food insecurity within the population of people experiencing homelessness. More than 820 pounds of fresh vegetables and herbs were harvested for use in the shelter kitchen, where 61 residents, two staff, and two volunteers averaged consuming two meals a day, every day in 2022.



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Allen County

Bluffton Commits to Developing Complete Streets

Community Members Team Up for More Inclusive Streets.

Challenge

Twenty-five percent of Bluffton residents report having no exercise in the last month, according to Activate Allen County's Health Atlas. Lack of exercise is a large factor in the increase of a community's rate of chronic disease. An easy way for residents to be active is to utilize local streets and sidewalks. However, streets and sidewalks are not always safe and accessible because streets cater more to motor vehicles than to pedestrians and bicyclists. By improving the built environment, with multiple modes of transportation in mind, communities can work together to build a foundation for prevention of chronic disease.

Approach

To help improve the safety and accessibility of Bluffton's streets and sidewalks, the Allen County Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with the Village of Bluffton, Lima-Allen County Regional Planning, and other community members to create a seven-member stakeholder team. This team met 15 times in 2022 for monthly meetings, trainings, walk audits, and policy drafting. Members of the stakeholder team distributed surveys, educated community members, and advocated about the need for a formal Complete Streets resolution in the Village.

Results

The Village Council of Bluffton passed the Complete Streets resolution in February 2023. A community survey showed that 54% of Bluffton residents would feel safer walking with wider sidewalks, and 55% of residents stated they would feel safer cycling with more bicycle lanes. These survey results, and others, will set the tone for future road and sidewalk projects in Bluffton. Other upcoming projects, such as the planned mid-block crossing on Jackson Street, near Bluffton Elementary School, and proposed updates to Bentley Road will follow Complete Street guidelines. This resolution has the ability to impact each one of Bluffton's 4,268 residents as they walk, bike, ride, and roll through their community.



At A Glance

Safety and accessibility affect the ability of Bluffton residents to be active where they live. Allen County Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with the Village of Bluffton to draft and implement a Complete Streets resolution. The resolution aims to focus on safety and accessibility for all modes of transportation when implementing road and sidewalk projects. Improving these aspects increases opportunities for Bluffton residents to engage in active living and active transportation within their community.



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Athens County

Walking Path Increases Access to Physical Activity

New Trail is Part of Village-Wide Improvement Project.

Challenge

The 4,400 residents of rural Trimble Township have not had access to paved multi-use trails, making it difficult to walk for recreation without venturing onto open roadways or uneven sidewalks. Township residents of all ages visit Glouster Memorial Park for youth sports, family gatherings, local events, and to play on the playground. However, visitors had to walk across uneven ground to use park amenities. This presented difficulties for individuals with mobility challenges, those who use wheelchairs, and those pushing strollers. The community wanted a safe place to walk.

Approach

When a Neighborhood Revitalization Grant provided the Village of Glouster an opportunity to make improvements at Glouster Memorial Park as part of a comprehensive village improvement project, local officials used data from a community survey to ensure the improvements were responsive to community needs. The survey found that the two most-requested park amenities were restrooms and a walking path. By collaborating and keeping community members' wishes in mind, Glouster Village Council, Hocking Athens Perry Community Action Program, Trimble Local School District, Athens County, and Creating Healthy Communities were able to pool resources to accomplish multiple park enhancements.

Results

A quarter-mile walking path was installed in Glouster Memorial Park in August 2022. Meandering through the park, the path connects the youth sports fields, playground, skate park, picnic pavilions, and portable restrooms. Community members have a new place to walk, and park visitors can easily access amenities. Glouster Mayor Sam Sikorski says the village has received positive comments from stroller users, and a local teenager noted that it will be much easier to push her grandmother's wheelchair through the park (the uneven ground has been a difficulty). Still to be completed in 2023 are water fountains – including an accessible fountain, exercise stations, benches, and a permanent restroom facility.



At A Glance

Trimble Township residents have limited access to paved walking trails, and visitors to Glouster Memorial Park had to walk on uneven ground to utilize park amenities. A community survey found that residents wanted a walking path at the park. When funds became available to improve the park, local officials used survey data to ensure the improvements responded to community needs. A quarter-mile walking path was installed at the park, connecting the youth sports fields, playground area, skate park, picnic pavilions, and restrooms while also providing a new recreational asset.



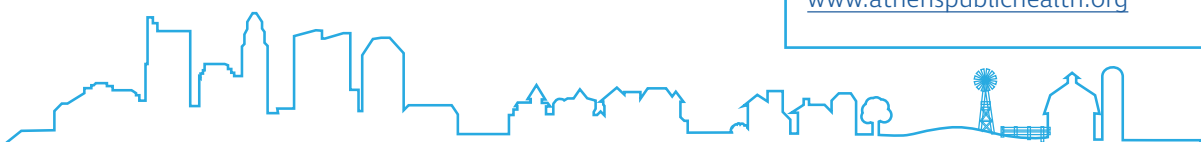
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Clark County

New Visioning Garden Coordinator for Clark County

Increased Food Distribution to Help Improve Health Outcomes.

Challenge

Clark County has some of the worst health outcomes in the state. The 2022 Clark County Community Health Assessment states that 41% of adult residents have obesity and 11% experience food insecurity. Clark County has a food environment index of 7.2/10, which is lower than the average in Ohio. These statistics have not improved from 2019 to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these outcomes, Clark County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) has partnered with Promise Neighborhood to launch one of the first paid Visioning Garden Coordinator positions.

Approach

The Clark County CHC Coalition decided to collaborate with Springfield Promise Neighborhood and their Visioning Garden to increase access to healthy foods. There has been a need for a position to help coordinate events, help with planting and harvesting, and have better communication between all other community gardens. The collaboration led to the implementation of a paid part-time community garden coordinator. Promise Neighborhood began its partnership with CHC by holding interviews for the position and finding the best suited candidate that lives in the community. The community garden coordinator was tasked with increasing the amount of produce to be distributed and hold educational events.

Results

Visioning Garden in Springfield was one of the first community gardens to designate a community garden coordinator. The coordinator, along with the Visioning Garden volunteers, increased the number of gardeners and families to 13, which is a 116% increase from 2021. Visioning Garden participants harvested over 2,500 pounds of produce, which was distributed to multiple farmers' markets, youth centers, schools, and food pantries. The garden coordinator held five educational and orientation events for community gardeners, and two community festivals that included distribution of food. Outside of the CHC partnership, Visioning Garden secured \$33,992 in leveraged funds for 2022 that increased the impact of the program. Visioning Garden is seeking funds to increase the amount of harvest to be distributed in 2023.



At A Glance

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Clark County Combined Health District and Promise Neighborhood successfully launched one of the first paid community garden coordinator positions in Springfield. Visioning Garden and its garden coordinator increased the number of community gardeners who participated in the growing season by 116%. Clark County has a long history of poverty, poor health outcomes, and limited food access. This collaboration will help to improve upon the food access disparities within the community.



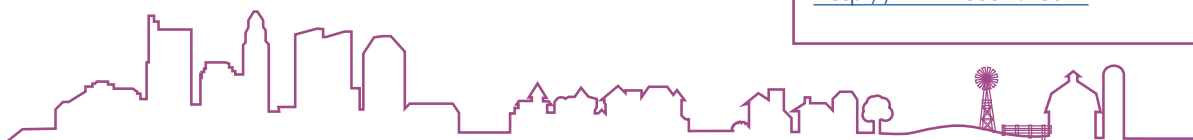
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Cuyahoga County

Euclid Coalition Pilots Violence Prevention Program

The Bluestone Court Coalition Expands and Navigates New Waters.

Challenge

Safe and healthy public spaces in Euclid are critical for residents to increase physical activity, but high levels of violence in the neighborhood surrounding Bluestone Elementary School have deterred outdoor physical activity, resulting in higher rates of chronic disease compared to Cuyahoga County overall (2019 Euclid Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment). Additionally, the Bluestone Court Coalition (BCC), a powerful group of neighborhood residents and faith organizations seeking to reduce violence and build trust in the community, has had difficulty securing funding to achieve their goals due to hesitancy from funders to support emerging grassroots organizations with innovative strategies.

Approach

Following implementation of two public basketball courts at Bluestone Elementary School in 2021, the BCC further strengthened its neighborhood legitimacy and increased its grassroots participation by organizing a spring kickoff event at the courts. Over 200 residents attended, several of whom became core members of the coalition. This led to bi-weekly meetings to implement a pilot youth mentor and violence prevention program and apply for more serious funding streams, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The BCC leveraged their legitimacy and provided violence data from the Cuyahoga County Board of Health to inform strategic proposals to address the neighborhood's urgent community needs.

Results

The CDBG application was not successful; however, the BCC secured a \$1,000 grant from the Awesome Foundation—their first successful grant funding stream. Additionally, the BCC fundraised an additional \$3,000 in community donations and secured a funding commitment from the city of Euclid of up to \$22,500 in American Rescue Plan Act funds to support their youth mentor and violence prevention program. The struggles and successes experienced by the BCC has led to a sharpened approach and a stronger legitimacy within the city and the community.



At A Glance

Access to safe and relevant recreation in low-income neighborhoods is important to address disparate health outcomes. The Bluestone Court Coalition, a neighborhood group who has successfully advocated for two new public basketball courts and piloted a youth mentor and violence prevention program, fundraised \$3,000 and secured up to \$22,500 in American Rescue Plan Act funds to strengthen their youth mentor and violence prevention program and increase resident participation in their coalition.



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Erie County

Combating Food Insecurity Through Food is Medicine

Food Lockers Bring Produce Prescriptions to Erie County.

Challenge

Erie County is a rural county with over 70,000 residents. Its largest city, Sandusky, is a food desert and is USDA-classified as Low Access with its census tracts having a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) of 0.75 or greater. Over 25,000 residents in Erie County are more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket, and over 13.6% of Sandusky households do not have reliable transportation to access fresh foods. The county experiences high rates of adult and youth obesity, adult high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes as reported in the 2019 Erie County Community Health Assessment. Adults report diagnoses of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes at rates higher than state and national averages. Seven percent of adults (approximately 4,126) had experienced at least one issue related to hunger or food insecurity in the past year.

Approach

To increase access to healthy foods within low access communities and improve county-wide health outcomes, the Erie County CHC Coordinator partnered with the Food is Medicine Committee to design and implement a produce prescription program at Family Health Services in Sandusky. Family Health Services is a non-profit federally qualified health center that provides affordable healthcare services to all. Eligible adult participants who demonstrate food insecurity and who have been diagnosed with a diet-related disease are referred to the program by a health provider. The PRx program installed a refrigerated locker system onsite at the clinic. Participants may collect boxes of fresh produce for their household from a locker twice a month after meeting with a dietitian. Participant health outcomes are monitored for 12 months following their referral to the program.

Results

The PRx program provides participants with improved access to nutritious foods and fresh produce in the Sandusky food desert. A total of 36 patients were enrolled between Sept. 1 and Dec. 31, 2022. Twenty-four of the patients claimed more than one produce box; a total of 113 boxes were claimed. On average, 13 lockers were stocked weekly with fresh fruits and vegetables. Based on participant feedback, a PRx orientation class has been implemented and adjustments to the boxes have been made to provide nutrition education and to increase program utilization. As a result of this PRx program, 83 food-insecure Sandusky household members have been reached. A final report will be published in October 2023.



At A Glance

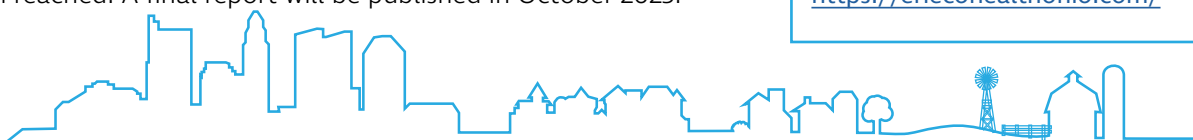
Over 25,000 residents in Erie County are more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket and do not have reliable transportation to access fresh foods. In response to this challenge, the Erie County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coordinator formed a partnership with the Erie County Food is Medicine Committee to establish a Produce Prescription (PRx) Program at Family Health Services in Sandusky. Following program implementation, 83 household members have been reached and 113 produce boxes have been redeemed.



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Huron County

Bike Lovers Enjoy Access to New Bikeshare Program

Willard Book-A-Bike program Implemented at the Huron County Community Library.

Challenge

According to the 2020 Huron County Community Health Assessment (HCCHA), about 30% of Huron County youth and 80% of adults are either overweight or obese —with an adult obesity rate of 47%, a rate nearly 10% higher than Ohio's (BRFSS 2021). Additionally, the 2020 HCCHA showed "lack of exercise" as one of the top 5 most important health problems affecting the community as many residents are falling short of CDC's recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity. Ensuring active transportation is more accessible in Huron County can enable residents to be more physically active and live healthier lifestyles.

Approach

The CHC Coordinator partnered with Willard's Parks and Recreation Director, Huron County Community Library, Public Works Director, and the City Manager to plan and implement a new bikeshare program at the library. The CHC Coordinator contacted two local bike businesses, Excel Bike and Y-Not-Bikes, to supply the bicycles for the new program, and recruited Toole Design to help create a bike map of the City of Willard that would help riders identify trails and routes to everyday destinations. TNT Designs, a local design company, began work on signage and a new logo for the program.

Results

The new bikeshare program was implemented at the Huron County Community Library in May 2022 and fully operational by July. Named "Willard Book-A-Bike," the program offers two electric pedal-assisted bikes, four standard bikes, and five local bike rack locations. Accessories include bike locks, bike baskets, new bike cargo racks, a bike-repair station, and 75 bike helmets donated by the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics "Put a Lid on It!" Campaign. The finished Willard Book-A-Bike logo was placed on all the cargo racks and bike baskets accompanied with a QR code that links to the bikeshare webpage. By the end of October there were 20 program users, all of whom left positive feedback and identified they will utilize this program in 2023. The library and the City of Willard will sustain the program, assess growth potential, and continue to establish healthy living programming to educate, promote, and encourage healthy lifestyles.



At A Glance

To increase accessibility to physical activity in Willard, Ohio, residents now have access to the Willard Book-A-Bike bikeshare program. Huron County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC), the Huron County Community Library, the city of Willard, and local businesses all came together to make the bikeshare project a success. Six fully equipped bicycles, including two electric bikes, are now available to check out at the HCC Library. Maps have also been created to help riders identify routes to everyday destinations.



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Knox County

Improving Active Transportation Options for All Knox County Adopts an Active Transportation Plan.

Challenge

According to the U.S. 2020 Census, approximately 13% of Knox County residents live in poverty and 8% of households do not have vehicles. Additionally, Knox County is home to a growing number of older adults and an estimated 13.6% of residents live with a disability (51% of them ambulatory). Finding opportunities for physical activity and transportation to everyday destinations is challenging for individuals who experience these health disparities, putting them at higher risk for chronic diseases.

Approach

Knox Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coordinator led a team of advocates, elected officials, and mobility and transportation management in the development of the county-wide active transportation plan. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Health and Toole Design provided technical assistance throughout the process with a series of workshops. Public comments showing overwhelming support were collected through online and in-person community engagement activities. Team members gained valuable insight as to the needs of residents experiencing mobility barriers by sharing the proposed plan with riders on Knox Area Transit's daily shuttle. Forty changes to the proposed plans were made according to public input, and the finalized bicycle and pedestrian network reflect the desire of the residents to have more options available for active transportation.

Results

The Villages of Centerburg, Danville, Fredericktown, and Gambier, the City of Mount Vernon, and the Knox County Commissioners adopted resolutions to demonstrate their support for a county-wide active transportation plan. Representatives from each jurisdiction formed the Knox Active Transportation Coalition, a group that meets monthly to share project successes, potential funding resources, and plans for "share the road" educational activities. The planning process has allowed Gambier to prioritize sidewalk projects. In Centerburg, CHC funds were used to add bike racks and a cement pad at Kolacheez's Coffee Bar, a popular resting spot along the Heart of Ohio Trail. The Coffee Bar is one of many local businesses interested in developing a "bicycle-friendly" business program listed in the active transportation plan. With a total of five different jurisdictions committing to active transportation, barriers to physical activity for all residents are being addressed.



At A Glance

Knox County leaders and the communities are dedicated to prioritizing biking, walking, and active transportation. Individuals living with mobility issues and financial struggles face a disproportionate barrier to traveling to everyday destinations. Knox County adopted an active transportation plan to strengthen their bicycle and pedestrian network. The plan establishes Knox County with health-focused and sustainable recommendations to improve the active mobility of the community. In addition to increased travel options, the active transportation plan promotes cleaner air, less traffic congestion, and fosters economic health.



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Licking County

Reducing Food Insecurity through Veggie Van Pop-Up Events

Veggie Van Provides Healthy Food to Low-Income, Low-Access Communities.

Challenge

Twelve percent of Licking County residents are considered food insecure, and 8% are identified as having limited access to healthy foods, according to the 2022 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. Factors such as income, race/ethnicity, neighborhood conditions, and employment can influence food insecurity. According to 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, 98% of Licking County survey respondents did not eat the recommended amount of fruit per day, and 91% did not eat the recommended number of vegetable servings per day. BRFSS data also showed that 49% of respondents reported living two or more miles away from stores selling fresh, healthy foods. Access to affordable, healthy foods is vital to increasing food security and improving diet-related health outcomes.

Approach

In an effort to increase access to convenient, fresh, healthy foods to Licking County residents, the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program at the Licking County Health Department collaborated with the Local Matters Veggie Van Program and the Licking County Veggie Van (LCVV). LCVV is a group of over 15 community organizations and individuals with a collective vision of creating a mobile market providing locally grown healthy foods, along with other resources, in low-income, low-access areas. Through this collaboration, Local Matters, a non-profit partner organization based in Franklin County, hosted Veggie Van Pop-Up events at four locations across Licking County including Oakhill Manor in Utica, Legacy Park in Hanover, the YMCA in Newark, and the YMCA in Pataskala in the summer of 2022.

Results

As a result of the four Veggie Van Pop-up events, 311 healthy food items were sold to over 50 Licking County households, 10% of whom used SNAP/EBT or Produce Perks as payment. Surveys conducted by CHC and LCVV throughout the county indicated that 93% of respondents were very interested in a Veggie Van serving Licking County and 85% indicated they were very likely to buy fruits and vegetables from a Veggie Van in the future. Moving forward, LCVV will participate in a Veggie Van Extension Study with the University of Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions. This study will aim to result in the development of an operating Licking County Veggie Van by the Spring of 2023. The CHC program will continue to partner with LCVV throughout this study to further increase access to healthy, affordable, local foods and reduce food insecurity in Licking County.



At A Glance

Food insecurity can lead to increased risk for negative health outcomes and disparities such as obesity and chronic diseases. To increase access to healthy foods, four Veggie Van Pop-up events took place throughout Licking County, thanks to a partnership between the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program at the Licking County Health Department, the Local Matters' Veggie Van Program, and the Licking County Veggie Van. Over 50 households were served, and more than 300 healthy food items were distributed.



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Lorain County

Community Improves Food Access Resources

USDA Planning Grant Awarded to The City of Lorain.

Challenge

The City of Lorain is the largest city in Lorain County with 26.3% of residents living below the federal poverty level according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Four of Lorain's census tracts are classified as food deserts, or areas with limited access to grocery stores, supermarkets, or affordable food. Residents of Lorain also face multiple barriers to health due to social or economic factors beyond their control, known as the social determinants of health. Access to quality, nutritious food is essential to a healthy life. Therefore, various policies, systems, and environmental changes are necessary to ensure that nutritious food is available for everyone who lives in the city of Lorain.

Approach

In recent years, Lorain County Public Health and Second Harvest Food Bank developed Food Forward Lorain (FFL). FFL is a partnership of community organizations collaborating on policies, systems and environmental changes in Lorain to ensure that healthy food is available for city residents. The purpose is to encourage partnerships to increase access to healthy food. To build and sustain momentum for local urban farming, FFL applied for the USDA Urban Agriculture Planning Grant in partnership with the city of Lorain, Second Harvest, Solidarity Urban Farms, Lorain County Community College, Ohio City Farm, Lorain Port Authority, and Lorain County Public Health in 2022.

Results

In fall of 2022, FFL, the city of Lorain and partners were awarded \$207,174.48 from USDA to support Food Forward Lorain initiatives. These funds will be used to improve and increase the volume of urban agriculture to support additional urban farming operations and to increase economic opportunity within the city. By completing these urban farming improvements, new methods of access will be created to bring healthy foods to neighborhoods that are currently lacking in these resources. In addition, new urban agriculture partnerships continue to be established within the community between schools, farms, city and county government, and other community organizations. Education, business costs, and food policy are also areas that this funding will potentially cover.



At A Glance

Access to nutritious, affordable food is a key component to preventing chronic diseases and living a long, healthy life. Lorain County Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program partnered with the city of Lorain, Second Harvest Food Bank, and community organizations to establish Food Forward Lorain, a healthy food access collaborative. Food Forward Lorain was awarded a USDA Urban Agriculture Planning Grant that will allow Lorain to create and enhance methods of food access for residents.



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Lucas County

Improving Birth Outcomes Through Produce

Produce Prescriptions Provides Pregnant Women Access to Fresh Produce.

Challenge

According to the Ohio Department of Health's Ohio Public Health Information Warehouse 2021 data, 6.5% of all births in Lucas County were born to teenage mothers. Of those teenage mothers 79.1% were low income, 15.3% delivered low birth weight babies, and 13.7% delivered preterm. These teenage mothers also presented with a number of risk factors which include gestational diabetes (3.8%), gestational hypertension (15%) and poor pregnancy outcomes (.9%). It has been well established that optimum nutrition during pregnancy is essential to maternal health as well as positive fetal outcomes. Increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables protects against a number of serious and costly chronic diseases; however fresh produce can be scarce and expensive.

Approach

In an effort to improve the birth outcomes of vulnerable pregnant and postpartum teenage mothers and their children, the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department and its Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program contracted with Produce Perks Midwest to provide monthly Produce Prescription vouchers for fruits and vegetables to food insecure participants at Health Partners of Western Ohio (HPWO). HPWO Community Health Workers (CHW) identified vulnerable pregnant and postpartum women who would benefit from the Produce Prescription Pilot Program (PRx). The interested PRx participants attended monthly check-ins with their CHW where they received their produce prescription vouchers. The participants received \$30/month per household member (max. \$150) to be redeemed at participating stores and farmers' markets in Lucas County.

Results

Twenty-eight participants were enrolled into the six-month PRx program from July through December 2022. Eighty-six percent of participants enrolled were women of color with the average age 28 years old; ranging 16-41 years of age. The Toledo Farmers Market, Seaway Market, and Family Food Center partnered with the PRx program to redeem the produce prescriptions. In the first year of the program, \$2,953.51 in vouchers were redeemed serving a total of 103 household members. An additional \$1,255 of meal kits and holiday produce boxes were distributed to the participants. In addition, participants received blood pressure cuffs from the American Heart Association for self-monitoring blood pressure. In December, the program participants received a post-program survey which indicated that the participants and their household members benefited from the produce vouchers and have increased their knowledge of healthy foods.



At A Glance

Having access to healthy, nutritious foods during pregnancy is essential to the mother's overall health as well as the development of the fetus, however, this is not always possible for individuals experiencing food insecurity. To help combat this issue, the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department contracted with Produce Perks Midwest to provide pregnant and postpartum mothers of Health Partners of Western Ohio the opportunity to participate in a Produce Prescription Program. These participants received \$30/month per household member of fresh produce vouchers to be redeemed at participating stores as well as nutrition education.



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Marion County

Downtown Market Improves Access to Healthy Food Options

Center Street Market Begins Accepting WIC Benefits.

Challenge

According to Feeding America, households living with children are more likely to be food insecure (20%) than households with no children (11.9%). In Marion County, the U.S. Census 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates reports that poverty rates have increased to 15.9%, and unemployment to 5.8%. According to the USDA Food Atlas report, the downtown area in the city of Marion has been identified as a food desert. However, there is strong evidence that food assistance programs, like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), improve poor and inadequate diets and give newborns and young children a healthy start to life. Half of infants born in Marion County are enrolled in the WIC program. Ongoing nutrition education coupled with nutritious offerings helps to improve the health status and prevent health problems of over 1,400 families receiving this food assistance. Geographic availability, affordability, and transportation options are all factors influencing food choices among individuals and their families.

Approach

The Center Street Market is located 0.10 miles from the WIC office, as well as 0.10 miles from the transit hub. This geographic proximity potentially impacts young families receiving WIC benefits, including residents who have limited access to healthy food options and face transportation barriers. This factor, supported by local data, guided the selection of the Center Street Market in becoming an authorized WIC vendor. Over the past year, health department staff, store managers, and WIC staff began improving availability of nutritious offerings, implementing WIC benefits, and increasing marketing on the new healthy options available in this once food barren area.

Results

On July 1, 2022, Center Street market officially began accepting WIC benefits in their store. To increase awareness of this new vendor, WIC hosted two consecutive kick-off events at the market. These dates were in collaboration with the downtown farmers' market and open streets community events. Over 132 families participated in this launch. Each family in attendance experienced a personalized market tour, received additional WIC farmers' market vouchers, and left with a nutritious snack and health education. In the future, CHC and other coalition partners plan to increase awareness and marketing of store offerings and support the establishment of onsite cooking demonstrations and nutrition education.



At A Glance

In 2022, Creating Healthy Communities Coordinators identified a lack of access to affordable foods for WIC participants in the downtown area of Marion. Given the proximity of the Center Street Market to the WIC office and a transit hub, prioritizing the store to become a WIC vendor was imperative. In July, the market officially began accepting WIC benefits and hosted two kick-off events where families were able to tour the market and utilize their WIC vouchers. Future plans include continued marketing of the store's WIC acceptance and on-site cooking demos.



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Meigs County

Rural Community Praises New Basketball Court

New Basketball Court to Help Promote Physical Activity.

Challenge

Obesity in Meigs County has dramatically increased within the last three years. 38% of the population over the age of 18 has a BMI greater than 30, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity is associated with a range of different diseases, including stroke, Type 2 diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, and a variety of cancers. Keeping an active and healthy lifestyle can help people maintain a healthy weight. According to the World Health Organization, adults should get the equivalent of two to two-and-a-half hours of moderate-to-vigorous activity every week. With limited accessibility to safe physical activity in Chester, the community desired a safe place to go.

Approach

The Meigs County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities program teamed up with Chester United Methodist Church to increase options for physical activity in their community. Plans were made to resurface the existing basketball court on the church property and add new basketball systems consisting of poles, hoops, and nets. The church leadership selected a local contractor to help complete the resurfacing project. Several volunteers from the church assisted in installing the new basketball systems.

Results

This project was completed in September 2022. The community immediately came together to put the court to good use. Brent Buckley, a church liaison, stated that as the volunteers were putting up the basketball hoops, kids and families were already stopping by, ready to play. This new basketball court will continue to serve as an amazing resource for Chester and the surrounding communities for years to come. A spring bash in 2023 will help promote this new addition to Chester.



At A Glance

Creating a healthy active lifestyle can be challenging. The Meigs County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities program teamed up with Chester United Methodist Church to update their basketball court. Resurfacing the existing court and adding new basketball systems is making a big impact in a small community. This update will promote a healthier, more physically active lifestyle for the residents of Meigs County.



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Perry County

Making Strides to Improve Safety for Walkers

Active Transportation Gains 230 Feet of New Sidewalk on Lincoln Park Drive in New Lexington.

Challenge

According to the most recent Southeastern Ohio Epidemiology Regional report, Perry County has an adult obesity rate of 39% and an adult physical inactivity rate of 35%. The lack of safe, walkable environments for people to use for daily errands and connectivity could be contributing to inactivity in Perry County citizens. In 2000, New Lexington, the county seat, went from being a city to a village, therefore receiving fewer federal funds for community utilization. This creates a problem with maintaining infrastructure within the village corporation limits including sidewalks, roads, water lines, and parks.

Approach

The Perry County Health Department (PCHD) adopted an Active Transportation Plan (ATP) in 2019. In 2022, PCHD and the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coordinator worked with residents and the New Lexington Village Council to determine which projects in the village to address. The team chose the three busiest streets: Broadway Street, Carroll Street and Lincoln Park Drive. Broadway Street was the first street to receive attention for walkability. New sidewalks were installed on most of Broadway Street from Carroll Street to Madison Street. Carroll Street sidewalk was addressed next with a Systemic Safety grant application to the Ohio Department of Transportation submitted in January 2023. Lincoln Park Drive had a big gap between two old sidewalk sections. These three streets generate the most foot traffic and transit trips in the village due to the medical offices, grocery store, restaurants, and other businesses located along each corridor.

Results

A new 230-foot sidewalk was added on the east side of Lincoln Park Drive in New Lexington so residents can walk safely in their neighborhood and access local businesses. Additionally, a walking trail was added to the westside of the street allowing better access to the new Wetland Park. The Perry County Engineer assisted with soil removal and development of the trail along this road. The Village of New Lexington will be adding three new crosswalks on Lincoln Park Drive. These new walking routes and crossing infrastructure will connect to the new sidewalk on Carroll Street and the trail on Panther Drive that will be added in 2024 to expand walkability to other areas of the village. The New Lexington Village Apartments, Shawnee Senior Housing and single-family housing residents now have better access to 17 businesses and a new park in this neighborhood.



At A Glance

Active Transportation (AT) planning has the potential to decrease chronic disease, obesity, and motor vehicle-related injury and death. By integrating AT planning into future road projects, the choices citizens have for mobility increases. Having an AT plan helped Perry County to focus on the areas with the most need for infrastructure in the county. Building a new sidewalk on Lincoln Park Drive in the Village of New Lexington improved safety and quality of life for all the residents living in this neighborhood.



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Ross County

As the Garden Grows, the Community Grows with It!

Healthy Eating Promoted Through Community Garden Activities.

Challenge

According to the Ross County Community Health Assessment (CHA), more than 29% of Ross County residents are not consuming enough fruits or vegetables. Also reported in the CHA, more than 29% of Ross County residents are considered overweight, and almost 36% have obesity. The Ross County obesity rate is considerably higher than the state (30.1%) and national (27.1%) averages. Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is not only beneficial for weight loss, but also a reduction in chronic diseases. Limited access to fresh produce combined with obesity rates illustrated the need for a community garden on the east side of Chillicothe.

Approach

Ross County's Creating Healthy Communities' (CHC) vision for the community garden was to provide public access to fresh produce for residents and nutrition education to the preschool children who tended the garden. CHC purchased supplies, materials, and labor for the project. Behavioral health provider Integrated Services donated seed packets, Adena Regional Medical Center donated lunch for planting day, and The Ohio State University Extension provided ongoing youth education and snacks. News articles and articles shared by the radio station promoted the garden to community members. The garden beds will be maintained by the Chillicothe School District STEM staff and students. Collaborative efforts created a community garden that invites residents to learn about nutrition while having access to fresh produce.

Results

The community garden was fully functional by mid-July 2022. The garden is located behind the preschool and includes nine raised beds with gravel walkways and aisles. Two water tanks are located onsite for easy garden maintenance. Rainbow chard, green beans, basil, tomatoes, cucumbers, cilantro, peppers, and pumpkins were planted in the garden. The initial harvest produced 1.2 pounds of rainbow chard and green beans. Nearby, residents in the priority neighborhood volunteered to weed and tend to the garden, along with preschool students and staff. Ross County CHC will work with the school to identify additional funding to construct an ADA-compliant pathway and a possible shade area to ensure the garden continues to benefit the entire community.



At A Glance

Thanks to collaboration between Ross County Creating Healthy Communities, Chillicothe City School District, and local donors, residents on the East side of Chillicothe now have increased access to fresh, locally grown produce. A section of formerly razed and barren school ground has been transformed into a usable green space where the community can access fresh produce, and education and development activities take place for children. The future of the community garden is bright and will continue to grow and flourish.



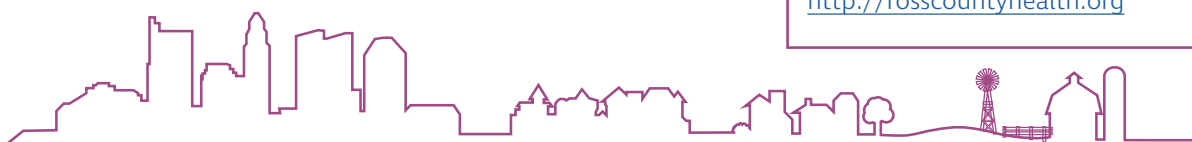
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Sandusky County

Bus Shelters Improve Experience for Public Transit Users

Additions to Public Transit Infrastructure Promote Active Lifestyle.

Challenge

A lack of physical activity places most Americans at an elevated risk for developing a variety of diseases such as cardiovascular conditions and diabetes. Findings from the 2019-2020 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment indicate more than three-fourths of Sandusky County residents were either overweight or obese based on Body Mass Index (BMI). Significant evidence shows that regular physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight and lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. The built environment in a community plays a key role in influencing the ability of residents to live more active lives. Simple improvements to public transportation systems such as the addition of bus shelters can encourage people to walk or bike to and from bus stops and improve health.

Approach

In July 2019, the Sandusky County Public Transportation, known as TRIPS, began offering a low-cost fixed route shuttle service in the city of Fremont to address unmet transportation needs of residents. With no bus shelters along any of the existing shuttle stops, a workgroup was formed to help improve the experience of public transit users and create public awareness. The workgroup evaluated 17 bus stop locations, reviewed ridership data, obtained input from shuttle service users, and initiated conversations with community stakeholders. In June 2022, findings from a survey completed by the TRIPS shuttle service users indicated more than 75% of users would be more willing to use the shuttle service if there were bus shelters to wait at. The survey results also indicated that the most important features in or around a bus stop were protection from the weather such as rain and snow, a bench or sitting area, and a sign identifying the bus stop location.

Results

After extensive discussions and reviews, two locations were chosen, with commitment gained from the local Walmart store and Fremont City Schools to place a bus shelter on each of their properties. Ridership data from 2021 showed the local Walmart store to be the top bus stop location with 2,357 passengers boarding. A bus shelter to accommodate three to four people will be placed at this location. Interest expressed by Fremont City Schools prompted an additional shelter to be added near the middle & high school to accommodate five to six people. Both shelters will be installed in April 2023.



At A Glance

The Sandusky County Public Health Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP), the city of Fremont, and other key community stakeholders to assist with the planning, design, and purchase of two bus shelters to be installed along the fixed routes of the TRIPS shuttle service. These will be the first bus shelters to be installed out of 17 bus stop locations in the city of Fremont. These simple additions will help to improve the commuters' transit experience by offering protection from inclement weather and a safe place to sit and wait for a low-cost ride.



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Stark County

Increasing Physical Activity for Lifelong Health

New Challenge Course in Alliance Allows Students to Learn Healthy Habits at Early Age.

Challenge

Daily physical activity can play a major role in obesity prevention, but 17.2% of Ohio children are obese, according to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's State of Childhood Obesity. Furthermore, the percentage of Stark County residents with access to exercise opportunities has been decreasing since 2013 and is now significantly lower than the state (2022 Stark County Community Health Assessment). For children, playtime at schools can provide a great opportunity for exercise, but some schools in Stark County are facing unique challenges, like Regina Coeli Catholic School in the city of Alliance. Due to the small playground size at the school, play time must be limited to 16 students at a time for a maximum of 15 minutes, making it difficult for all the children to meet CDC's recommendation of 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Approach

Stark County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with Regina Coeli Catholic School to explore options to expand the size of the school's playground. A challenge course with outdoor fitness equipment was selected as an ideal way to increase the number of kids who can utilize the playground as well as teach the students the importance of physical activity. Exercise equipment was ordered through AAA State of Play, and the school recommended that installation be conducted by T&N Excavating, a local business whose owners' children had once attended Regina Coeli.

Results

In October 2022, a new challenge course playground was installed at the Regina Coeli Catholic School. There is now enough play space for an entire class of 32 students to go outdoors and play for the full recess time. The new playground now includes seven pieces of equipment where students can engage in a variety of different exercises. Kids have fun building relationships while rotating through the challenge course and completing the sequence. Students also have access to the playground during one of the two school breaks and on Fridays during physical education classes. They now have a structured environment where they can learn valuable physical health benefits that can be carried into adulthood.



At A Glance

Regina Coeli Catholic School in the city of Alliance had minimal space for children to play on their playground, limiting opportunities for physical activity. The Stark County Health Department partnered with the school to increase the amount of play space by implementing a challenge course where children can meet daily physical activity needs. Students are now able to utilize the seven new pieces of exercise equipment during breaks, recess, and physical education classes. Over 100 students now have a greater opportunity to meet the physical activity guidelines and develop lifelong health habits.



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Summit County

Akron's Middlebury Residents Transform Jewett Park

Neighborhood Empowerment Results in a Redesigned Play Space.

Challenge

The Middlebury Neighborhood of Akron has a limited amount of green space, with only two public parks providing cost-free areas to exercise and play. Local neighbors view both parks as run-down, unsafe, and non-inclusive, which has left them underutilized. Approximately 26% of the neighborhood is under 18, and the lack of safe places to play causes many to stay indoors and be inactive. According to the 2019 Summit County Community Health Assessment, 44% of middle school students and 42% of high school students do not meet the recommended level of physical activity. This coupled with Middlebury's 30% poverty rate—a rate double to that of Summit County's according to U.S. Census data—equates to a neighborhood at high risk for obesity and chronic disease.

Approach

Summit County Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program, Akron Parks Collaborative, the city of Akron, LINKS Family and Community Services, Neighborhood Network a program of Habitat for Humanity of Summit County, and Summa Health, worked with Middlebury residents to plan, design, and refurbish Jewett Park. Their park assessment identified many beneficial features, including a walking path, large green space, and playground; however, significant barriers to accessibility and safety were discovered due to an eroded walking path and dilapidated play structure. The group concluded that addressing these limitations would create a safer and accessible space for recreation in the Middlebury Neighborhood.

Results

The youth of Middlebury helped to design a new Jewett Park, and the neighborhood came together to rebuild. The park now includes new play structures, an adaptive swing, and a community garden. The City of Akron installed an ADA-compliant walking path and curb cuts on the street to increase accessibility. During the build, a 5-year-old watched eagerly and stated how excited she was to use the monkey bars. The addition of this all-inclusive park helped almost 1,000 residents within a 0.5-mile radius have access to a play space and a public walking path. The grand opening is set for the spring of 2023.



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 health risks associated with this, an intervention was needed. Summit County Creating Healthy Communities provided a forum to plan for ways to increase physical activity in the neighborhood. Community input was collected, and local neighbors designed and installed a refurbished Jewett Park to include new play structures, an adaptive swing, and an ADA-accessible walking path. Now, nearly 1,000 residents have access to a safe area to exercise and play.



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Trumbull County

Burbank Park Welcomes New Playground

Park Improvements Help to Increase Access to Physical Activity.

Challenge

Participation in regular physical activity plays an important role in preventing obesity and chronic disease and improving health outcomes. Trumbull County is ranked among the least healthy counties in Ohio, coming in at 72 out of 88 counties for health outcomes and health factors according to County Health Rankings. The same source indicates that 22% percent of Trumbull residents reported poor or fair health, 37% reported obesity, 32% reported physical inactivity, and 37% reported a lack of access to exercise opportunities. This data solidifies the need to expand and improve access to safe places for physical activity.

Approach

Burbank Park sits back in a beautiful neighborhood near McGuffey Pre-K-8 School. The park is mostly utilized by the community for league baseball games. Playground equipment had previously been installed, but the equipment was outdated, unsafe, and not maintained for residents to use. The city of Warren and Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership (TNP) realized the need for upgrades to keep the park safe and accessible for its residents and developed a citywide parks plan. Thanks to successful partnerships with Warren and TNP, and funding from the William Swanston Charitable foundation, the Trumbull County Creating Healthy Communities (Coalition was able to help take on this park improvement).

Results

Thanks to successful partnerships and effective collaboration between the city of Warren, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership, Trumbull County Combined Health District CHC, and community residents, a much-needed face lift was given to Burbank Park. The improvements brought positive attention to the park from the community and its residents. They included playground equipment such as swings, double slides, an orbitron, and various kinds of climbing apparatuses, to name a few. Due to these improvements, roughly 5,500 children and residents will be positively impacted. This rejuvenation of Burbank Park helps to make it a staple of the community and the improvements won't stop there.



At A Glance

Access to parks helps create a community that is connected and inclusive and provides a shared environment for people to interact. The City of Warren and Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership (TNP) created a Parks Plan for all the City's parks in 2020 to help guide future projects. The Trumbull County Creating Healthy Communities Coalition partnered with TNP and the City of Warren to help start the process of making the plan come to fruition. By improving Burbank Park, roughly 5,500 children and residents will benefit.



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Union County

Village of Richwood Addresses Food Insecurity

Richwood Farmers' Market Expands Food Assistance Programs.

Challenge

Last year in Union County, 5.24% of residents were low-income and did not live close to a grocery store (2022 Ohio Department of Transportation AT Needs Analysis Data). According to Healthy People 2030, those who are food insecure may be at increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes and health disparities, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. The Richwood Farmer's Market in Union County had once been an option for residents to gain access to healthy foods, but recent restructuring had forced the market to lose important food assistance programs, leading to a greater food insecurity in the community.

Approach

Beginning in 2021, to help address food insecurity in Richwood, the Village Council voted to support the relaunch of the Richwood Farmers Market. Union County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Coordinator led the effort and partnered with the Farmers' Market Committee to submit applications for food assistance programs, such as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). In April 2022, the Village Council appointed a full-time market manager, who was trained to accept Produce Perks, SNAP, and WIC—as well as assist farmers interested in the SFMNP.

Results

Richwood residents now have access to fresh produce from June to October every year at the farmers' market. After some unexpected delays with the SNAP application, the first SNAP customers were able to use their benefits at the market in July 2022. Throughout the 2021 and 2022 seasons, the average vendor count increased from seven to eight and the number of produce vendors tripled. In 2022, SNAP and Produce Perks utilization was \$280, customer counts increased 35% from the previous year, and WIC redemptions jumped from \$95 in 2021 to a staggering \$470. Additionally, the market was recently scored as excellent by the WIC team for customer satisfaction. Farmers' markets, like the Richwood Farmers' Market, have shown to be a critical component to address food insecurity throughout the United States.



At A Glance

To help address food insecurity in Richwood, the Richwood Farmers' Market was relaunched in 2021. Increased access to fruits and vegetables is now a reality due to the market's expansion of food assistance programs, such as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Union County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities Coordinator worked with the village of Richwood and the Farmers' Market Committee to help expand the market and address this vital community need.



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Vinton County

Food Pantry Expansion Site Battles Hunger in Vinton County

Overwhelming Food Insecurity Rates Trigger Need for Assistance.

Challenge

Nearly 82% of residents in the village of Wilkesville report low to very-low food security according to a survey conducted by the Vinton County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program in 2022. Wilkesville sits on the southeastern-most border of Vinton County and is identified as a food desert, with the nearest grocery store located 18 miles away. More than 23% of Vinton County residents receive food assistance benefits, but many are unable to travel to obtain nutritious foods, according to the 2020 Census. Approximately 100 households in Vinton County report having no vehicle of their own (2020 Census). A local food pantry brings food boxes to the area once weekly, but food insecurity continues to be a serious issue for the county, especially in Wilkesville.

Approach

The CHC program partnered with the Renovate Life Church of God Food Pantry to establish an expansion site to combat hunger and improve food security in Wilkesville. The food pantry managers secured the proper permits to deliver food to Wilkesville on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 4-6 p.m. To reach those who were unable to travel to the expansion site, many residents volunteered to deliver the food boxes directly to those most in need. While this additional site required extra resources, time, and capacity, the CHC program promoted the new giveaway location, reimbursed volunteers for mileage, and provided the necessary materials to support these efforts and lessen the financial strain.

Results

Over the course of 2022, the church delivered over 1,100 food boxes in the Wilkesville area. Each box was stocked to feed a family of four for a week. The CHC Coordinator attended the giveaway multiple times throughout the year to engage with participants and gain their feedback. The participants all reported appreciation and satisfaction with the offerings. The food security survey was administered in December 2022 to assess the impact of the expansion site. Forty-two surveys were collected, and results showed a nearly 8% decline in food insecurity in the Wilkesville area. These results prove the need is great in this area and the expansion site was a significant success. The church plans to continue the bi-weekly giveaway in Wilkesville with the potential to expand to another site in the future.



At A Glance

The village of Wilkesville is a food desert on the southeastern-most border of Vinton County, where 81.6% of residents experience food insecurity, according to a 2022 survey. The Creating Healthy Communities program in collaboration with the Renovate Life Church of God Food Pantry sought to combat this issue. Throughout 2022, the pantry delivered over 1,100 boxes of food to the Wilkesville area. The giveaway was held bi-monthly and available to all residents. As a result, the residents reported nearly 8% decline in the food insecurity rate based on post-survey data from December 2022.



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Washington County

Washington County Residents Step Up as Health Ambassadors

Ambassadors and Community Members Improved Their Skills and Created Community-Based Solutions.

Challenge

The 2021 Washington County Community Health Assessment shows one in five residents report “fair” or “poor” health status, a rate higher compared to individuals across the state or nation. Washington County is the fifth-largest county in Ohio by land area, boasting 640 square miles. The fair/poor health status and expansive area make it imperative to have community partners who reside and understand the needs of their neighbors. According to the publication Using Research for Effective Health Promotion interventions and actions to promote health have been historically driven by agencies with little or no input from the targeted populations.

Approach

Washington County CHC enrolled three Community Health Ambassadors, paying a small stipend for their service. Ambassadors had unlimited open communications with the program staff as well as partners. To support ongoing community-led change, Washington County CHC connected ambassadors and local community members with workshop sessions to advance communication, leadership, and advocacy skills. Pamela Lankford, Director of Building Bridges to Career Epicenter, and Dr. Alane Sanders of Maven Lane Co. facilitated these sessions. One committed participant noted how valuable the opportunity was to practice these skills with other passionate citizens working toward the same goals.

Results

Community members and ambassadors are now the decision-makers for projects, from planning and design through implementation. Six healthy eating and active living projects have been enhanced by the ambassadors and driven by the neighborhood. The West Side Community Ambassador is motivated by seeing his neighborhood leaders working to speak in a unified voice as they advocate for themselves to local and state government officials to advance their community goals. Most recently, they worked with officials to install sidewalks and safe crosswalks in the West Side Community. The Fort Frye Ambassador worked side by side with community members to develop Beverly & Waterford Farmers’ Market and has been able to attain verbal commitments from all vendors for the 2023 market. Ambassadors also improved local parks and playgrounds throughout the county.



At A Glance

Washington County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) is committed to long-term relationships rather than a project-based approach. Ambassadors who live, work, and play in their neighborhood bring to life the CHC principle of community-led solutions. Enrolling Community Health Ambassadors and investing in workshop sessions to develop community members’ communication, leadership, and advocacy skills continue to lead to healthier communities in Washington County. Ambassadors helped make safer crosswalks, sidewalks, farmers’ markets, parks, and playgrounds a reality in 2022.



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