

## Collaborative Schools and Communities Bike Ride: Ride East New York

### Project Summary

On May 4, 2024, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department) and partners, including the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), hosted an all-ages bike ride to highlight the new protected bike lanes in the neighborhood of East New York (East NY). These protected bike lanes are the longest in East NY. They are the first to connect areas that had previously lacked the transportation connections common in neighborhoods with more resources. Thirty community participants and bike leaders rode the approximately 15-mile route from a local school playground to Shirley Chisholm State Park, which is home to 10 miles of biking and hiking trails and a bike library with loaner bikes for park patrons of all ages.

### Physical Activity Implementation in Action

#### **The Situation**

The neighborhoods of East NY and Brownsville in Brooklyn have, in part due to structural racism, a history of disinvestment. They are therefore lacking in biking infrastructure. Before the construction of the protected bike lanes this ride was meant to highlight, the neighborhoods had only one protected bike lane. There is a greenway that stretches to Shirley Chisholm State Park in the southern part of East NY along the bay but none in the heart of the neighborhood. There is only one Citi Bike station, located at the edge of Brownsville, far from the location of the ride. The new protected bike lanes connect with the other protected lane and other lanes to create access to the state park.

There are two assets in the neighborhood to highlight. The first is the two schools who were partners on the ride: PS 325, the Fresh Creek School; and PS 273, the Wortman School. Both of these schools have large playgrounds, which were useful meeting places for bike riders. The second is the diverse land use of the neighborhood. There are mixed-use buildings, single-family residences, NYCHA developments, commercial buildings and rental units. This diversity invites many different voices to speak about their transit priorities and interest in biking.

In 2019, less than half (47%) of youth in North and Central Brooklyn had biked in the past year; in 2017, only 41% of youth had walked or biked all the way to school.<sup>1</sup> Despite commuting trends increasing over time across NYC, as shown by NYC DOT annual data, the newly installed bike lanes in East NY have been underutilized. There could be many causes for the lack of receptivity to the bike lanes. Advocacy groups are engaged in community organizing and coalition building to improve the existing relationship of members of these neighborhoods to biking and biking infrastructure.

### The Solution

The NYC DOT's Community Bicycle Working Group gathered partners to brainstorm ideas for showcasing the new bike lanes and increasing the community's awareness of them. Transportation Alternatives (TA), a nonprofit that advocates for safe, sustainable and equitable streets, reached out to the Health Department to create a bike ride. The site of the newly installed protected bike lanes, Cozine and Wortman avenues in East NY, was chosen because it fell within the catchment area of both organizations. The bike route was designed by staff at the Health Department, a head of the East Brooklyn Bike Club who regularly leads rides to the state park, and TA staff members with experience in route design and community bike rides.

Nine sponsors joined the Health Department and TA, including East Brooklyn Bike Club; East New York Restoration; New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; NYC DOT; Bike New York; and East New York Farms. The partners represented diverse interests from East NY and other populations around the city. Outreach to elected officials and area schools was key, as the bike ride was designed to be for all ages. The schools promoted the ride to their students and provided their schoolyards for stops along the way. Street outreach and use of flyers helped to engage community members who were not contacted through the partners. To encourage participation, bikes and helmets were available to borrow.

### The Results

The bike ride had over 50 registrants and 30 community members in attendance. A representative from each of the sponsors spoke about their group's relationship to biking, road safety and physical activity. Shirley Chisholm State Park conducted a shoreline cleanup on the same day, so ride participants were able to assist with the cleanup afterward. The bike ride [garnered media attention on Streetsblog NYC](#), a local publication.

The goals for this ride were to:

1. Bring visibility to the new protected bike lanes
2. Exhibit a route to a recreational destination utilizing all types of bike lanes
3. Encourage community use of the bike lanes for recreation, active transportation and commuting

These goals were all successful, and that success will be seen in the long term in an increase in biking and construction of protected bike lanes. While the Health Department is not responsible for the

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<sup>1</sup> Source: NYC Youth Risk Factor Behavior Survey, 2019. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/nyc-youth-risk-behavior-survey-public-use-data.page>

creation and placement of protected bike lanes, the agency hopes to increase use of the bike lanes and to provide suggestions for additional areas that are underserved.

As an accompaniment to the ride, the DOT created a Self-Guided Bike Ride guide called the [NYC DOT East New York Brooklyn Group Bike Tour](#). This guide is available on their website and hopefully will be the first in an ongoing series of Self-Guided Bike Ride guides.

## What's Next?

The large number of registrations for the event created a roster of interested and invested community members. These people can be empowered to advocate for the kinds of roads and transit opportunities they would like to see in their neighborhood. In the coming months, the Health Department will host additional rides that connect everyday locations to areas of recreation. Building off the momentum of these rides will create a larger roster of riders and a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the neighborhood residents.

This bike ride served as a demonstration of the interest of community members and families in riding bikes in the area. Similar rides have the potential to inspire the change needed to install additional bike lanes, increase funding for bike education and foster cycling culture. Continued collaboration with the NYC DOT will create programming that educates and engages students and families. Our partners are also continuing their biking advocacy work to spur development. Lastly, the ride will also inform community research to suggest areas for infrastructure improvements and barrier reduction.

## Learn More:

[nyc.gov/health/brownsville](https://nyc.gov/health/brownsville)

[lgable@health.nyc.gov](mailto:lgable@health.nyc.gov)



This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities, a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative helping to build stronger, healthier communities.



Adult and kids' bikes at ride



Rides on protected bike lane



2024 NYC Bike Map, NYC DOT

# Updated Food Service Guidelines Lead to Healthier Options at First Presbyterian Church

## Nutritional Support for the Community

Broome County Health Department’s Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Team (CHSC) has partnered with First Presbyterian Church to increase opportunities for healthy food options.

## Lack of Healthy Food Policies

First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City, NY (FPCJC) has always been committed to serving its community. Prominently found on their website are requests for donations and information on their current outreach projects. Their service includes a food pantry and free meals served weekly through their “This Day” program, supporting those who may not have other reliable options.

Broome County Health Department’s CHSC Team reached out to First Presbyterian Church early in Year 2 of the CHSC grant, and First Presbyterian was very receptive to the opportunity to update their food service guidelines. Food service guidelines are baseline standards aimed at increasing accessibility of healthy, nutritious, and affordable food options. By implementing guidelines, a culture of wellness is established, and healthy choices become easier.

First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City worked hard to provide healthy options for those they served, such as offering low-fat dairy products and seasonal produce. However, a pre-assessment found that there were no official food guidelines or nutrition standards in place. Since FPCJC values the health and well-being of their community, they



Photo Credit:  
First Presbyterian Church

**A free community all-you-can-eat dinner is served each Wednesday evening throughout the year.**

were quick to use this opportunity to create a policy and hold themselves accountable.

## Healthy Meals for Healthy Living

Late in Year 2 of the CHSC grant, First Presbyterian Church finalized their food service guidelines to ensure that 50% of food and 100% of beverages that are healthful: low in sugar, fat, salt, and calories. This includes offering 100% whole grain products, a variety of plant-based protein options, and frozen produce that does not include sauces or syrups when fresh produce is unavailable.

FPCJC also began their “Healthy Meals for Healthy Living” program as a direct result of their partnership with Broome County Health Department’s CHSC team. Launched early in Year 3 of the CHSC grant, this program showcases how to make healthy meals with limited resources, such as a restricted budget or lack of kitchen tools.

**“The First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City This Day Program is thankful for funding from the Creating Healthy**

*Schools and Communities grant. The funding allowed the program to replace older kitchen items with more efficient and safer tools. The new tools positively affected our Community Meal service capabilities.”- Amy Abbey, Outreach Program Coordinator*

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## Long-Term Health Benefits for the Community

First Presbyterian Church of Johnson City has continued to offer free taste testings and recipes through their monthly “Healthy Meals for Healthy Living” program, hosted during their pre-existing weekly “This Day” community meal. These events have been well attended, and participants are actively engaged, interested in new foods, and provide positive feedback.

## Sustainability

With CHSC funding, First Presbyterian Church was provided with resources to allow them to continue supporting their community. A large refrigerator was purchased, allowing for the storage of fresh food rather than frozen or canned. Additionally, oven mitts and cut-resistant gloves make working in the kitchen safer, especially for those who may not have prior experience. There is open communication between FPCJC and Broome County Health Department, and the Health Department continues to provide advice and support when needed.

## To learn more about our work:

**Visit:** <https://firstpresjc.com/this-day/>

## Email:

[Nikole.hurlbert@BroomeCountyNY.gov](mailto:Nikole.hurlbert@BroomeCountyNY.gov)





## Free Food for All via Fridge

In March 2024, Capital Roots partnered with Free Food Fridge Albany to establish a community fridge and implement Food Service Guidelines at Mechanicville Area Community Services Center (MACSC). The fridge has provided the community with low barrier access to nutritious food.

### Hunger Continues to Rise

According to the USDA, in 2022 food prices across the country rose by nearly 10%, an increase faster than any year since the 1970s. This unprecedented rise in food prices has created a staggering deficit in food access, forcing many Americans to make difficult financial choices between housing and health. For households that can afford to utilize grocery stores, long hours including early mornings and late nights, accommodate busy parents and working households. However, low-income families that rely on food pantries and other assistance programs to access food often don't have the same privileges in visiting food access sites whenever is convenient for them due to limited hours. While these institutions remain important anchors in low-income communities, barriers to accessing food offered by these organizations such as identification requirements, inconvenient hours and lack of appropriate food items remains.



The community fridge, painted by local artist Sion Hardy, sits at MACSC after being installed by the Capital Roots and Free Food Fridge Albany.

In Mechanicville, a small city in Saratoga County, MACSC has served local residents through family support, recreation and food services since 1969. Their weekly Free Produce Thursday has become widely popular within the community. MACSC's location in downtown Mechanicville means that community members can access their facilities via car, foot, bike or public transit. In August 2023, Meghan Quillinan, MACSC's Executive Director, met with Capital Roots to discuss challenges related to this distribution—the program placed free produce on shelves in the parking lot, but most of the food was quickly spoiling due to high heat. After this conversation, the Healthy Communities team at Capital Roots decided that a community fridge would allow MACSC to safely distribute food as well as expand the availability of food.

## Innovative Food Access Approaches

Enter Free Food Fridge Albany (FFFA). In August of 2020, Jammella Anderson, a longtime community advocate, worked with community partners to open the Capital Region's first free fridge in downtown Albany. Since then, Anderson has grown their program to include 11 fridges throughout the greater Capital Region.

The concept of a free fridge, also known as a community fridge, is simple; a brightly painted fridge is kept outside in an accessible location. The fridge is open 24/7 and maintained by community members. The fridge is regularly filled with donations which may be accessed, no questions asked, at any time. Fridge organizers work to balance supplying the fridge with produce and meal staples such as dried legumes and fresh meat with premade meals that are important for unhoused folks and busy families. After Capital Roots and MACSC began the Mechanicville Free Fridge project, they invited FFFA to collaborate in this work in an effort to strengthen community ties.

***“Our mission is to provide healthy, nutrient dense and low interventions foods... and allow those we serve to have the power of choice and agency.”***

*-Jammella Anderson, Free Food Fridge  
Albany Founder*

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## Arrival of the Fridge

On a sunny day in March, the Capital Roots team drove up to MACSC, with the freshly painted refrigerator (completed by local artist Sion Hardy) in tow. Alongside Anderson and the MACSC team, Capital Roots set up the fridge against the South wall of the building. This spot was chosen because of its visibility from the street, its accessibility via sidewalk and its proximity to the parking lot. Once the fridge was plugged in, we installed our traffic light labeling system. This system involves labeling

each shelf with different colors to indicate which items might be more nutritious. Green shelves contain the healthiest items, yellow shelves contain moderately nutritious foods and red shelf food should be consumed sparingly. Finally, we filled the fridge with colorful fresh produce gleaned from farmers and donated from some local groceries.

## Fridge in Action

In the months since installation, MACSC has reported that the fridge has gotten a lot of use and has trouble remaining stocked. Quillinan has noted that food waste at MACSC has decreased significantly and that she notices community members focusing on accessing items from green labeled shelves.

As the first free fridge in Mechanicville and Saratoga County, the fridge supports individuals and families facing financial insecurity in accessing the quality, nutritious foods they deserve around the clock. Further, this project aims to inspire other area non-profits to be innovative and responsive in meeting the needs of their constituents.

**To learn more about our work:**

**Visit: [www.capitalroots.org](http://www.capitalroots.org)**

**Email: [healthycommmanager@](mailto:healthycommmanager@capitalroots.org)**

**[capitalroots.org](http://capitalroots.org)**



# From Plot to Pantry: Food Pantry Sprouts Community Garden

## Shifting to Meet Need

In the Osgood neighborhood of South Troy, on a homey tree-lined street, Troy Area United Ministries (TAUM) has quietly served meals to the surrounding community for nearly 40 years. Like many small nonprofits, TAUM has become an expert in adjusting. When the organization began in the mid-80s, their services were tailored to support people living with HIV/AIDS. Throughout the last couple of decades, the need for HIV/AIDS-specific support in the Troy community has decreased. While the organization continues to be a champion for the HIV/AIDS community, their leadership has observed the neighborhood in transition. As Troy has become a more popular city, the price of food and housing has increased, putting an additional strain on low-income families and unhoused folks.

In response to this shift, TAUM's operations have modified as well. Currently, a large part of TAUM's programming is fresh meals and grocery distribution. Three times a week, TAUM opens their doors for the community to come and share a meal. They strive to include fresh produce with every meal, despite operating on a low budget and receiving most of their food from the food bank. The organization is primarily volunteer run—their Food Coordinator, Barbara Healey, picks up, cooks and distributes all of the food that comes through their kitchen.

Since stepping in to support TAUM in August of 2023, Barbara noticed a lack of fresh produce available for their customers. Barbara feels strongly that food is a trust-building mechanism. For an organization that strives to provide wrap-around services, food is often the first point of

contact. Providing delicious and nourishing food tells the customer that TAUM is a place to feel safe and get their needs met. After learning of our organization, Barbara approached Capital Roots to learn about how we may be able to support her in expanding access to fresh vegetables for the TAUM community.



Before (top) the project, the garden was overgrown with weeds. After (below), TAUM is able to use the space to grow fresh food for their customers.

## Innovative Food Access Approaches

Working with a low budget and volunteer team, TAUM often turns to salads to serve as a fresh side with their meals. Lettuce is a high volume, low-cost food that doesn't take long to prepare and can often be sourced from the food bank. While touring TAUM during an initial assessment, the Healthy Communities team noticed an empty lot

## CHSC | Success Story

along the side of TAUM's building. The overgrown green space is fenced in, and receives immaculate light throughout the day, which allows the weeds to thrive even in early April. After assessing the site and learning about the operation, the Healthy Communities team decided that rehabbing the side lot to accommodate cultivating a 'salad accessories' garden would allow TAUM to offer the volume of fresh food that they have been striving for.

*"Thanks to the support of Capital Roots, we are not only able to grow food, but we are also able to grow community.."*

*-Barbara Healey, TAUM Food Coordinator*

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### Installation Begins

On a Friday morning in May, Capital Roots gathered at TAUM, compost, tools and plants in tow. Over the course of four hours, overgrown weeds were removed, compost was laid down, the lawn was tidied up and a variety of tomatoes, peppers, greens and other vegetables were planted. A volunteer group from Mohawk Global joined the project, expertly weed whacking the yard and powering through despite balmy temperatures. Their power and willingness to persevere allowed them to walk away from a functional and beautiful garden by early afternoon.

### Looking Forward

Since the installation, TAUM has written with pictures of and joy for the fruits (and vegetables) of the Healthy Communities' team's labor. Attendees of their meals have shown interest in supporting the garden, many staying after hours to support weeding and harvesting. TAUM is thrilled about the participation that they've seen, sharing that the work in this garden is reminiscent of pre-pandemic engagement. No matter how the organization shifts to support the needs of their

constituents, one thing is for sure; fresh, healthy food will be central to TAUM's means of services.

To learn more about our work:

Visit: [www.capitalroots.org](http://www.capitalroots.org)

Email: [healthycommmanager@capitalroots.org](mailto:healthycommmanager@capitalroots.org)



## Sullivan O & W Rail Trails: Making Connections Count through AFRED

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Trails offer an excellent alternative transportation option that promotes health improvement, economic development, socialization, and various other benefits. Access points connect to a wide array of locations such as municipalities, parks, residential areas, schools, museums, theaters, business districts, workplaces, food sources, bridges, and more.

The Sullivan O & W Rail Trail Alliance is comprised of several key stakeholders including Sullivan County Government, municipalities with trail links, Cornell Cooperative Extension SC-CHSC, Sullivan 180, Catskill Mountainkeeper, local businesses, trail advocates, the Sullivan County Visitors Association, community members, and others. Together, they collaborate to enhance and reconnect segments of the trail that have been separated for some time.

The Sullivan O & W Rail Trail Alliance's most recent initiative involves the Fallsburg Neversink Crossing, a trail bridge project aimed at establishing a crucial connection.

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller*



#### The Situation

The Alliance was established specifically for a feasibility to bridge gaps along the Sullivan O & W Rail Trail, initially serving as an advisory committee to the Sullivan County Legislature, albeit constrained by limited funding resources. This trail access plays a vital role in a rural setting, offering an alternative means of transportation for pedestrians and cyclists. Once a functioning rail trail passing through South Fallsburg and spanning the Neversink River via a bridge, this route now faces an obstacle: the bridge no longer exists. For years, all that has remained is a forested area teeming with wildlife, and an open space where the Neversink crossing once stood.



## The Solution

The Sullivan O & W Rail Trail Alliance, currently under the fiscal sponsorship of Catskill Mountainkeeper, Inc., a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, facilitates multiple avenues for raising funds to support both current and future projects. Meanwhile, supported by the Alliance, the Town of Fallsburg, in collaboration with Sullivan County Government, has applied for and received \$250,000 in funding. This funding aims to construct a bridge over the Neversink River, connecting South Fallsburg, and completing a crucial 14+ mile section of the Sullivan O & W Rail Trail.



## The Results

The Alliance has implemented various methods to increase funds, including membership fees, merchandise sales, and donations. The Town of Fallsburg has cleared a path from the Historic Tunnel to the future Neversink Crossing, and a new Trailhead off Old Country Rd. CHSC, in partnership with the Town of Fallsburg, has implemented new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure at both ends of the trail. The trailhead is situated near a residential area, also adjacent to a newly constructed parking lot and park for families and pets.

This new trailhead segment features two points of interest: the Historic Tunnel and an overlook area where pedestrians and cyclists can take breaks, enjoy meals, and access a message board/kiosk providing information about the trail, its landmarks, and local activities. While the trail isn't fully open to the public yet, visitors are already utilizing these amenities.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

CHSC will supply directional signs and trail markers. The Town and Alliance will seek additional funding from various sources for trail beautification and the Historic Tunnels restoration. Plans are underway to develop a parking lot near the Neversink Crossing, with a construction contract anticipated to be signed soon for the bridge. The completion of the bridge is projected by December 31, 2026.

## TO LEARN MORE:

**Contact:** Wanda Vionet Cruz at [wvc22@cornell.edu](mailto:wvc22@cornell.edu)

**Website:** <https://sullivance.org/food-nutrition/creating-healthy-schools-communities-chsc-2021-2026>

**Social media:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClydcioh7I5K43AFzkInduw>

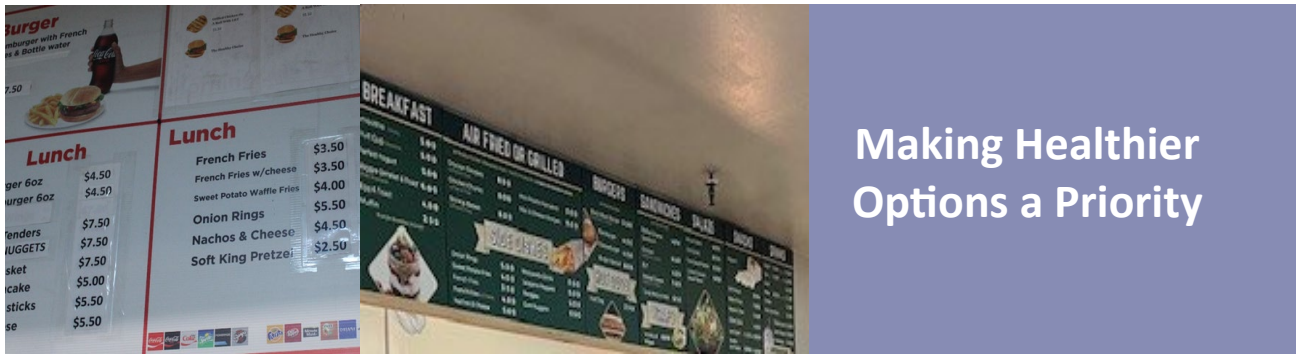


Above you will see the new trailhead entrance next to the new parking lot with bike, and pedestrian accessibility, and dog station. Historic tunnel with pedestrian infrastructure nearby and a bike/ped infrastructure junction to overlook a historic tunnel. Best of all is the Fallsburg Rail Road Station, now the Fallsburg Town Hall.



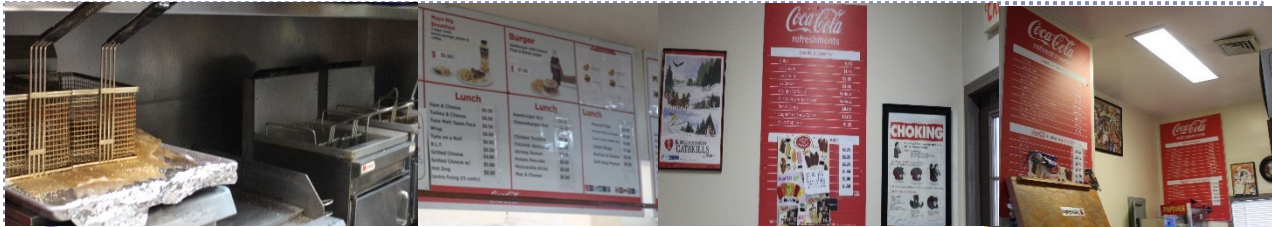
**Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities**

**Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Sullivan County**



## PROJECT SUMMARY

Exchanging deep fryers for air fryers, adding a blender for smoothies, and using spaces previously occupied by unhealthy items for a salad/sandwich prep station, make great impacts in food preparation. Using equipment that assists in storing and preparing healthier fresh foods and drinks, visual stimulation and education played an important part in this transformation. [Strategy] in Action



### The Situation

Morningside Park Café is the largest food service location operated by the Town of Fallsburg. Coca Cola products, deep fried foods and unhealthy snacks were staples you could count on finding. Plenty of visuals promoting their unhealthy items were all over their walls and lower prices for such items always made them a hit. They were slowly trying to make some positive changes. However, the Town staff members and surrounding communities made it clear that they were ready, and wanted more changes, but didn't have the financial support to make it happen at a faster pace.



### The Solution

Fried food being their biggest selling items, The Town was immediately on board when provided with the opportunity to remove their deep fryers in exchange for air fryers in partnership with the CHSC program. Salads and wraps had always been requested, but they didn't have the equipment needed so they used tuna as a healthy alternative to one wrap selection on their menu. Proposing a salad/sandwich refrigerated prep station brought music to their ears. They weren't crazy about their food and beverage menu boards, but since Coca Cola provided several for free, it was the best way to promote food and beverage items with sale prices. Accepting new menu boards and posters with information on healthy foods, beverages, and physical activity made everyone happy. The only problem was that changes couldn't happen at the speed municipal staff members and park visitors hoped for. Due to issues with voltage required to operate the air fryers, and electricians' availability, the air fryers took longer to install than expected.



## The Results

The Town of Fallsburg adopted a Food Service Guidelines Policy. The Town of Fallsburg Morningside Park Café is an example of a municipally operated location with access to healthier food and drinks. It is frequently visited for lunch and breakfast by municipal staff members, nearby trail and park users, religious and other neighboring communities, as well as new visitors. Their salads and wraps with fresh fruits and/or vegetables are a hit. All food items including smoothies are prepared any time of the day. Price changes making healthier food items accessible have also made a change with items that are most frequently ordered. The Town of Fallsburg has moved forward in making changes that contribute to health improvement.

## WHAT’S NEXT?

Positive feedback and outcomes with changes made has taken away any doubts or concerns some staff members may have had. The Town, its communities and visitors, are very happy with the healthy and fresh choices available through Morningside Park Café. They are now looking forward to making the same changes at three other park locations. They hope that this will inspire other municipalities and locations where food and drinks are accessible to the public or staff to do the same.

## TO LEARN MORE:

**Contact:** Wanda Vionet Cruz at [wvc22@cornell.edu](mailto:wvc22@cornell.edu)

**Website:** [Cornell Cooperative Extension | Creating Healthy Schools & Communities \(CHSC\) 2021- 2026 \(sullivanccce.org\)](http://Cornell Cooperative Extension | Creating Healthy Schools & Communities (CHSC) 2021- 2026 (sullivanccce.org))

**Social media:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClzydci0h7I5K43AFzkInduw>



The pictures you saw on the front page reflect Morningside Park Café before we began to make healthy changes. Pictures directly above reflect some of the present changes.



**Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities**

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Sullivan County**

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



# Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program

## Launching Affinity Groups

Leveraging funding made available through the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) grant from the New York State Department of Health, Chautauqua Health Network has teamed up with local school districts and youth-serving organizations to establish the Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program (CHYSP).

### Childhood Obesity in Chautauqua County

According to Harvard's School of Public Health, childhood obesity rates have tripled in the United States over the past three decades. This is a concerning public health issue because obesity is associated with several comorbidities. Children with obesity also typically endure social and emotional hardships, in addition to the physiological effects. Children and adolescents with obesity are also bullied at higher rates than their normal weight peers, which can lead to social isolation, depression, and lower levels of self-esteem.

Obesity is also a prevalent issue in Chautauqua County. The New York State Department of Health reports that there are about 25.9%, or about one out of four students with obesity in the County. While the percentages are slightly different between Elementary School aged and Middle/High aged students at 25.2%, and 27.4%, respectively, these percentages are all higher than Statewide averages. Obesity trends are similar among adult populations in Chautauqua County as well. These percentages of residents with obesity and those suffering from associated comorbidities exacerbate the burden on healthcare providers in the County, which already holds a Health Provider Shortage Area distinction from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA).

There is clearly a need in Chautauqua County to address the rising obesity rates. Through the Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program (CHYSP), which bridges local school districts and youth-serving organizations, stakeholders aim to

instill healthy behaviors in young people to prevent chronic diseases later in life.

### Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program

The overarching goal of the Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program (CHYSP) is to create healthier schools in Chautauqua County by supporting activities and informing policies and administrative regulations that increase opportunities for school associated physical activity and create school environments that promote health, wellness, nutrition and healthy eating for students. Program emphasis has also been placed on generating young people's awareness and understanding of the health care system in the Chautauqua Region.

Major objectives of the Program are to:

1. Establish, strengthen, and sustain school programs that create opportunities for physical activity before, during or after the school day for students, teachers, staff and community members.
2. Increase access to healthy, affordable food and increase school districts' ability to meet the federal Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) nutrition standards.
3. Extend and sustain program learning and impact through an ongoing stakeholder process of developing, implementing, evaluating and sharing evidence-based standards and 'best practices' among the CHYSP partners.
4. Support faculty, staff and student leadership in advancing health, nutrition and physical activity goals.
5. Promote awareness of health, nutrition and wellness education, training, careers and services in Chautauqua County

To date, Chautauqua Health Network, serving as the Secretariat of the Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program has formally welcomed (with signed Memorandums of Agreement) 17 out of the 18 public school districts in the County. We

anticipate the last district joining the fun early in the 2024-2025 school year. In total, the CHYSP encompasses 60 school buildings.

While we are proud to embody a County wide School and Youth Health Program, with our small team, we knew we needed a novel solution to provide support to all the districts and accomplish CHSC grant deliverables. This is why in Year 3, we launched our Affinity Group approach.

## Launching Affinity Groups

Within this novel approach, Chautauqua Health Network encouraged participating Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program (CHYSP) school districts to formally connect with neighboring districts to interact and collaborate on mutual programming goals. In most cases, Affinity Groups consisted of about 2-3 districts, and in some cases even 4 districts, working collectively together to further specific activities related to Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs, Healthy Nutrition Environments, and/or Local School Wellness Policies. While all groups had differing priorities (i.e. After School Physical Activity Programming, Incorporating Local Produce into Healthy Celebrations, etc.) the CHN team established guidelines that all districts have the same focus surrounding milestones that must be completed to receive funding through CHYSP.

Forming these Affinity Groups was extremely helpful for our Chautauqua Health Network team to be able to provide more individualized technical support to the districts because instead of visiting school sites individually, our team was able to check in with the Affinity Group Focal Points and address inquiries with multiple sites at once. Another positive result of Affinity Group formation was that districts with stronger school wellness programs have been able to support those with less strong (or even non-existent) programs and share their best practices with them to develop stronger programs. It has been great for our team to see how willing and excited our school communities are to help each other out!

## Sustaining the Program

Our Affinity Groups have been a great success so far in Year 3. Moving into Year 4 of the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant, we will

continue to work to further develop these groups, share best practices, and solidify our Chautauqua Healthy Youth and Schools Program (CHYSP) Governance structure by formalizing our Advisory Board. This will be a heavy lift for Chautauqua Health Network as the Secretariat of the Program, but we are looking forward to the challenge!

For sustainability of the CHYSP, we will also prioritize fundraising efforts moving into Years 4 and 5 of the CHSC grant. Leveraging funding still available from NYSDOH and other sources, CHN will provide technical assistance to school districts to support them in mobilizing other community and philanthropic sources such as applying for other 'mini grants' to support wellness programming outside of the CHSC grant purview, approaching local business owners to donate to their districts programs and starting-up fundraising efforts within their district's communities. A handful of schools have even started these strategies in Year 3, and we will point to them as 'best practices' moving forward.

We will also look to utilize our Canvas Learning Management System as a virtual platform to engage ideas and strategies surrounding fundraising, programming activities, and policy language more heavily in Years 4 and 5.

**To learn more about our work:**

**Visit our website at**

**CHQ.HEALTH or reach out to our School and Youth Health Project Coordinator, Lisa**

**Roberts at**

**[Lisa.Roberts@chq.health](mailto:Lisa.Roberts@chq.health)**





## Healthi Kids helps move Rochester's Active Transportation Plan to completion

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Walkers and bikers in Rochester got a boost from the new City of Rochester Active Transportation Plan. Healthi Kids was a consultant on the city's plan and helped move the plan to completion. The plan dramatically expands the city's existing "spine" of bicycle paths and lanes and improves safety and accessibility for pedestrians throughout the city.

### ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN ACTION



#### The Situation

The City of Rochester had planned for elements of active transportation in its Bicycle Master Plan, Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan, and Comprehensive Plan. But the City needed to ask residents which elements were top priority. It especially wanted the unique perspectives of people with disabilities, residents who have been historically marginalized, people with low incomes and residents without cars.



#### The Solution

That's where Healthi Kids and its partners brought in their expertise. Healthi Kids' team member, Mike Bulger, served on the project advisory committee. He championed equity as a guiding principle and advocated for the plan to include a focus on safe routes to destinations, such as schools, grocery stores, healthcare and parks.

Healthi Kids publicized public input opportunities to help drive turnout and engagement, contributed to the City's popup engagement plan and advocated for implementation of the plan. The advisory group ensured that the geographic distribution of various populations was considered when prioritizing improvements.

They looked at the proximity of locations to key services and places where people gathered and used the data to help to create the prioritization framework for how to roll out improvements. This review also included mapping such features as where libraries and community centers were, where medical facilities were and where seniors lived.



#### The Results

The result was an Active Transportation Plan that prioritized 29 pedestrian-focused projects, 17 miles of safety-focused pedestrian improvements and 43 new miles of "spine" bike network adding to the existing 18 miles. A quarter of Rochester is now designated as priority areas targeted for further planning efforts. The effort aligns with and builds on other City transportation projects that are completed or currently underway, such as the [Rochester 2034](#) and the [Bicycle Boulevard](#) plans.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

As the city plans projects, it will look back at the Active Transportation Plan to help it plan future improvements. For example, if a resurfacing or bike lanes proposal is planned in an area where a concentration of seniors has been mapped, the city can do outreach to seniors and add features such as a walking trail to plans. Because community demographics were part of the prioritization formula, future projects will look back at the plan and understand who their project is going to impact and who they should do outreach to.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Contact: Mike Bulger, 585-224-3171 or [mike.bulger@commongroundhealth.org](mailto:mike.bulger@commongroundhealth.org)

Website: [www.healthikids.org](http://www.healthikids.org)

Social media: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: @HealthiKids

A new City of Rochester Active Transportation Plan aims to make walking, biking and other active



transportation safer. The plan expands many of the city's existing active transportation features. From left: playful elements such as mirrors entice pedestrians along the Play Walk in Rochester. An intersection at Parsells Avenue and Greeley Street gets an eye-catching paint job and curb realignment to slow traffic and protect pedestrians. A protected bike lane in Rochester is part of the bicycle "spine."



Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities



*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*

# Thriving Together: The Journey of Bertrand Chaffee Hospital's Healthier Workforce

## Summary

In 2023-2024, partners came together to increase access to healthier snack bar options and opportunities for physical activity throughout the workplace for Bertrand Chaffee Hospital (BCH) employees as part of the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) Grant Project.

## Challenge

As a place that encourages taking care of one's health and wellbeing, Bertrand Chaffee Hospital's Community & Development Relations coordinator, Erin Schwab-George, realized there was room for improvement in promoting nutrition and physical activity for its 350 employees.

## Committee Creation

After our initial meeting about CHSC, Erin quickly took the initiative to form a diverse wellness committee.

Within a week, she successfully recruited 17 employees from many departments, including Food Service, Director of Primary Care, Nurse Managers, Dietetics, LPN, PSR Manager, Recruiting and Retention Coordinator, Employee Health, Diabetes Care Specialist, Medical Surgical Nurse Manger and ER Nurse Manager. The wellness committee even recruited community members & partners like avid hiker Chuck, and Debbie from the local non-profit Love Inc. of Springville. With the wellness committee identified, the partnership began in November 2023.



## Approach

During the initial meetings of the wellness committee and the completion of a Food Service guidelines assessment, we identified several areas for improvement. The Strive snack bar offered healthier options, but these were often hidden on lower shelves, less visible and least likely to be purchased. The committee acknowledged that there was an indoor walking path that could be utilized during a 15-minute break, but employees had little to no motivation to go on a walk. Members of the committee also shared that in the new building there was a dedicated space where you can work out, but it was not utilized because the equipment was old and nearly unusable.

## Impact

Focusing their efforts to highlight healthier food options, the committee identified a handful of healthier snacks that were already available in the Strive snack bar, such as veggie straws and healthier chip versions, LUNA, CLIF and Nature Valley granola bars, and nut and dried fruit blends. On an employee wellness day shortly thereafter, we hosted a snack sampling event so employees could try the snacks that were already available within Strive.

We next focused on increasing opportunities that would encourage employees to be more physically active. The wellness committee addressed the lack of motivation to go on a walk during the workday and decided to host a Step Challenge. The first Step Challenge lasted 4 weeks from January 8<sup>th</sup> to February 4<sup>th</sup> with 70 employees participating. To help support the step challenge, CHSC funding was used to purchase pedometers and safety whistles so employees would be able to track their steps and feel safe if they were walking alone. Employees would track their number of steps and send them to Erin for

## CHSC | Success Story

her to record. The group’s steps for the first round totaled over 7.8 million steps!

In addition to the step challenge, the committee wanted to focus on additional opportunities to be active by obtaining new & safe equipment for their workout room. With CHSC funding, we were able to purchase an elliptical, treadmill, cycling bike, kettlebells, an adjustable bench, various sized weights, resistance bands, yoga balls and yoga mats. Employees can use this room as they are able, and plans are in the works to host workout classes taught by an employee and member of the wellness committee, who is a certified fitness instructor.



**“Partnering with the CHSC grant was invaluable, starting our wellness committee became not just a goal but a reality, and we are looking forward where it is going to take us in the future.”**

**-Erin Schwab-George**

January 8- February 4 2024 Step Challenge					
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total Steps	
54,720	74,324	74,998	76,543	280,585	
96,354	84,695	94,027	85,386	360,462	
116,322	133,611	134,724	124,183	508,840	
51,482	61,263	56,574	0	169,319	
42,863	24,809	44,908	47,211	159,791	
68,829	64,090	75,859	73,344	282,122	
0	0	0	0	0	
65,676	62,720	0	0	128,396	
50,000	0	0	0	50,000	
11,000	18,203	0	0	29,203	
38,341	43,282	62,342	63,452	207,417	
0	51,402	0	0	51,402	
0	25,571	0	0	25,571	
43,534	47,563	0	0	91,097	
34,594	17,930	27,111	37,820	117,455	
81,000	60,000	142,000	180,000	463,000	
56,126	50,618	64,549	51,132	222,425	
1,500	0	0	0	1,500	
21,146	54,077	0	0	75,223	
0	0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	0	
16,679	15,971	0	23,624	56,274	
0	61,694	0	68,220		
0	21,452	18,400	26,432	66,284	
0	0	0	42,916	42,916	
0	3,766	0	3,381	7,147	
0	0	10,000	10,000	20,000	
2,116,980	2,126,062	1,959,468	1,981,966	7,882,386	
1058.49	1039.25				

The data above shows the Step Challenge participants, how many steps they took each week and the groups totals.

## What’s Next?

So, what’s the plan after all these amazing opportunities have been implemented? The committee will be focusing on sustainability beyond CHSC support in several ways and looking to improve these strategies.

We will be working on behavioral design strategies to move the healthier food options at the Strive snack bar to eye level so they are easier to identify. The committee will look at how to improve the step challenge to focus on employee engagement throughout the entire process. We are planning to use CHSC funding to purchase tile or wall-safe stickers to make the indoor walking path easier to identify. To help support all these changes, we will also be creating the hospital’s wellness policy.

The CHSC & BCH partnership has also led to BCH’s increased presence within their Springville community. Erin now represents BCH, within the Springville Regional Community Coalition, where CHSC has a great presence, working with many community partners and members.

The CHSC & Bertrand Chaffee team is excited to continue to increase opportunities for all employees and their involvement within the Springville Community.



To learn more about our work:

Visit: [www.e1b.org/creatinghealthy](http://www.e1b.org/creatinghealthy)

Email: [khuber@e1b.org](mailto:khuber@e1b.org)

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*

# Sustaining Healthy Food Choices with Local, Culturally Diverse Lackawanna Factory Workers

**Why is Culturally Relevant Food Important?**

It's important to have access to culturally appropriate foods. Being able to grow our native foods for ourselves and our family or being able to access these foods at a local farmer's market and grocery store, helps us thrive in our community.



Food that we can grow, prepare and eat that are connected to our ancestors and culture are a part of a celebration, an identity, and a comfort of who we are.

*Real Food is medicine. It prevents disease and heals our body and brain.*



Share your family's home cooked recipes with Donna and we can share them on this big screen!

When visiting the TRS facility in Lackawanna (where the Magic Eraser is manufactured) in 2023, I was intrigued by the population and demographic of the staff. 90% of all their employees are from 9 different countries, other than the US, and speak 6-9 different languages. This was going to be a unique challenge, as to how we partnered with the company to implement CHSC grant work and offer nutrition resources to a community with such a diverse make up. Knowing language and culture were some of the obvious barriers to executing our work here, I ate lunch with some of the staff and quickly noticed how nutritious many of their lunch choices were. My goal was set: to continue and sustain these healthful habits!

TRS factory staff come from many countries outside America. The primary languages most often understood, spoken, read and written there are Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Nepali, Somali and Spanish. After assessing the vending machine in the lunch/break room with our FSG strategies and quickly learning not much besides bottled water and energy drinks were being purchased daily, I did notice the staff was bringing home cooked meals for lunch instead of fast food, take-out or some of the fresh vending items available.

My instinct was to continue this healthful eating pattern and increase the outcome of more home cooked fresh healthy meals by displaying digital signage on a smart screen in the lunchroom, supporting CHSC goals, nutrition education and the positive culturally diverse eating habits, already in place. However, with multiple language barriers and not much of a graphic design background, this wasn't going to be an easy feat. I enlisted some of our previous grant partners at Villa Maria College and was fortunate enough to partner with Professor Scasha Smith and some of her Senior Art and Graphics majors, as a final Senior service project. We joined forces with the students to create and design the first 3 of many health improving slides to come! These 3 dynamic, creative and dedicated Senior students worked diligently with me to create and deliver 3 nutrition slides in English to be translated and reformatted by The International Institute of Buffalo into Arabic, Begali, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish. "It takes a

village” comes to mind when thinking about how many joint efforts and visions came into play with this unique grant implementation.

This was an interesting risk and way to solve a unique challenge in our work. So far, it’s difficult to tell how these slides are being perceived and given attention. Interviewing employees and taking surveys is imperative going forward to gain more knowledge as to how to proceed with our best foot forward in the future.

After speaking with some of the Bengali employees, we have greater insight as to what may improve the employee’s attention to our wellness and culturally relevant slides. One team member suggested creating each country’s Flag as a digital image on each slide to alert them that we are addressing them specifically. We feel this is an important suggestion and are going to try that on future slides going forward! Another employee suggested transforming the digital slides into table tents with each countries’ translated material, since most of the staff from the same region sit together. We plan to try this as another innovative suggestion as well!

The challenge of this particular worksite is invigorating and special. We look forward to continuing our partnership with TRS this grant year and beyond to implement our education and resources in the most unique and collaborative ways.

## TO LEARN MORE:

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Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Educator

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Social media:

[https://www.instagram.com/healthy\\_schools\\_communities?igsh=b2s4cW00cHI0a2Vm&utm\\_source=qr](https://www.instagram.com/healthy_schools_communities?igsh=b2s4cW00cHI0a2Vm&utm_source=qr)

## النظام الغذائي الأمريكي

### النظام الغذائي الأمريكي المعتاد

إن النظام الغذائي الأمريكي المعتاد الذي يتكون في معظمه من الأطعمة قليلة المعالجة والسريعة، بسبب أمراضها ومخاوف صحية خطيرة هنا في بلدنا، أنه فعلاً نظام غذائي سيء. لحظ هذا النظام كلما أمكن ذلك حتى تحافظ على أفضل النتائج الصحية وتدعمها.

**قل لا لهذه الأطعمة!**

### النظام الغذائي الصحي

إن إعداد الأطعمة الطازجة الصحية في المنزل التي تحتوي على وجبات غنية بمجموعة متنوعة من الفيتات والدهون الصحية والبروتينات الصحية والمكسرات والحبوب طريقة مجربة التحسين صحتنا بشكل عام وطاقتنا ومزاجنا والعيش لفترة أطول بألماني.

**قل نعم لهذه الأطعمة!**

Nutrition Education Slide translated in Arabic

## ¡El agua!

En Estados Unidos, el agua del grifo **FILTRADA** es el agua más saludable que usted puede consumir. Una botella de acero inoxidable o de vidrio que usted pueda rellenar no sólo es la forma más sana de hidratarse, sino también la más barata y la más ecológica.

**El agua FILTRADA** es una forma maravillosa de hidratarse el cuerpo y el cerebro, así como de mantener una buena digestión.

**El agua embotellada** no es siempre la mejor opción. ¡Recuerde! que la mayoría de las aguas embotelladas en Estados Unidos contienen microplásticos que pueden ser perjudiciales para su salud con el paso del tiempo.

Nutrition Education Slide translated in Spanish

## সাংস্কৃতিকভাবে সম্পর্কিত খাদ্য কেনো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

সাংস্কৃতিকভাবে উপযুক্ত খাবার পাওয়ার সুযোগ থাকা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। নিজেদের এবং পরিবারের জন্য আমাদের দেশীয় খাবারের উৎপাদন অথবা স্থানীয় খামারীদের কাছ থেকে এবং মুঠি মোকাবেলা এই খাবারগুলো পছন্দ্য আমাদের জনশেষ্ঠীকে সমৃদ্ধ করতে সাহায্য করে।

যে খাবারগুলো আমরা উৎপাদন, ভেঁরি করতে ও খেতে পারি, সেগুলো আমাদের পুষ্টিগুণের এবং সাংস্কৃতির সাথে সম্পর্কিত, আমাদের উৎসাহন, পরিচয় এবং স্বাস্থ্যের অংশ।

পরিষ্কৃত খাবার হচ্ছে ঠাণ্ডা এটি বেশ প্রতিযোগিতা এবং আমাদের শরীর ও মস্তিষ্ককে সুস্থ করে তোলে।

আপনার পরিবারের মাঝেমাঝে বেটসি'র চেম্বার সাথে, কাগজটি কাম এবং আমরা সেগুলো এই বড় শব্দ জাগরুণ করতে পারি।

Nutrition Education Slide translated in Bengali



**Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities**

**Cornell Cooperative Extension**  
Erie County

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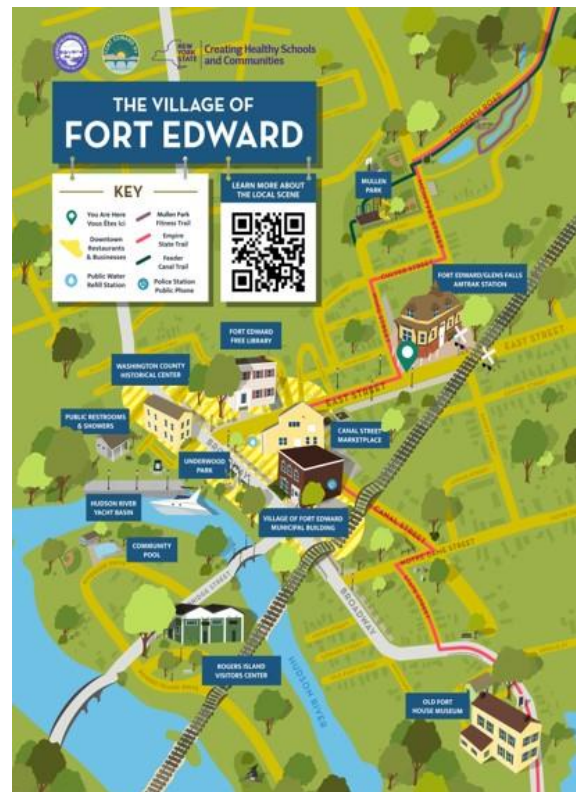
## Success Story

# Fort Edward: Connecting a Community

Glens Falls Hospital’s (GFH) Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) is working with the Village of Fort Edward to increase safe physical activity for all ages through implementation of safer streets, increasing trail utilization, and making connections to everyday destinations.

The village of Fort Edward presently lacks an updated Complete Streets policy, therefore bike and pedestrian-friendly treatments are rarely considered or utilized routinely when infrastructure is being upgraded. Currently, there is little coordination between the Village Department of Public Works (DPW), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT), and the Water Authority to address road issues within the village.

State Route 4 runs through the center of the Fort Edward community, along which is the school, and is a main commuting route for drivers: leading to higher-than-normal speeds and increased side street usage. In 2022, two speeding tickets were issued for the 35-mile-per-hour zone. Lack of enforcement can lead to increased speeds and reduced adherence to road signs.



The school district allows students to walk and bike to school, but due to the heavier traffic area during school hours, these modes of transportation are not consistently used by students and their families. This and the lower number of safe crossings to the school have concerned the school district and the village board. They recognize the need for coordination with the Fort Edward Union Free School District to create and adopt a Safe Routes to Schools policy.

The lack of public awareness and connectivity allowing for active transport (i.e. crosswalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant sidewalks, signage, and biking infrastructure) leads to underutilization of the Empire State and Feeder Canal trails. It also inhibits access to the



**Present crossing in front of the Fort Edward UFS.**

## CHSC | Success Story

downtown/business district area and popular locations, such as the train station and local yacht basin on the Champlain Canal, by all modes of transportation.

Since Fort Edward is located along the Champlain Canal it is a boating destination, from summer to fall, with the Yacht Basin filled with docking boaters who utilize bikes to access needed amenities from local businesses and attractions.



CHSC has partnered with many stakeholders including the Fort Edward Union Free School District, NYSDOT, the Washington County Planning Department, the Village and Town of Fort Edward Trustees, and Promote Fort Edward to improve walkability and bikeability to everyday destinations.

Through the invaluable education and technical assistance that CHSC has provided the Village Board initiated a Complete Streets Policy Committee to develop a comprehensive policy that will: require yearly repainting of crosswalks by DPW; develop an updated plan for the location of traffic and pedestrian signage; and establish a monthly meeting to discuss enforcement of traffic laws with the local contracted sheriff's department.



Newly painted crosswalks and added signage.

To increase public utilization and awareness, improvements were added to connect local destinations to the trail system including increased signage, crosswalks, and pedestrian amenities.

***“The village of Fort Edward is very thankful for the relationship and help given to the community by CHSC. We have completed “quality of life” projects with items such as benches, water fountains, bike racks, and street markings, to name just a few. The coordination assistance between the village and NYSDOT will soon provide “lighted” signs to enhance the school crossing, helping add more safety to a difficult crosswalk. CHSC’s funding for the points of interest kiosk map, located at the train station and trailheads, will drive pedestrians and bicyclists to our local attractions. With assistance from CHSC, we completed projects that could have taken years longer to complete. We thank them and look forward to collaborating with them in the future” - Matthew Traver, Mayor of the Village of Fort Edward***

CHSC facilitated communication between NYSDOT, the Village of Fort Edward, and the school district to further everyone’s understanding of the NYSDOT process to improve roads. Together, the village board and the school district were able to effectively communicate the need for an updated crosswalk and rapid flashing beacons at the crossing to the school along State Route 4. Collaborative work between all entities garnered an upgraded crosswalk that will be installed by NYSDOT in the summer of 2024. CHSC also provided rapid flashing beacons for the crossing connecting the staff parking lot and adjacent streets to the school, to provide safe crossing when there is not a crossing guard present. CHSC believes that this will help tremendously to improve safety for all and increase the number of students who walk or bike to school.

***“Thanks to GFH’s partnership, our community has become more welcoming, safe, and accessible for pedestrians and cyclists alike.” Pete Williams- Village of Fort Edward Trustee***

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In the upcoming grant year, we will continue to assist the village board in drafting and creating a comprehensive Complete Streets policy that reflects their wants and needs.

CHSC is also exploring a new project with the village and the school district that includes an already-established trail, that is utilized regularly by students, families, and the general public, to walk to and from school. The hope is to improve access for all along the trail and connect the school and community to the Feeder Canal and Empire State Trails. Improvements will provide increased access for the physical education department to the lower-level fields, courts, and trails. Even with frequent utilization, the trail needs repairs that will make it safer and more accessible for all. Meetings are being set with the school district and village board members to discuss how we can progress on this project.

**To learn more about our work:**

**Visit:**

<https://www.glensfallshospital.org/services/community-services/health-promotion-center/>

**Email:**

**School and Early Childcare Strategy**

[ehoffman@glensfallshosp.org](mailto:ehoffman@glensfallshosp.org)

**Community Strategy**

[jhuggins@glensfallshosp.org](mailto:jhuggins@glensfallshosp.org)

*\* While this template attempts to cover the most important points, CHSC grantees are expected to be familiar and comply with grant requirements and guidance for success stories/annual report.*

## Success Story

### Fort Edward: Projects for Student Wellness

Glens Falls Hospital's (GFH) Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) grant is working with the Fort Edward Union Free School District to increase physical activity for all ages and access to healthy foods throughout the school day.

The school district, after years of possible merges with other school districts and changing administration, had an outdated wellness policy and lacked an active wellness committee. Staff expressed their concern for the limited student exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables, food insecurity, and their want to expand physical activity opportunities.

The school district allows students to walk and bike to school, but due to the heavy area traffic during school hours, these modes of transportation are not used consistently by students and their families. This and the lower number of safe crossings to the school have concerned the school district.

The school district hired a new superintendent who has worked closely with CHSC. In July of 2023, the new Wellness Policy was updated and adopted by the Board of Education (BOE). The district now has an active wellness committee, that has worked hard to implement the policy and generate projects that benefit the students and staff.

To increase physical activity throughout the school day, CHSC worked closely with the physical education department and classroom staff. The Physical Education (PE) department increased its units related to lifelong fitness. They received professional development for archery through the National Archery in Schools Program (NASP) and Learnin the Ropes. They also received the appropriate equipment to support these programs in their schools. All school staff were offered the opportunity to attend an Agriculture in the Classroom and a Math and Movement training.

***“The training the PE department received through NASP was clear and concise and will help us introduce and teach our students archery. The CHSC initiative has brought equipment resources, training, and access to education that would not be possible without them.”*** Chris Terry- Physical Education Teacher



Under Safe Routes to Schools, a goal of the committee was to improve crosswalks to the school with rapid-flashing beacons. Partnering with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the village, and the school district, CHSC facilitated communication and provided procedural education. An upgraded

## CHSC | Success Story

crosswalk will be installed by NYSDOT in the summer of 2024. These updates will help tremendously to improve safety for all and increase the number of students who walk or bike to school.

CHSC was able to engage and assess the Fort Edward Universal Preschool Program (FEUPK) program. Assistance was provided to increase physical activity throughout the day and expose students to family-style dining and healthy eating.



As a result of the support CHSC provided, the district established a garden club and expanded its physical activity offerings to students from Preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



Students presented their grow tower at a recent assembly, which garnered more student volunteers. The garden club was able to produce enough lettuce to share with the cafeteria for salads.

This spring, with the help of the students in the technology class, the garden club expanded their efforts outside, starting three raised beds, which were filled with the seedlings they started inside.

***“Our students are really excited about the grow trays and producing fresh vegetables for the cafeteria.”*** Melissa Rosenthal-  
Social Studies Teacher and School Garden Committee

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After PE teachers attended the Learnin’ the Ropes training, the school district booked a show for all the students to enjoy and added a jump roping unit to their PE classes, students wanted to jump at

recess, and a weeklong jump roping after-school enrichment opportunity was offered to students. Students also presented a jump rope routine at a student assembly that they choreographed.

For the upcoming grant year, CHSC is exploring a new project with the school and the community to improve an already existing trail that is utilized daily by students walking to and from school, as well as by the physical education department to access fields and courts. The trail also allows access to the Feeder Canal and Empire State Trails. Presently the trail requires repairs to make it safer and more accessible for all. Meetings are being set with the school district and village to discuss the project.

CHSC will continue to support the school district’s physical education staff in updating their Physical Education Plan. With technical assistance and supplies from CHSC, the preschool program will collaborate with the cafeteria staff to implement family-style dining strategies into their breakfast-time routine. CHSC is also exploring a redesign of the outdoor preschool playground that would include a classroom and integration with the school garden.

***“I cannot say enough about how the CHSC grant has helped our school. Program Coordinator Elizabeth Hoffman has essentially become part of our staff, assisting us in providing professional development and programs to our students and staff such as a jump rope program and the math and movement initiative. We have also been able to get off-the-ground school community growing trays, which will eventually evolve into raised beds outside of the school. The opportunities the grant has provided the Fort Edward Union Free School District with are immeasurable, and we are thankful.”*** Dr. Richard DeMallie-School Superintendent

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**To learn more about our work:**

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<https://www.glensfallshospital.org/services/community-services/health-promotion-center/>

**Email:**

**School and Early Childcare  
Strategy**

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**Community Strategy**

[jhuggins@glensfallshosp.org](mailto:jhuggins@glensfallshosp.org)



## Student Success and Student Health Go Hand in Hand

As part of the New York State Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) initiative, the Genesee Valley BOCES (GV BOCES) is partnering with schools to increase access to healthy foods and opportunities for daily physical activity for all students.

### Nutrition and Student Success are Connected

Since children spend many of their waking hours and eat up to half their daily calories at school, schools play a critical role in building and supporting healthy nutrition habits that can last a lifetime. Further, there continues to be an ever-growing body of research that highlights the impact that nutrition has on student learning and success. Healthy eating and regular physical activity improve academic performance, attendance rates, behavior and life-long health and well-being. As a result, school districts are creating meaningful and authentic strategies to support their students with access to healthier food choices.

Administrators and staff at Pembroke Central School District (CSD), located in Corfu, NY, recognize the important role that nutrition plays in a student's life. As such, one goal of the district's wellness policy is to promote healthy food and beverage choices and ensure all of its students have the ability to make nutritious food selections. A particular area of focus has been on the availability of nutritious foods outside of the school meal programs. Like many school districts in the state, Pembroke's percentage of economically disadvantaged students consists of nearly half of the student population which adds to the challenges students and their families face for accessing healthy foods. Recently, the district's wellness committee administered a

survey to students to learn more about their access to nutritious food choices as well as their ability to identify and prepare nutritious food. Survey results indicated that a majority of students lacked access to nutritious food after school, particularly during the time of day before after school activities begin. The survey also indicated many students lacked the knowledge and skills to choose and prepare healthier food options on their own.



This mini refrigerator and freezer unit is being used in Pembroke Central School District's Dragon Kitchen. The Dragon Kitchen is a school club that teaches students how to prepare healthy food. Students enjoy the fruits of their labor and share what they prepare with other students, staff and families at school events.

### Teaching Students How to Prepare Healthy Food

During the 2023-2024 school year, GV BOCES and Pembroke CSD joined forces through the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) Initiative. CHSC fosters healthy school

## CHSC | Success Story

environments and supports academic success by increasing students' access to healthy foods and opportunities for daily physical activity. Through CHSC, the school district receives technical assistance and support for implementing best practices for nutrition and daily physical activity. Recently, Pembroke CSD received needed materials and supplies to ensure the success and sustainability of the Dragon Kitchen Club.

Pembroke CSD, home of the Dragons, offers the Dragon Kitchen Club to all 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The club supports students' interest in cooking and healthy food preparation at a young age in hopes of fostering healthy eating habits that will benefit students during their school years and beyond. Not only do students in the club enjoy the healthy foods they prepare, they also share their creations with other students, staff and even families that attend school community events such as parent cohort nights.



Pembroke CSD's Dragon Kitchen Club learns about healthy food preparation and creates items such as these veggie calzones to enjoy themselves and share with others.

### Growing More Opportunities


The Pembroke CSD and GV BOCES will continue their partnership into the 2024-2025 school by focusing on healthy eating opportunities for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders including a collaboration with the community food pantry, a gourmet foods curriculum and an after-school wellness club.

The district wellness committee is also looking to enhance the implementation of district wellness policy physical activity goals. The district is committed to encouraging classroom physical activity breaks, recess for elementary students, active academics and opportunities for physical activity before and after school. Training and technical assistance will also be provided to prepare for the required triennial assessment and update to the local district wellness policy. The triennial assessment is a requirement for school districts that participate in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. Assessment data will support the district with learning more about the impact and outcome of their nutrition and physical activity programming for students.

***“On behalf of the District Wellness Committee, we are eager to partner through CHSC in hopes of supporting our Local Wellness policy goals.”***

*Morgan Wagner, District Wellness Coordinator,  
Pembroke Central School District*

To learn more about our work,  
contact Heather Bachman,  
Program Coordinator, Genesee  
Valley BOCES  
[hbachman@gvboces.org](mailto:hbachman@gvboces.org)



**NEW YORK STATE** | **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities**

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2021-2026) New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities. The Genesee Valley BOCES is a NYSDOH CHSC grantee.*



## Success Story

# Empowering Youth Around Food Justice in the Bronx

As part of the New York State Department of Health’s Creating Healthy Schools & Communities (CHSC) Initiative, Bronx Health REACH is working with the Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center to support its Youth Food Justice Club (FJC), empowering youth to demand and choose healthier food for themselves and their peers. The goal is to create a peer-led food justice campaign that expands beyond an after-school program to mobilize youth in schools across the Bronx.

### Inadequate Food Access

The Mary Mitchell Center (MMC) is in the East Tremont section of The Bronx, where “food” is plentiful - you can easily access many fast-food chains and unhealthy food options for your next meal. However, what is not easily accessible in East Tremont is *fresh, healthy, affordable* produce.

To address this problem, in 2020, the FJC members (ages 13 – 17) began experimenting with hydroponics, which is a method of cultivating food that uses water and nutrients as the growing medium instead of soil. The idea behind hydroponics is to see if produce could be grown during the colder months when many gardens and farms go dormant.

Along with growing produce to increase access to fresh, healthy produce for the surrounding community, the MMC runs the Food Buying Club, Heidi’s Healthy Canasta, as well as two Farmers Markets in the Bronx. MMC also serves healthy meals in its afterschool program. Nevertheless, it was recognized that there was room for improvement in the healthfulness of the meals served to the children at the center, and that the children weren’t always eating the healthy options that were being served.



Credit: Chef Marion Wilson

Mary Mitchell Center Youth Food Justice Club members participating in a cooking class with Chef Wilson

### Hands-On Recipe Preparation and Countering Unhealthy Options

From 2021-2022, Bronx Health REACH connected the MMC to Lenox Hill Teaching Kitchen (LHTK) which provides training to help nonprofit organizations convert their food services to a farm-to-institution model by serving more fresh, healthy and local food. The MMC Chef and after school site supervisor participated in the LHTK training which introduced the Chef to recipes that used more whole grains and legumes to encourage healthier eating. As the MMC knew that changing the menu drastically without youth involvement would be too big of a change for the youth enrolled in the after school and summer programs, the MMC had the FJC members and the Chef work together to prepare the LHTK recipes. Throughout this process, the FJC members had an opportunity to taste the new recipes and gain culinary skills. The FJC members in turn encouraged the younger children at the center to try the new menu options as well.

With the support of CHSC, the MMC was able to purchase cooking demo supplies for all the youth in the afterschool program to get the full experience in the cooking demo. This was very exciting for the youth as they each had their own apron, cutting board, safety knives, bowls, chef hats, gloves, etc. The FJC would hold cooking demos with the children ages 5 – 12, showing them

exactly what was going into the meals using the LHTK recipes, and letting them prepare the meals to sample. The children would then sample the meals and take a short survey to decide which new meals would get incorporated into the MMC menus. The cooking demos gave the youth a new hands-on experience to learn about cooking, kitchen safety, and experimenting to try new things. In addition to LHTK recipes, the FJC also came up with their own recipes.

Additionally, starting in 2022, Bronx Health REACH introduced a Snack Attack counter marketing booklet to FJC members. The Snack Attack booklet had been created by Bronx Health REACH with students at CMSP 327 in 2019 to empower students to demand that schools abide by Smart Snack standards for competitive foods sold in schools.

The FJC members really liked the Snack Attack booklet and were interested in getting a better understanding of the local community's perspective on food issues. As a result, in spring 2023, the FJC members conducted surveys in the community with both adults and accompanied youth to find out: what community resources they are utilizing, how they perceive the availability of healthier food options in their community, and what do they and their families do to have a healthier lifestyle. The data and the findings were included in new version of the Snack Attack booklet put together by the FJC.

### Healthy Menu Changes Approved by Youth

As a result of the Lenox Hill training, the MMC Chef reduced the amount of animal protein in the meals and increased vegetable and legume options as a substitute. In alignment with the CHSC goal around foodservice guidelines, this has been something the MMC had been trying to do for a while and it was very exciting to see the changes being made, with the MMC Chef, teens, and children involved every step of the way. The teens

and the 40 children enrolled in the afterschool program are now consuming more than half of the food on their plates.

In addition, through CHSC, the MMC was able to increase the number of participants in the FJC from 5 students to 10 in 2022. Once again in the summer of 2024, a total of 10 FJC members are expected to be a part of the program. Throughout this period, the increased support of FJC has enabled the MMC to bring in more opportunities for the group to try new things, and gain leadership and mentorship skills.

### Expanding the Movement to Bronx Schools

The FJC plans to reach out to local schools to spread more awareness about the Snack Attack booklet and how their peers can encourage their schools to abide by Smart Snack standards for competitive foods sold in schools. Starting with nearby CS 300, the FJC members in partnership with the MMC's partner, Chef Wilson, conducted a cooking demo with the families at the school to share a recipe and ideas on how to prepare healthy culturally relevant meals at home for their families.

During spring 2024, the FJC began working on connecting with the CS 300 student council to start conversations with the students on the school's wellness initiatives and what they can do to improve nutrition policies and practices, using the Snack Attack Booklet as a guide. The goal is for FJC members to create a peer-led campaign for improving the nutrition standards of competitive foods sold in Bronx schools, and ensure that snacks brought into schools are also healthy.

**To learn more about our work:**  
**Visit:** [About Us | The Institute](#)  
**Email:** [Dibernal@institute.org](mailto:Dibernal@institute.org)



## Success Story

# Embracing Connections and Renewal: The Healthy School Partner Network's First In-Person Meeting Since 2020

In a heartwarming return to face-to-face interaction, the Healthy School Partner Network (HSPN) celebrated its first in-person meeting, in May, since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. While virtual platforms helped us to maintain connections, the joy and camaraderie of meeting in person were truly irreplaceable.



The transition from virtual to in-person gatherings began with a cautious approach, initiating discussions during the network's first meeting in September to gauge comfort levels. Through thoughtful polling, conversations and surveys, conducted at intervals throughout the school year, it became clear that members were beyond

eager to reconnect physically, marking a significant step toward normalcy.

Energized and hyped by this enthusiasm, the network embarked on designing a fun, memorable experience for its members. We made the decision to collaborate with the NYC Department of Transportation and NYC Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) to organize a "We Outside" Health Event. This initiative not only celebrated the dedication of network partners but also aimed to foster connections with East Harlem's schools, families, and local businesses.

The partnership with city agencies provided valuable insights and support, laying the groundwork for a successful event. However, the network's vision expanded further when the opportunity arose to spotlight PS/MS 206 in East Harlem and their innovative outdoor learning initiatives designed to enhance physical activity.

PS/MS 206 embraced the chance to showcase their active design spaces during the "We Outside" meeting, demonstrating a commitment to fostering healthier school

## CHSC | Success Story

environments. The event served as a testament to collaboration and community spirit within the Healthy School Partner Network.



We were excited to host the 'We Outside' meeting at PS/MS 206 and receive their support. It was inspiring to see partners engage and activate the space with brain breaks. This allowed our partners to envision similar initiatives with their partner schools.

The event not only celebrated partnership but also symbolized a return to normalcy and the power of in-person connections. From the initial planning stages to witnessing the smiles and lively conversations among partners, the event reaffirmed the network's commitment to creating engaging and impactful meetings.

As the network looks to the future, the success of the "We Outside" Health Event has sparked ideas for continued engagement and learning sessions outdoors. The experience

has ignited enthusiasm for exploring new ways to collaborate and innovate, ensuring that future gatherings are both meaningful and enriching for all involved.

In conclusion, the Healthy School Partner Network's return to in-person meetings marks a significant moment in its journey. It highlights collaboration, creativity, and the strength of our communities. As we navigate the path and what our network looks like moving forward, we remain true to the network's mission to support healthier school environments and foster lasting connections that benefit our partners, and communities alike.

Many thanks to all partners, supporters, and stakeholders. The network looks ahead with optimism and continued support from our community and partners, poised to build on the momentum of this milestone event. Together, we can continue to pave the way for a brighter, healthier future through collaboration, innovation, and heartfelt connections.



## Success Story

# The NYC Healthy School Partner Network Collaborates with Stakeholders to Enhance Wellness in Schools

In a heartwarming return to face-to-face interaction, the Healthy School Partner Network (HSPN) celebrated its first in-person event in May 2024. The Healthy School Partner Network (The Network) is a collection of community-based organizations and agencies that work to improve the health and wellness of the NYC school community. Our goal is to work together on policies and programming to reduce health inequities. The Network works with all New York City Public Schools particularly those in disinvested neighborhoods. Members of the Network include NYC Health Department (Active Design), NYC Department of Education, Asphalt Green, Equity Design and Teachers College Columbia University.



This past year, the network embarked on designing a collaborative event that brought together members to discuss next steps for wellness in schools. Members collaborated

with the NYC Department of Transportation and NYC Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) to organize a "We Outside" event. This event aimed to foster connections with East Harlem's schools, families, and local businesses at the newly constructed outdoor space, by Active Design, at PS/MS 206. Equity Design, a member of the Network, is collaborating with the Active Design team to develop and implement practices that will improve and enhance physical activity for the school.

In addition to using the space for physical activity, the plan is to activate the space as a healthy nutrition environment. The space was built to include garden beds which can be used to demonstrate and cultivate a healthy food environment. Members engaged in discussions on developing practices and policies that will support these actions. The discussion with city agencies provided support, laying the groundwork to assess the school for future implementations on healthy practices for physical activity and nutrition standards.

We were excited to host the 'We Outside' event at PS/MS 206 and receive their support. It was inspiring to see partners engage and activate the space with activities such as brain

## CHSC | Success Story

breaks hosted by a Network partner. Inviting community members and partners to this event provided an opportunity for them to envision similar initiatives with their partner school sites.

The event served as a testament to collaboration and community spirit within the Healthy School Partner Network.



As the network looks to the future, the success of the "We Outside" event has sparked ideas for continued engagement and learning sessions outdoors. The experience has ignited enthusiasm for exploring new ways to activate outdoor spaces for schools ensuring that future gatherings are enriching for all involved.

Many thanks to all partners, supporters, and stakeholders. The network looks ahead with continued support from our community and partners to pave the way for a healthier environment at schools.



# Empowering Healthy Choices through Policy, Practices, and Environmental Changes

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The Onondaga County Health Department’s Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) program partnered with St. Joseph’s Health Hospital to provide a multipronged approach to improving health of their employees. We were able to implement behavioral design techniques within their food pantry, as well as improve the environment of their cafeteria by increasing access to healthy foods, snacks, and beverages within the worksite. St. Joseph’s Health Hospital employs over 3,000 staff members and is dedicated to implementing health initiatives to improve the health of their employees.

*We at St. Joe’s Journey Café have truly enjoyed partnering with Onondaga County Health Department to offer and promote healthy meals & snacks to our colleagues, patients, and visitors. We are especially grateful to OCHD for providing us with a spice station that contributes to our colleagues, patients, and visitors’ long-term health by allowing them to garnish their meals/snacks with spices instead of adding salt. Thank you for supporting us with this wonderful health initiative that started in National Nutrition Month and has continued to be successful long after that due to your industrious efforts!*

*-L. Perreaux, General Manager, Food & Nutrition Services*

## ST. JOSEPH’S HEALTH HOSPITAL IN ACTION



### The Situation

Our introduction to St. Joseph’s Health truly started organically and emphasizes the importance of partnership and community engagement. We were introduced to Eric Stone, Director Community Health and Well-Being, at an American Heart Association Heart Walk through our Tobacco Team. Following the event, we scheduled a meeting with Eric and everything took off from there. We started in the food pantry, and he was quick to sign a policy as it aligned with the Food is Medicine program they were also running. To continue and expand our work Eric suggested staff meet with the Food Service Director, Louie Perreaux, to discuss enhancements to the cafeteria. Staff met with the Food Service Director to discuss food standards and bringing some environmental changes into the cafeteria, with the hopes of obtaining a signed cafeteria policy.



### The Solution

CHSC worked with St. Joseph’s Health Hospital to create environmental, practice and policy changes at the employee food pantry and the cafeteria. In the employee food pantry, the shelves are designed to promote healthier food choices among employees. Staff provided traffic light posters in English and other languages to educate employees on choosing healthful foods (green). A student volunteer created small signs for each food group using a green, yellow, and red-light system from the HERS program, which indicate nutritional information such as added sugar, salt, and saturated fat content. These signs have simplified the process for volunteers stocking shelves, allowing them to quickly verify and place items correctly. Eric is enthusiastic about the new setup, comparing it to a grocery store layout. He believes this

approach not only encourages employees to make healthier choices but also aids him in selecting nutritious foods for the pantry.

The focus in the cafeteria was to modify and enhance the purchase of healthy foods and beverages by the placement and highlighting of the healthy options and offer them at a reasonable price. In addition to the staff that utilize the cafeteria, this location serves a diverse population of hospital visitors. CHSC staff completed installation of the healthy messaging floor decals leading to the healthy food options in open air refrigerators and the salad bar, along with healthy snack and drink posters hung throughout the cafeteria. The flavor station was set up and placed in the cafeteria to encourage using spices and herbs to season foods instead of salt. Following the installation, staff set up an educational table for National Nutrition Month during lunch hours to highlight the flavor station and distribute educational materials about healthy eating and drinking.

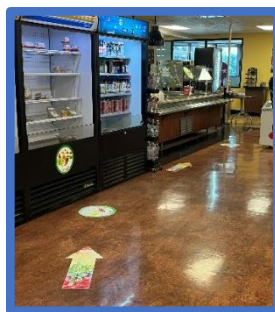


## The Results

St. Joseph Health Hospital has signed a “Healthy Cafeteria Policy” as well as a “Healthy Food Pantry Policy.” They have seen an increase in healthy foods purchased, and the spice station is a huge hit. They have already had to purchase more seasonings to fill up the shakers from the initial start-up funds. The Food Pantry has utilized the HERS program to order and stock healthier items to place on the shelves. The signed policies will create lasting changes to ensure that nutritious foods are consistently sourced for both the food pantry and cafeteria.

## WHAT’S NEXT?

To further enhance our partnership, we will collaborate with the hospital's coffee shop to promote healthier food choices for both patrons and hospital staff. By working closely with the coffee shop management, we can introduce and highlight nutritious options such as fresh fruits, salads, whole grain snacks, and low-sugar beverages. This initiative not only supports the health and well-being of hospital employees and visitors but also aligns with our shared goal of fostering a healthier community. Implementing signage and promotions that educate on the benefits of healthy eating can encourage better dietary decisions among all those who interact with the hospital, thereby promoting a culture of wellness within our local healthcare environment. This partnership exemplifies a proactive approach to community health that we are committed to advancing together.



Left to Right: St. Joseph Health Hospital Employee Food Pantry; Decals highlighting healthy options in the cafeteria; Spice Station to season food.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Contact: Email: [KaraVerbanic@ongov.net](mailto:KaraVerbanic@ongov.net) Website: <https://healthyliving.ongov.net>



Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities



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*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



## Success Story

# math & movement

### Summary

The Orange County Department partnered with Math and Movement to provide training to teachers about the benefits of physical activity while learning.

### Issue

Poor test scores, lack of engagement, COVID-19 learning loss, chronic absenteeism, and math anxiety are all issues that teachers are currently facing among their students. There are also many students within the catchment areas whose second language is English. These students struggle with the previously mentioned issues in combination with pre-existing communication and comprehension issues.

Furthermore, students are sedentary for the majority of their school day. Math & Movement aims to promote a healthy lifestyle while engaging students in learning. The kinesthetic strategies used in the Math & Movement program work to increase students' learning comprehension while also improving physical and mental health. Children love to move, and physical activity can minimize the stress and boredom associated with learning at school.

### Intervention

*“I was blown away how fun you made math. I am so excited to share what I took away from your workshop.”*

Math & Movement helps educators add more movement to the school day through our multi-sensory learning approach. The program incorporates physical exercises, specifically hopping, stretching, cross-body movements, and



yoga, to teach math and literacy concepts. Math & Movement creates large visual aids, including floor mats and stickers, to help educators teach and direct kinesthetic activities.

Movement-based learning intervention can be as simple as skip counting aloud while tapping on desktops or as large as hopping on the colorful 10 ft x 10 ft Add/Subtract Mat. The program has options for incorporating short movement breaks throughout the day or for longer kinesthetic lessons to supplement existing curriculum.

Math & Movement also provides professional development for educators, like the workshop at Orange County BOCES. Other Math & Movement offerings include Family Fun Nights to help schools increase parent and community engagement.

### Outcome

Thanks to the training, 20 educators from the 6 catchment areas left with new kinesthetic strategies in their teaching toolboxes to try out and were given free skip counting mats for students to utilize in the classroom. Many teachers began using the Skip Counting floor mats right away as a brain break and new method of teaching the kids to skip count which covered 20 different classrooms within the 6 school districts. The educators hopped on Skip Counting mats

## CHSC | Success Story

themselves during the training and got a first-hand feel for the kinesthetic activities possible with Math & Movement materials.

Math & Movement is used at public, charter, private, Title 1, rural, and large city schools in almost every US state and parts of Canada. Over 1 million students in grades K-8 have gained confidence in math and literacy using Math & Movement materials and activities.

### Next Steps

CHSC grants can be used to purchase Math & Movement materials. Math & Movement also shares grant opportunities on their website and via email. Virtual training workshops are also held frequently. Visit [mathandmovement.com](http://mathandmovement.com) to find out more.

### To learn more about our work:

#### Visit:

[www.mathandmovement.com](http://www.mathandmovement.com)

#### Email:

[info@mathandmovement.com](mailto:info@mathandmovement.com)

#### View:

[www.youtube.com/@mathandmovement](http://www.youtube.com/@mathandmovement)



# Inclusivity in School Leads to Change

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## SUMMARY

In the third year of the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant (CHSC) in Rockland County, NY (June 1, 2023-May 31, 2024), the North Rockland Central School District (NRCSD) focused on purchasing equipment that would increase access to physical activity for students with special needs. NRCSD recognized the potential for improved quality of life and educational outcomes for students with physical disabilities and by providing adaptive equipment, the school district's commitment to inclusivity and support for all students, regardless of ability, was strengthened.

*The steps we've taken this year with the support of the CHSC grant shined light on the ways the district could improve. - Dr. Kris Felicello, Superintendent*

## ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT IN ACTION



### The Situation

In the first two years of CHSC in Rockland County, NY, NRCSD's physical education coordinator initiated a biking education program for the physical education curriculum, totaling approximately \$60,828. Initially, 90 mountain bikes and helmets plus accessories and a bike storage shed were purchased to introduce middle and high school students to mountain biking through their physical education (PE) classes. In the second year, grant funds were used to divide 75 balance bikes among the three early elementary school PE programs. It was immediately clear that the bikes were very well received among students and PE teachers alike, and that the program could easily grow.

While most students benefited from riding the new bikes, it was apparent that students with physical disabilities faced seemingly insurmountable barriers to joining in. There were students with mobility issues who were unable to participate in some of these school activities due to the lack of suitable adaptive equipment. It was decided that solving this problem was the direction in which to grow.



### The Solution

A guiding principle of the CHSC grant is diversity, equity and inclusion and an objective of the funding is to support development of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program for all. To that end, when additional grant funds became available in the third year, it was earmarked for adaptive equipment that would facilitate participation in physical activity for students with special needs. CHSC staff and district

administrators agreed they wanted students with special needs at all grade levels to have the opportunity to bike and benefit from a variety of physical activity during school with their peers. The CHSC school coordinator consulted with the district's Special Services Director to identify the equipment most needed to support participation as well as align with grant objectives.

Adaptive tricycles and specialized chairs were chosen because they are proven to promote physical activity, enhance movement skills, improve overall well-being for individuals with disabilities, and support the grant objectives. A total of seven Rifton adaptive trikes and accessories were purchased, one for each of seven schools K-12, for a total of \$19,684. A total of 22 Rifton Compass Chairs costing \$8,856 were distributed among all the schools K-12 for use as needed in classrooms and PE classes. The specialized chairs provide a height-adjustable, contoured seat with arm rests and straps to stabilize a student's legs and torso so the user can participate better in activities with their classmates, including physically active "brain breaks" and active lessons, to the extent possible.

Additionally, a social communication picture board was installed in an elementary school playground. The board helps children express themselves to peers and teachers thereby fostering appropriate interactions and a safe and an inclusive environment for communal active play.

This equipment was successfully integrated into the school environment by working with key stakeholders that included students with special needs, school administrators, special education teachers, physical and occupational therapists, parents and advocates, and the CHSC School Coordinator. This multisector collaboration ensured that the equipment not only met the parameters of the grant but also the needs of the students. These new tools were easily incorporated into existing educational and recreational programs showing the district's willingness to address equity and inclusivity for students.

*My students LOVE the bikes! Most of my students have never ridden bikes before, so they are so excited to ride them. I even use them as motivators and as a reward. Imagine rewarding a student with exercise!!*  
*Sheri Serra, School Physical Therapist*



## The Results

The intervention involved purchasing adaptive tricycles, specialized adaptable chairs, and a playground communication board for use by students with disabilities to enhance their mobility and participation at school. The tricycles of varying and appropriate sizes have accessories that allow students to engage in physical activity and outdoor play, promoting both physical health and social interaction with their friends. The specialized chairs provide a comfortable, supportive, and safe seating option that improves students' abilities to participate in activities. Each school was given several chairs for use in the classroom and gymnasium, as needed.

Now, students with physical disabilities have access to adaptive tricycles for PE, recreation, and school-based physical and occupational therapy sessions. Students with physical challenges have access to the specialized chairs in the classroom which allows them to participate in classroom-based physical activity along with their peers. These tools have been integrated into daily activities resulting in enhanced student participation in school and community life. The original situation involved barriers to mobility and participation, whereas now, students experience improved access and inclusion.

The CHSC and school staff set out to address a need by providing adaptive equipment for students with mobility challenges. They could not have foreseen the much broader impact this project would have. In fact, integration of adaptive tricycles, chairs and communication boards resulted in highlighting the necessity of equity and inclusion for all students to thrive. The personal and systemic benefits became evident to district administrators and strengthened their commitment to equity and inclusion within the school district. Near the end of the school year, the Superintendent spearheaded the All Access Team to evaluate accessibility in each building and to ultimately make recommendations for improvements in policy, infrastructure and funding sources.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Currently in its nascency, the All Access Team is expected to evolve to become a diverse body with educators, students and potentially others who will provide feedback to the school district on how to improve accessibility within its purview. Superintendent Felicello stressed, "it is a priority for the district to break down barriers that may prevent students and families from participating fully in district events and programs." To start, Dr. Felicello has identified the need to add sidewalk cut outs and improve the location of the handicapped parking areas on campuses as easy improvements with big impact. Dr. Felicello also expressed openness to making inclusion-related policy and infrastructure changes informed by the findings of the All Access Team.

### To learn more:

Contact: Carrie Steindorff, CHSC School Coordinator  
Email: [steindoc@co.rockland.ny.us](mailto:steindoc@co.rockland.ny.us)

#### Playground Communication Board



Photo courtesy of [Smarty Symbols](#).

#### Adaptive Tricycle



Photo © 2017 by [Rifton Equipment](#).  
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#### Adaptive Chairs



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*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



## Success Story

### Venison Donation Program Sees First Year Success

#### Local hunters take aim at hunger.

Seneca County Health Department, with subcontractor Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension (SCCCE), worked under the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) Grant to promote the launch of the Venison Donation Program in Seneca County. Finger Lakes Meat Processing located in Romulus now participates with the Venison Donation Coalition to accept, process, and package deer meat that is then distributed to the County's food pantries through the Food Recovery Program.

#### Food insecure residents rely on local food pantries.

Data from the 2021 Feeding America Map the Gap report show that food insecurity affects 12% of Seneca County residents, and 17% of Seneca County children. Food pantry data from FoodLink also shows that an increased number of households were served in 2023 compared to 2022, indicating that access to food is still a pressing issue in Seneca County.

Pivotal Public Health Partnership conducted a series of cross-sectional surveys across the eight-county network, which includes Seneca County, in the Spring of 2023 to assess regional food security and healthy eating trends. Survey responses show that the percent of households reporting food insecurity rose from 26% in 2019 to a staggering 61% in 2023. With this increase we also saw a rise in food pantry utilization, increasing from 14% pre-COVID to 33% in 2022–2023. Additionally, 50% of food insecure households report obtaining food from food pantries, indicating that these services

are essential in supporting families facing food insecurity.



#### Transforming a renewable natural resource into nutritious food for those less fortunate and in need

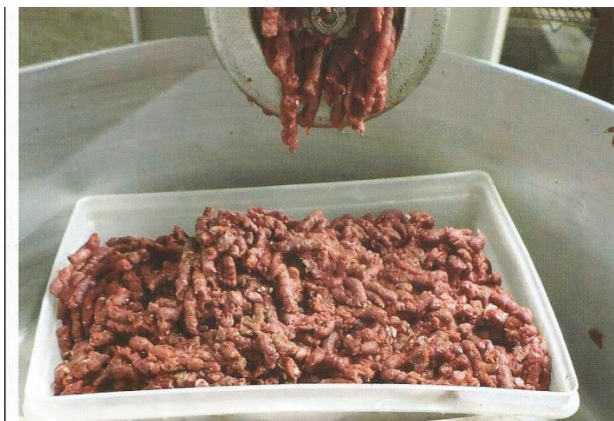
The Pantry Project was started in 1999 by the Venison Donation Coalition of Western and Central New York to get NYS deer meat to those in need. Hunters are now able to donate an entire or portion of a harvested deer to the Venison Donation Coalition at a participating processor at no cost to the hunter.

As of the 2023-2024 hunting season Seneca County now has their first participating processor, Finger Lakes Meat Processing, located on NY-336 in Romulus. The CHSC grant and SCCCE supported the processor in joining and promoting the program. The introductory year of program availability in Seneca County included donations that resulted in 328 pounds of lean, ground venison that were processed into 1-pound packages. Once the meat was processed, Community Action Program (CAP) picked up the packages and distributed them across the County

to all 7 food pantries, benefiting the lives of hundreds of families.

***“We live in a wonderful county. It is amazing to see neighbors feeding neighbors. This program has made a difference in the lives of many people still struggling to feed their families” said CHSC Project Director, Sara Flack.***

The Spring 2023 Pivotal survey found that 17% of respondents felt the food provided by pantries did not help them to eat healthy meals, with one of the main reasons being a lack of meat. Pantries had been struggling with having enough meat products to satisfy the needs of their clients. Food pantry directors shared their overwhelming gratitude for the individuals that donated their deer this season, stating that the venison was distributed to needy families just as quickly as it was available.



### **Farmers and gardeners have a role to play too!**

While food insecurity is still an issue impacting the lives of Seneca County residents, the Health Department and community partners are working together to offer creative solutions. As we approach the start of the 2024 hunting season, we will continue to promote the Venison Donation Program with the goal of increasing the number of pounds of donated venison from last season.

Meat is not the only food item needed, however. Food insecure households have also reported that they eat less fruits and vegetables than food

secure households. Another CHSC initiative is the “Plant a Row for Pantries” project which urges farmers and local gardeners to plant an additional row of crops to donate to their local pantry. 2024 will be year 2 of this springtime initiative, which saw success in 2023.

### **Stepping to the plate to support Seneca County**

Lead is a known neurotoxin that is especially harmful to women and children. If possible, consider hunting with a bow or non-lead ammunition, as lead bullets have been shown to fragment upon impact. Non-lead ammunition has many benefits including being less prone to fragmentation, yielding more high-quality meat, and reducing the risk of harming other wildlife.

There are many ways you can help feed those less fortunate. Please consider donating a deer this coming season to the Venison Donation Coalition to ensure that healthy deer meat is provided directly to Seneca County food pantries. Tax-deductible charitable contributions may also be made to the Venison Donation Coalition to support the program. For recipes and nutritional information about venison, wild game, and fish, visit The Wild Harvest Table at [www.wildharvesttable.com](http://www.wildharvesttable.com).

Looking for other ways to help your local food pantries? They are always looking for volunteers and accept cash donations.

### **For more information, please contact:**

**Sara Flack**

**Project Director, Creating Healthy Schools and Communities**

**Email: [sflack@co.seneca.ny.us](mailto:sflack@co.seneca.ny.us)**

## Success Story

# Waterloo Little League Hits a Home Run with Healthy Snacks this Season!

### Seneca County Health Department supports healthy nutrition at local little league

The Seneca County Health Department (SCHD) has partnered with the Waterloo Little League to enhance menu options in the league's concession stand for the 2024 season. Funding through the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) grant provided by NYS Department of Health and administered by the Seneca County Health Department supported upgraded equipment, and staff collaborated to enhance the menu and develop Food Service Guidelines.

### Healthy eating is a struggle for families on the go.

It is recommended that children receive a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity every day. While physical education (PE) class plays a key role in developing skills and meeting this recommendation, the NY State Education Department requires just 90-120 minutes of PE class over the course of a week. Organized youth sports, like Little League, can help children reach the recommended number of minutes. Many children and their families spend multiple nights each week at the ball fields. Busy family schedules mean dinner often takes place at the field as well, but concession stand menus do not always have the most nutritious options available.

High fat, high sodium, calorie-dense foods that are shelf-stable and easy to prepare are often the staple items in concession stands. Typical concession stand menus offer items such as hamburgers, hotdogs, French fries, mozzarella

sticks, and a variety of processed snacks and candies.

While completing a Food Service Guideline assessment tool, the Waterloo Little League was able to identify some areas of improvement. Prior to the 2024 season, the concession stand did not offer any fruit or vegetable options, low-fat or fat-free dairy options, or any whole grain products. Processed foods being stocked and sold by the concession stand contained large amounts of sodium, trans fats, and calories making them calorie dense and low-nutrient foods.



**CHSC Project Director, Sara Flack, stopped in to lend a hand at the updated concession stand.**

### Healthier concession stands reimagined.

Waterloo Little League has partnered with the Seneca County Health Department, utilizing the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant, to reimagine a healthier concession stand at their ballpark. With no formal written food guidelines or

nutrition standards the concession stand has turned to USDA’s Smart Snacks guidelines for their packaged snacks.

Smart Snacks in School guidelines is a tool for offering and promoting healthier snacks. To keep consistent messaging with snacks children are offered at school, the Little League is using the Smart Snack guidelines in the concession stand. New options added to the menu include 100% juice, string cheese, yogurt, baked chips, and grilled chicken. Additionally, drinking water and fresh fruit were made available at no charge.

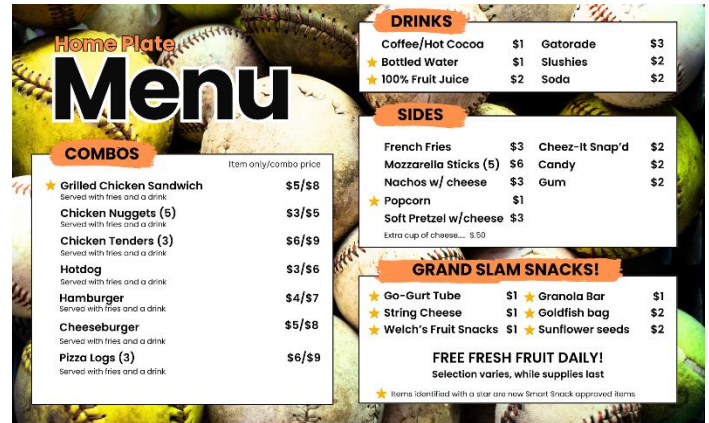
*“We were so excited to be able to offer healthy options to our players, families, and volunteers. The health and well-being of our little league community is always at the heart of what we do.”*  
**Said Tim Smith, Waterloo Little League Board President**

With the new menu came a need for new equipment. Little League worked with the SCHD to purchase a new merchandiser refrigerator, reach-in freezer, display rack, and countertop fruit baskets. The newly reconfigured concession stand also features 2 digital menu boards that highlight the new options and display nutrition messaging. Nutrition information is also accessible to consumers via a QR code for all products.

### Board adopted written Food Service Guidelines

Written Food Service Guidelines (FSGs) were adopted by the league’s board of directors that include a minimum percentage of items to meet Smart Snack guidelines. FSGs also addressed the marketing and pricing of healthy food items.

Making a healthy order has become an easier decision for players, families, and spectators at the Waterloo Little League fields in the 2024 season. Grilled chicken sandwiches seem to be especially popular as a dinner option for families looking to avoid the excess fat and sodium of a fried chicken alternative.



Updated menu highlights Smart Snack options.

### Looking ahead to next season

Upgrade plans for the 2025 season are already being considered. Bread products, like rolls and buns, may be switched to whole wheat products. While many popular fried foods (French fries, chicken tenders, and mozzarella sticks) remain on the menu, the preparation method can be adjusted. Utilizing an air fryer as opposed to the deep fryer will not only make the items healthier, but it also can reduce the costs and safety concerns associated with operating a commercial deep fryer.

Other preparation changes include soft pretzels with salt upon request or on the side, popcorn prepared with limited oil, butter, and salt, and condiments given on the side or made available to the customer to portion to their liking.

Interested in joining the Waterloo Little League board to support this initiative and general operations? Check out the Waterloo Little League Facebook page for information on how to get involved with the local league. Visit usda.gov to learn more about Smart Snack guidelines.

For more information, please contact:

**Sara Flack**

Project Director, Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

Email: [sflack@co.seneca.ny.us](mailto:sflack@co.seneca.ny.us)



## Spikeball Professional Development

### A NEW SPORT SOLVES AN OLD PROBLEM

*St Peter's Health Partners is working with eight school districts and their surrounding communities to reduce childhood obesity. By increasing access during the school day to physical activities, and developing new strategies to address logistical barriers, young children are reaping the benefits of the New York State Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities initiative.*

*["I am so impressed! The trainer was not only patient and very knowledgeable, but he was fun too! I feel so much more confident to introduce my new students to the game, but also re-teach my old students with new ways for them to grow their skillset." – Middle School PE Teacher]*

### SCHOOLS IN ACTION



#### A Scheduling Dilemma in the Gym

Mechanicville Elementary School's physical education (PE) teachers habitually faced barriers with their annual 2-week volleyball unit, leaving both teachers and students disappointed at lost instruction time. The gym was often needed for special purposes – such as testing or picture day – which took precedence over volleyball lessons.

The teachers report that many elementary school students not only enjoy volleyball but the game also teaches important skills that can be applied to other areas of their life, such as collaboration, discipline, and communication skills. But not all students are disappointed when volleyball must be cancelled. In fact, some feel relieved because they experience discomfort with the sport's skillset, which includes striking, passing, and defensive skills. This secondary concern was also on our minds when we considered strategies to resolve the gym-scheduling impasse.

Our team began working with Mechanicville Elementary School staff during year 2 of the grant and continued in year 3 to implement an effective, sustainable solution.



## A New Way to Grow Important Life-long Skills

After discussing various options with Mechanicville school administration, our team realized we had an alternative: *change what the PE teachers do*. In other words, could teachers sidestep the conflict entirely by choosing a different sport that would still offer volleyball-related skills? We reached out to Mechanicville High School PE teachers to see what they use in the course of their lessons. That's how we learned about Spikeball, a new sport.

Spikeball is played by hitting a ball hand down on a small trampoline-type net placed horizontally. Two teams of players compete by hitting a ball in such a way that the opposing team is not able to return it. The game can be played at any age and level, and just about anywhere. It requires minimal setup.

At a PE conference, I was able to:

- Secure a discount code for kits that enabled us to purchase a sufficient number of Spikeball equipment kits for Mechanicville Elementary School in Year 2
- Connect with a trainer to provide professional development on Spikeball in Year 3 to teach PE teachers and address their concerns, especially elementary school teachers. The trainer would also demonstrate variations of Spikeball to accommodate the needs of all abilities.



## PE Teachers Gain Knowledge and Confidence

This spring, St. Peter's Health Partners hosted a professional development day for Mechanicville PE teachers of all grade levels and invited PE teachers from other CHSC-approved schools. Each school that attended the training received printed materials that provide directions on different variations of the sport. In addition, Mechanicville Elementary School received complete Spikeball equipment kits.

Spikeball is now played during what was traditionally the volleyball unit. Students can play Spikeball every day of the unit independent of the need to schedule other activities in the gym. PE teachers report more student engagement during Spikeball activity time and an exponential increase after the professional development day.

## A SUSTAINABLE, ADAPTABLE APPROACH FOR STUDENTS OF ALL ABILITIES

The teachers said the professional development training helped to build confidence in their ability to introduce the new sport to students in such a way that they were quickly engaged. In addition, the training helps them adapt the game for students who have different physical needs.

Students will now be developing/practicing Spikeball skills throughout their entire academic career at Mechanicville CSD. District administrators are also looking to establish a Spikeball Club at the high school level and hope to garner local college support.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Contact: Latanya Christian, Community Relations Liaison

[Latanya.Christian@sphp.com](mailto:Latanya.Christian@sphp.com)

Website: [www.healthprograms.org](http://www.healthprograms.org)

Social media: [Community Health Programs | Albany NY | Facebook](#)



*PE teachers engage with professional Spikeball trainer to learn new techniques and fully maximize their Spikeball equipment with their students.*



Creating Healthy Schools  
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ST PETER'S HEALTH  
PARTNERS

Community Health Programs

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



## A New Sport That Solves An Old Problem

### PROJECT SUMMARY

St Peter's Health Partners is working with eight school districts and their surrounding communities to reduce childhood obesity. By increasing access during the school day to physical activities, and developing new strategies to address logistical barriers, young children are reaping the benefits of the New York State Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities initiative.

### [STRATEGY] IN ACTION



#### The Situation

Mechanicville Elementary School's PE teachers provide a brief, 2-week volleyball unit every year that students not only enjoy but also teaches important skills that can be applied to other areas of their life, such as collaboration, discipline, and communication skills.

Unfortunately, the gym is often used for special purposes that take precedence over the scheduled volleyball lessons. Students are disappointed. Teachers are frustrated.

But not all students are disappointed. In fact, some feel relieved because they experience discomfort with the sport's skillset, which includes striking, passing, and defensive skills. This issue was also on our minds when we considered possible solutions to the gym-scheduling impasse.



#### The Solution

After discussing various options with Mechanicville school administration to address the scheduling conflict, I realized we had an alternative: *change what the PE teachers do*. In other words, could teachers sidestep the conflict entirely by choosing a different sport that would still offer volleyball-related skills? We reached out to Mechanicville High School PE teachers to see what they use in the course of their lessons. That's how we learned about Spikeball, a new sport.

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## The Results

Spikeball is now played during what was traditionally the volleyball unit. Students can play Spikeball every day of the unit independent of the need to schedule other activities in the gym. PE teachers report more student engagement during Spikeball activity time and an exponential increase after the professional development day.

The teachers also said the professional development training helped to build confidence in their ability to introduce the new sport to students in such a way that they were quickly engaged. In addition, the training helps them adapt the game for students who have different physical needs.

## What's Next?

Students will now be practicing their Spikeball skills throughout their entire academic career at Mechanicville CSD. District administrators are also looking to establish a Spikeball Club at the high school level and hope to garner local college support.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Contact: Latanya Christian, Community Relations Liaison

[Latanya.Christian@sphp.com](mailto:Latanya.Christian@sphp.com)

Website: [www.healthprograms.org](http://www.healthprograms.org)

Social media: [Community Health Programs](#) | [Albany NY](#) | [Facebook](#)



[Photographs bring the story to life. They allow you to portray your work visually and better “explain” technical activities in a compelling, engaging, and artistic way. Use this space to caption the photos you insert above and describe what is happening in the story.]



**Creating Healthy Schools  
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PARTNERS**

Community Health Programs

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



# Centering Educators: A Day of Mindfulness

## A novel approach to managing stress and enhancing overall sense of well-being:

St. Peter's Health Partners (SPHP), in collaboration with Capital Roots, is working with eight school districts and their surrounding communities to reduce childhood obesity. With the promotion of healthful eating, increasing physical activity levels, and creating environments, people of all ages and abilities are reaping the benefits of the New York State Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities initiative.

## Educators face burnout more than any other professions:

It is not surprising that educators face burnout more than many other professions; in fact, in the four years since the COVID-19 pandemic began, prevalence has only gotten worse (38.29% in 2019 vs 52% in 2022).

According to recent studies, teachers may experience job-related burnout for a variety of reasons, including inadequate resources, challenging student behaviors, and overwhelming amounts of paperwork. Difficult circumstances during the pandemic years – virtual education, strict hygienic measures and social distancing protocols – introduced a previously unknown layer of stress, adding to the already complex demands of teaching. It was, in effect, a perfect storm.

Additionally, some teachers feel enormous pressure to help their students achieve academic success. Unfortunately, there is often little support given to achieve these important goals.

Evidence suggests that when teachers are stressed, the quality of their instruction, classroom



Photo Credit: Courtney Weisberg, SPHP

Breathe for Change wellness session at the Troy City high school's professional development day on March 15, 2024.

management, and relationships with students suffer. In other words, students tend to be more stressed when their teachers are! Unfortunately, teachers who face unrelenting stress may not have the capacity to address students' stress, manifesting as inappropriate classroom behavior.

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions and yet prolonged stress has been correlated with anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion. Is it any wonder that prolonged stress also correlates with experienced teachers leaving the profession?

With this in mind, SPHP recently partnered with one inner-city school district to “teach the teachers” a new lesson: a novel approach to enhancing a sense of well-being.

## Mindfulness-based training for annual professional development day:

Teacher burnout occurs as a result of stress that never subsides. Recognizing the value of taking proactive steps to keep their great teachers teaching, educators with Troy City High School expressed the need for additional stress

management resources. To this end, they decided to focus their March 2024 Professional Development Day on wellness. In addition to the day's 'required' training in the morning, the teachers planned an afternoon packed with fun wellness-related development activities, partnering with a number of local organizations to help teachers grow and students learn.

CHSC contributed to the day by supporting a mindfulness-based training called **Breathe for Change (BFC)**.

Developed for teachers, Breathe for Change is a researched-backed program that blends mindfulness, yoga, psychology and neuroscience. Through various trainings, the program focuses on developing a school-wide culture of social-emotional learning (SEL) and wellness.

Professional Development Day at Troy City High School included (3) 45-minute BFC sessions – each limited to no more than 20 participants. Each session included:

- An introductory discussion about mindfulness
- Breathwork
- Mindfulness exercises
- Meditation
- Calming yoga poses

*“Investing in an educator’s well-being goes so far. This event not only made their voices heard, but it also gave them tools to use immediately, both for themselves and their students.”*

*-Leanna Komoroske*

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### Positive feedback from all, with interest for continued learning:

Overall, feedback from the Troy educators was very positive. Many teachers saw the material as relevant and supportive of their work, even those who had been somewhat dubious prior to the training.

Key takeaways included that SEL at the secondary level is important; mindfulness activities can be effective in just a few minutes; and by focusing on their own well-being, teachers will ultimately be able to support their students' well-being as well.

Based on a post-evaluation, many attendees are interested in learning more about the ways that mindfulness can help to reduce stress.

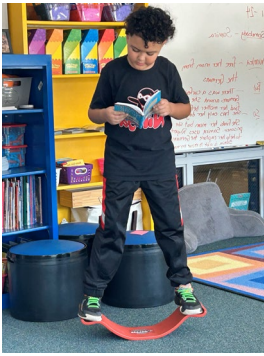
### Commitment to incorporating wellness techniques into the classroom and district:

Moving forward, the Troy educators are committed to incorporating their wellness learnings into the classroom as administrators discuss the possibility of a district-wide implementation plan. This would include a more robust SEL curriculum and incorporating brain breaks and mindfulness into the classroom setting across all grades.

SPHP and CHSC look forward to further engagement with the Troy City School District to support their educators and students.

To learn more about our work:  
Visit: [www.healthprograms.org](http://www.healthprograms.org)

Email: [Leanna.Komoroske@sphp.com](mailto:Leanna.Komoroske@sphp.com)



# Active Classroom, Successful Students

## A CLASSROOM IN ACTION

**Toby\* bounds into Mrs. S.'s classroom, grabbing a book from the bright blue shelf with one hand and a wobble board from the stack on the floor with the other.** “It’s the next one in the series!”, this fourth grader exclaims with a bright smile as he steadies himself on the board. After that there is only silence, save for a slight creak in the floor as he moves side to side on the board, and the barely discernible sound of turning pages. When the bell rings 30 minutes later, he has read two chapters, active the entire time.

**As Toby leaves the room, eight first graders enter, heading right for the active floor mat** spread at the end of a long row of bookcases. “Lowercase letters today!”, Mrs. S announces, signaling four students to begin. As soon as the projected image of a tiled game board appears on the mat, this first set of students hop from one tile to another. As they land on each one, the plain colored tile quickly changes to show a lowercase letter. The students hop quickly too, calling out “Little a, lowercase q!”, as they go.

**Later, six second and third graders arrive, each pulling a different style of active seating around a low table.** Some choose a metal desk chair outfitted with wobble feet, others get comfortable on a stool that moves with the students. Mrs. S. leads a language arts lesson, as students read and respond while they swivel and bounce. When the lesson concludes, one student asks, “May we?”, eyeing giant games tucked under a row of windows. With a “yes, you may” from Mrs. S., the students pull out a heavy game case with wooden blocks, lifting and balancing to build a tower almost as tall as the students themselves.

*“Our students thrive when they learn through movement – they stay on task, remember more, and develop a positive association with academics.”*

**“Active learning makes a real difference.”**, Mrs. S. remarks. “Our students thrive when learning through movement – they stay on task, remember more, and develop a positive association with academics. For the past few years we especially look forward to the consonant blend lessons each spring, featuring fruit smoothies made with the blender bike!”



## COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT HEALTH & LEARNING

These typical scenes from Mrs. S.'s reading classroom at Clifton-Fine Central School (CFCS) illustrate seamless integration of physical activity into the school day, highlighting the district's commitment to student wellness and overall school success in a challenging landscape. CFCS's one building district in St. Lawrence County is located in an area classified as both rural and remote. With a total K-12 student population under 250, 71% of students are identified as economically disadvantaged and 95% are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. A vast geographic region with limited transportation options makes accessing nutritious food, physical activity facilities, and other health-supporting opportunities a significant barrier for many. Lack of access negatively impacts wellbeing and school success.



Through an enduring partnership with the Health Initiative's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities project, the district is taking practical steps to combat these challenges and support health and learning. The link between physical activity and school success is strong, from cognitive function to school connectedness. CFCS's wellness committee meets regularly to assess, update, and implement the district's local school wellness policy. As part of the project, the district receives sustainable supplies such as active seating, giant games, and a blender bike to bring the policy to life.

This collaboration offers equitable opportunities for all students to benefit from systems and environments supportive of whole child wellbeing and overall school success. Because the local wellness policy is approved by the Board of Education at the district level, it impacts each and every student. This includes the entire elementary population of approximately 120 students who have regular access to Mrs. S.'s classroom. Each of these students, including Toby reading on the wobble board, now has an improved likelihood of enjoying school success and developing healthy habits that last a lifetime.

*\*Names and some details have been changed.*

## TO LEARN MORE

St. Lawrence County Health Initiative, Inc. (Health Initiative)

health@gethealthyslc.org - 315.261.4760 - gethealthyslc.org - @healthinitiative



Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities  
in St. Lawrence County



*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*

## Active People Healthy Wayne, partners with Child Care Counsel and Cornell Cooperative Extension to offer support to in home childcare providers.



In Wayne County where over 90,000 people live, you would expect to find more than 14 registered in-home private childcare providers. Unfortunately for parents and caregivers going to work or school, the lack of daycare providers is the predicament in which they were left. An ongoing result of the COVID 19 pandemic in New York State is the number of childcare centers that have closed their doors. Active People Healthy Wayne (APHW) is dedicated to determining where we could provide additional support to the overworked and highly needed private in-home childcare providers.

*Active People Healthy Wayne collaborates with private in-home childcare providers in Wayne County, NY to support positive changes in policies, practices, and behaviors.*

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SETTINGS IN ACTION



### The Situation

Wayne County has one of the highest obesity rates in New York State. APHW began contacting all the registered in-home childcare providers in September 2023. Collaborating with the Child Care Council and Cornell Cooperative Extension, we identified four providers who wanted to participate in our program to improve practices and policies regarding nutrition and physical activity. Each provider completed an assessment called the Wellness Workbook to assess their practices surrounding physical activity, nutrition, screen time, family engagement and staff wellness. Once the assessment was completed, APHW collaborated with each provider to identify areas of improvement, establish goals to implement best practices, and develop or enhance day care policies. The goal was to create a healthy environment for the children, families, and childcare workers in which everyone could thrive.



### The Solution

After each provider identified their goals, APHW provided trainings and technical assistance. We were able to provide Physical Activity and Learning Session (PALS) and Nourishing Healthy Eaters (NHE) trainings. PALS is a comprehensive training that teaches physical activity best practices for early childcare settings. We discussed barriers within childcare settings and how to overcome them. We also offered guidance on how to be inclusive with families and strengthen family engagement, as a caregiver is a child's first teacher. NHE is a training focused on the best practices for feeding infants and children in early childcare settings. We discussed how childcare providers play a vital role in promoting optimal nutrition and supporting a child's development of healthy eating patterns that sets a healthy foundation for healthful eating as they grow. We also discussed the importance of breast/chest feeding for infants and how to properly store breast milk. The training discussed ways to help support breast/chest feeding families and how to make it a positive experience for everyone involved. The childcare providers shared challenges with each other and discussed possible solutions to those challenges. With this we were able to provide another means of support by gathering the four providers together at the same training. During both the PALS and NHE trainings, we discussed how to create an action plan to implement policies to help each provider reach their identified goals.



## The Results

After the providers took the training sessions, APHW was able to offer various implementation materials to support increased physical activity and healthy eating. To help the providers reach their physical activity goals within their daycare, we provided play tunnels, balls, scooters, bike helmets, ring toss sets, hula hoops, a yoga and learn set and other various physical activity items. The providers shared the children’s enjoyment of all the new toys and reported that the kids have increased their activity while having fun with new toys. All the providers received child-sized kitchen utensils and easy-pour pitchers, USDA MyPlate plates, and cups with portion size information. They also received several books about healthy eating. The children are now able to participate in family-style dining with the appropriate child-sized items. The childcare providers all received a water pump to put on a 5-gallon water jug to allow all the children easier and independent access to drinking water. The providers also each received a small indoor growing vegetable kit to educate the kids about the process of growing food. As a result, the children have shown an increased curiosity about where food comes from and how it grows. The daycare children have started trying more fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious foods. We worked with each provider to help them create their action plan and implement policies in their daycare that reflect best practices for nutrition and physical activity in early childcare settings.

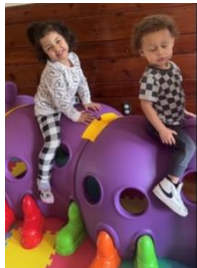
## WHAT’S NEXT?

APHW, Child Care Council, and Cornell Cooperative Extension continue to be available to offer support and to check in on the progress of the childcare providers. After completion of the assessment and the training, each provider was offered to select up to \$250.00 worth of implementation items that specifically target their health or fitness goals within their program. Some of the items included a highchair for feeding infants, kitchen equipment, scooters, a soccer net and soccer balls, and several other items promoting healthy eating and physical activity practices. We will do a review of the wellness workbook in the coming grant years to see what progress has been made, what was most helpful, and what we can do better. We will continue to offer support to ensure the childcare providers are able to effectively reach the health and wellness goals they have set.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Email: [fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW](mailto:fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW)

Phone: 315-333-4155 ext 3207



**Creating Healthy Schools and Communities**



**ACTIVE PEOPLE HEALTHY WAYNE**  
A Division of Finger Lakes Community Action



*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



Stock Photo

# Lyons Elementary School



## PROJECT SUMMARY

The Active People Healthy Team (APHW) has partnered with Lyons Central School District to improve their Wellness Policy, as well as to help the Lyons Elementary School improve recess time for students. As with many schools, Lyons Elementary is still recovering from the impacts of the COVID pandemic and it has manifested in increased bullying and negative attitudes, especially during recess. The team worked closely with the school to identify solutions that would provide a diverse range of activities to keep them engaged and active during recess while decreasing negative behavior and attitudes.

## SCHOOL STRATEGIES IN ACTION



### The Situation

According to the 2023 Census Report, Wayne County has approximately 90,829 residents with a median household income of \$71,000. The disparity of communities continues to worsen with current inflation and lasting effects of the pandemic including loss of instruction time, decrease in socialization and healthy relationship building skills. When the APHW Team approached the school in September 2023, they were grateful to collaborate and find ways to help their kids get healthier physically, mentally, and socially. Through discussions and meetings Lyons Elementary School identified their recess time could benefit from focused improvement provided by our team. Many of the students have attended the school for many years and the items available are the same every day and year after year which leads to boredom and with boredom can come negativity.



### The Solution

The goal was to help Lyons Central School District find ways to improve their Wellness Policy and to help develop a plan to improve negative attitudes and bullying during recess. The team worked closely with the school to identify ideas and decided that to help with negative attitudes, we should provide students with more activities to keep them engaged and find new fun ways to build healthy relationships while keeping them active. Keeping students engaged with new activities and continual fun helps to decrease boredom that leads to negative attitudes.

Lyons Central School District also invited the APHW team to evaluate their Wellness Policy using the Well Stat 3.0 tool. The team identified areas where the school could improve on the policy and are currently working with them on implementation.



## The Results

After brainstorming collaboratively, the school decided to install a Gaga Pit and a kick dart game to add to the recess area when the weather is appropriate. Lyons Elementary School also put together indoor activity recess carts for every classroom in the school to use during inclement weather days. The district also put together several healthy celebrations carts to teach the children that there are healthy options to enjoy birthdays or other special occasions. Lyons Central School District also requested an Active People Healthy Wayne team member join the school's Health and Wellness Committee to help support them while they work on improvements. The team member attends meetings and helps motivate and supports the school and committee as needed.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Once all equipment is in place and in working order, it will be important to monitor behavior to ensure the desired outcomes are successful. If students' behavior improves and bullying and negative behavior decrease it will be important to continue to maintain engaging equipment for students during recess. Seeing the full results of the project and sharing it with the community will be a great way to get the buy-in to continue to improve facilities and keep students engaged. The APHW team will continue to work closely with Lyons Central School District to make improvements for all Lyons Elementary students.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Email: [fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW](mailto:fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW)

Phone: 315-333-4155 ext 3207

Kick Dart



Photo courtesy of  
Melissa Kersten



Stock photo



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*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*

# North Rose Emergency Food Pantry



Stock photo

## PROJECT SUMMARY

North Rose Emergency Food Pantry is run by the volunteers from the North Rose United Methodist Church. Active People Healthy Wayne (APHW) partnered with the North Rose Food Pantry to work on food service guidelines in community settings. The North Rose community struggles with many economic disparities, including poverty and a lack of resources. This is compounded by the fact that North Rose is also considered a food desert, and there are only three pickups per day from local public transit, limiting access to those without transportation to shopping and other community resources. While conducting the assessment of the food pantry it was found that the location in the church was not wheelchair accessible and the shelving was not in good condition. The pantry had broken plastic shelves and had a 30-year-old refrigerator. The pantry was desperately looking at how they could continue to serve the local community while struggling with internal challenges. When we approached the North Rose Food Pantry in November of 2023 and offered our partnership and support, they stated it was an answered prayer.

## FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS IN ACTION



### The Situation

North Rose Food Pantry began as a blessing box in front of the church. As the needs grew bigger over the years, the church decided to open an indoor food pantry with a donated refrigerator and donated plastic shelving units. North Rose United Methodist Church viewed the food pantry as an opportunity to build community relationships and to serve and minister to its residents. The food pantry was in a small closet in the church that was approximately a 5 by 12-foot area. There was only room for one person to be in the food pantry at a time. This created difficulties for the patrons as well as the volunteers. The pantry was so small the church did not have the storage space to participate in the Foodlink program, a regional food bank that also offers programs to address the root causes of hunger. The pantry relies on public donations and a small fund provided by the church. The pantry was not only difficult for the volunteers to work in due to lack of space, but it was also not accessible to people using wheelchairs or walkers or to people who struggled with mobility on the stairs. The North Rose Food Pantry volunteers were also interested in learning about creating healthy nutrition policies and implementing behavioral design strategies to make the environment healthier and to improve its day-to-day operations.



### The Solution

After completing the assessment of the pantry, we concluded that a partnership could achieve the Creating Healthy Schools and Community Grant goals and help The North Rose Food Pantry increase their outreach. Active People Healthy Wayne partnered with our subcontractor, Cornell Cooperative Extension, to teach volunteers a food ranking system called SWAP (Supporting Wellness at Pantries), which is a spotlight nutrition system designed to help promote healthy food choices at food banks and food pantries using a color-coded system (Green, Yellow, Red, and not-ranked). A new pantry policy was introduced to the church board members in June of 2024 and is awaiting approval. The new policy includes the SWAP model as well as a policy that bans soda donations. North Rose Food Pantry is using the policy as a model to show they prioritize and support the health and wellbeing of their community. APHW was also able to supply the pantry with a new refrigerator, shelving units, a moveable island for sorting and packing groceries, and a wagon to assist in moving the groceries. These items will allow the pantry to be more accessible and sustainable.

With the support of our grant the pantry is being moved into a much larger room that is wheelchair accessible. This will remove a barrier that may have prevented some people from getting the help they needed.



## The Results

The North Rose Food Pantry has seen an increase in the number of families utilizing the food pantry every month. The volunteers of the church are still finishing up the assembly of the room and shelving units. The pantry volunteers feel very confident that the pantry will continue to help the community for many years to come. Due to the increased space and storage the church is having discussions regarding joining the local Foodlink program. We have assisted the pantry with purchasing healthy signage that will be displayed in the new location. The new utility cart has taken a large burden off the volunteers and has helped them run the pantry independently when needed which in turn reduces the manpower required to operate it.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The goals for this coming grant year are to get a policy approved by the North Rose United Methodist Church Board and to get the new food pantry room set up for use. We have offered technical assistance to help the pantry set up the SWAP healthy food promotion system, as well as guidance on the placement of the healthy food signage where it will be the most beneficial. We are looking forward to further success and outcomes as the North Rose Food Pantry has been very receptive and gracious to work with us. The North Rose United Methodist Church never gave up looking for a solution because they could see how big of an impact they were making for the local families. Our team efforts have already made a big impact on the North Rose Community, and we are excited to see our future success.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Email: [fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW](mailto:fingerlakescommunityaction.org/APHW)

Phone: 315-333-4155 ext. 3207

Photos curtesy of  
Melissa Kersten



The food pantry before  
working with APHW.



The new room the food  
pantry is moving to.

*This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year New York State Department of Health funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.*



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## Town of Lyons, NY



### PROJECT SUMMARY

The Active People Healthy Wayne (APHW) team partnered with the Town of Lyons, NY to improve their Complete Streets policy and collaborated on the William Street sidewalk repairs. William Street is near the local elementary school, and the dangerous, crumbling sidewalk impacted walkers of all ages, but especially young children walking to and from school and those with mobility issues. With our partners we are improving the safety of sidewalks for those that depend on them to actively commute to vital locations, including students who walk and bike to school, and community members who use bikes, wheelchairs and strollers.

### CONNECTING ROUTES TO DESTINATIONS STRATEGIES IN ACTION



#### The Situation

Staffing issues at our local Regional Transit Center of Wayne County, NY, have become a large obstacle for the local community. Members in the community are finding it harder to depend on public transportation due to the shortage of drivers, which leads to a decrease in available bus routes. This has caused disruption for many public transit users, impacting their ability to commute to work in a timely fashion, get to appointments, and run necessary errands. Many residents have started using alternative means of transportation that are self-reliant such as pedal bikes, e-bikes and walking. While conducting a Semi-Annual School Route Count at the Lyons Elementary School, the APHW team discovered the sidewalk on Williams Street Road was in disrepair, with broken and raised sidewalk tiles that could be dangerous for pedestrians. The APHW Team then conducted a Semi-Annual Pedestrian Count on William Street to determine if it was highly used by the community. The results found the William Street sidewalk was a bustling route being used by the community connecting residential homes to the elementary school, central Park, drug store, DMV and post office.



#### The Solution

Data is important and so armed with the information we gathered the APHW team approached the Lyons Town Board and supervisor with the goal of creating a partnership. Together we created a vision for an active community and started to work on our goals of making the Lyons Community more accessible and safer for pedestrians. Working with the town has been amazing and they were happy to get help with the project. The team worked to obtain estimates from contractors for installation and material. The APHW grant is not authorized to cover labor costs, so we worked diligently with another grant program and utilized the town policy of sidewalk reimbursement monies to pay for the labor of the project.

Simultaneously while working on the William Street sidewalk project, the team was working on evaluating the Lyons Township Complete Streets Policy, which had been dissolved by the village in 2016. The goal is to pass a new Complete Streets policy that includes recommended improvements that allow for safe and active mobility, which supports walking, bicycling, strollers, and mobility devices.



## The Results

Work on the sidewalk is scheduled to begin in May of 2024 and it will be a huge success for the town of Lyons. We cannot wait to see how much easier and safer it will be for pedestrians on this highly utilized route. The team also developed an Activity-Friendly Routes to Everyday Destinations Action Plan for Lyons that laid out a foundation of support with guidance and timeframes to maintain momentum throughout the collaboration. An APHW team member was also asked to join the Lyons Town Planning committee to offer continued support for the Complete Streets policy and collaboration. The team member attends meetings and helps motivate and supports the committee as needed.

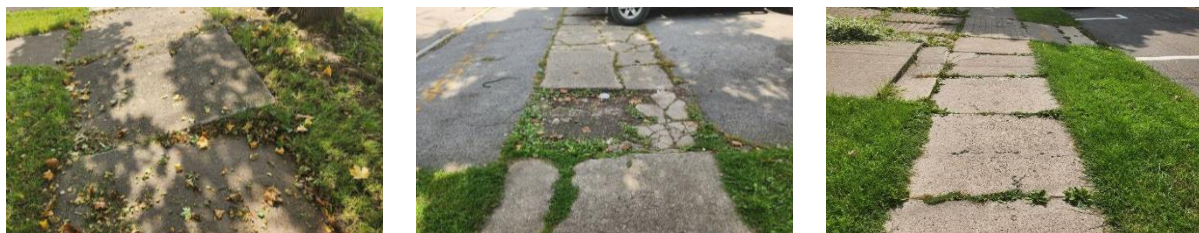
## WHAT'S NEXT?

The next step is to continue supporting Lyons as they work towards their Complete Street goals. The Active People Healthy Wayne team will work with the Town of Lyons to identify other hazards that create barriers that prevent people from using active forms of transportation. The town is working on identifying an official Complete Streets Advisory Committee lead so that even after the grant goals are completed, the improvement will continue to progress, making Lyons an even more pedestrian friendly place to walk.

## TO LEARN MORE:

Email: [activepeople.halthywayne@waynecap.org](mailto:activepeople.halthywayne@waynecap.org)

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[Photos are of the damaged sidewalk on Williams Street Road, Lyons New York]



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# Success Story

## Planting Seeds for Success in Assembly District 11

### Keeping our NYS elected officials in the loop

Western Suffolk BOCES’ Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) continues to maintain ongoing communication with legislators, sharing information about CHSC progress through success stories, wellness newsletters and program announcements. In person and virtual meetings take place periodically with officials and/or staff members to inform them of grant strategies and discuss activities and positive outcomes. New York State Assemblywoman Kim Jean-Pierre is no stranger to CHSC and has encouraged her staff to remain acquainted with CHSC coordinators and initiatives over the years.



NYS Assemblywoman Kim Jean-Pierre

### Food/Nutrition Insecurity

CHSC hosted its eighth Healthier Long Island Challenge Conference, “Planting Seeds for Success” in October 2023. Keynote Speaker and 2023 Global Food Hero Stephen Ritz, of the Green Bronx Machine, spoke about his globally-recognized educational program that made history, incorporating growing fresh produce in the classroom. The conference featured local

partners, programs, experts and resources, appealing to the attendees’ capacity to contribute to and/or enhance wellness efforts in school and community settings. Topics included: garden growing and curriculum, Tower Gardens (indoor vertical gardens), school and community gardens, horticultural practices, seed libraries, Master Gardener Programs (and walkability). As a result of the conference, CHSC began to work with new schools, more educators and administrators, and community leaders who were inspired to implement gardening and tower growing in their respective settings. These relationships opened up new doors for CHSC to address Food/Nutrition Insecurity, access to affordable, nourishing foods, chronic disease prevention, and much more.

### Serendipity at the Healthier Long Island Challenge Conference

Assembly Member (AM) Jean-Pierre’s Chief of Staff Jennifer Martin’s arrival that day was serendipitous as her prior meeting had ended early. Walking in just as both Stephen Ritz and Lety Algeri from School Seeds were presenting such positive stories about students and indoor gardening, she became immediately captivated.



Jennifer Martin, Chief of Staff for NYS AM Jean-Pierre with Stephen Ritz from Green Bronx Machine

Following the conference, separate meetings with AM Jean-Pierre's office and both Ms. Algeri and CHSC coordinators further convinced the Assembly Member to pursue funding opportunities to support the implementation of more Tower Gardens. WSBOCES, CHSC and School Seeds had already established a longstanding working relationship that only accelerated after the conference.

### NYS Assembly Grant Funding

WSBOCES is being awarded NYS Assembly grant funding from Assemblywoman Kim Jean-Pierre to purchase, train, support and expand Tower Garden use across Legislative District 11 in 2025. This will be accomplished with Ms. Algeri under a WSBOCES contract.



Lety Algeri of School Seeds with Tower Garden

Ms. Algeri has vast experience working with school districts, providing professional development and support and helping educators incorporate Tower Gardens into the classroom or school setting. She (and CHSC staff) have clearly witnessed its many benefits as a teaching aide, culinary tool, social and emotional support and nutrition motivator. Depending on the District, grade level, subject matter, and learning ability, students and staff seem to all thrive from the hands-on experience of growing vegetables and herbs. Through problem-based learning projects, students tackle food insecurity while developing

essential skills like collaboration and communication. They often gain knowledge in NYS Science Learning Standards, Social Studies Practices, Computer Science, and Digital Fluency Standards. Most importantly, students experience the joy of cultivating their own nutritious foods. Following the October conference, CHSC in partnership with Ms. Algeri began introducing Tower Gardens into community settings such as food pantries and community-based organizations. These efforts have been met with equally positive responses and feedback.

***“This is so much bigger than just planting a plant. It’s an opportunity to support the sustainability of the planet, educate children on the cutting edge ‘future’ of growing, create jobs and provide affordable, nourishing food to all.” Ms. Algeri***

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### Impact and Outcomes – Back to Roots

These projects and partnerships have far reaching outcomes and significance as CHSC expands its work into new school and community systems, transforming environments, exposing children and adults to the growing experience and access to fresh, affordable, nourishing foods, all while simultaneously addressing chronic disease.

### Next Steps

In 2025, WSBOCES will be awarded NYS Assembly grant funding from the Assembly Member's office and will begin to contact existing and prospective partners to implement Tower Gardens. Ms. Algeri will be the sole consultant to work with these individuals, to provide training, technical support and educational tools and CHSC coordinators will be there every step of the way communicating successes, spreading the word, and implementing other grant strategies.

**To learn more about our work: Visit:**  
[www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES.org](http://www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES.org)

**Email:** [kirschb@wsboces.org](mailto:kirschb@wsboces.org),  
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## Hempstead Village Pedestrian Safety Improvements

### Project Snapshot

Vision Long Island is working with Hempstead Village residents and stakeholders and Nassau County officials to improve safety along five county roads that pass through the Village.

### Issue

Hempstead Village is a community where many residents walk to access daily needs and services in the community. The school district does not provide bussing so most children walk to school. Hempstead is also in the center of Nassau County and many high volume County roads pass through the downtown area.

There are a high number of pedestrian and bike crashes in this area and it was designated a crash “hotspot” in Tri-State Transportation Campaign’s report in 2017.

The goal is to reduce crashes and improve safety and comfort for those outside of cars in the downtown area. Particularly along the roads adjacent to schools, churches, libraries, parks and other destinations.

### Intervention

Vision Long Island, along with Western Suffolk BOCES, AARP and community stakeholders, conducted two walking audits in downtown Hempstead. The first was done on and around Franklin Avenue in the northwest corner of downtown in September of 2019, and the second was done on and around Peninsula Boulevard in the southeast corner of the downtown in July of 2022.

Two reports were produced highlighting the safety issues found which included: busy intersections without sufficient crosswalks or in



Photo Credit: Vision Long Island

Walk Audit team crossing Peninsula Blvd. in Hempstead

some cases any crosswalks at all, wide lanes that facilitate speeding and other features that prioritized speed over safety. Recommendations included additional crosswalks at several locations, smaller curb radii to slow down turns, and designs that shortened crossing distances when crossing the street.

Legislator Siela Bynoe who represents this community, used these reports as evidence to support holding up the budget approval by the legislature until they allocated \$41 million in funding to improve the county roads in Hempstead.

### Impact

As a result of both the walk audit reports and the work of Legislator Bynoe, she was successful in getting the funding allocated to be spent on five county roads that pass through downtown. This amount of funding can make a significant impact within the community.

## CHSC | Success Story

Safety, comfort and beautification improvements including more and safer crosswalks, street trees for both shade and traffic calming, and other landscaping improvements can have a significant impact to those living and working downtown. It will be safer to students walking to school and more attractive to residents and businesses in the area.

In order to ensure that the improvements meet the needs of the communities, she has created a stakeholder committee for each road with members of the community that live or work on that road.

### Next Steps

Now that the stakeholder committees have been established, meetings will be scheduled for each of the five roads that are being improved. These meetings will address issues and concerns on these roads that may not be obvious to those who don't live and work there.

Once these committees have brought community concerns to the attention of the engineering team, the final plans will be drafted and the project will be bid and constructed.

**To learn more about our work:**

**Visit:** [vimeo.com/user122188780](https://vimeo.com/user122188780)

**Email:**

[projects@visionlongisland.org](mailto:projects@visionlongisland.org)





## Success Story

### Tower Garden Takeover in Brentwood

#### Growing Greens and Young Minds

Since Western Suffolk BOCES hosted the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) *Planting Seeds for Success Conference* last October, they have been working with educators, administrators, and community organizations to implement indoor growing with Tower Gardens in their own classrooms, schools, and community settings.

Mrs. AnnMarie Madsen, the Science Staff Developer at Brentwood School District expressed significant interest in implementing indoor gardens for their elementary students. CHSC purchased three Tower Gardens for the district, distributing one to Twin Pines Elementary, another to North Elementary, and the third to Laurel Park Elementary.

#### *A Little Background...*

The Brentwood School District has had great success with Tower Gardens, starting with Northeast Elementary School in 2017-18, where a Tower Garden purchased by Cornell Cooperative Extension-Eat Smart New York Long Island (CCE-Eat Smart NYLI) led the Principal to buy three more. Inspired by this, Twin Pines School adopted a Tower Garden in 2018. By 2019, Dr. Rebecca Grella, the district's Director of Science Research, expanded the initiative by building 11 cost-effective Tower Gardens with her team of students, benefiting the entire district.

#### Reviving Tower Gardens: Empowering Brentwood Schools to Combat Food Insecurity and Promote Nutrition

Since the pandemic, Tower Gardens have not been consistently operational throughout the buildings in Brentwood. However, with the

renewed momentum from the conference and CHSC's funding to enhance food and nutrition in schools, we recognized the perfect opportunity to reintroduce these vertical gardens across the school community.

Food insecurity is a significant issue in the Brentwood community, affecting many families who struggle to access sufficient, nutritious food. According to data from the CDC, Brentwood typically face challenges such as higher rates of poverty, limited access to healthcare, and higher rates of chronic health conditions. Brentwood, being a high needs school district, is dedicated to educating students about nutrition and the food insecurity issues, emphasizing the importance of everyone having the ability to fuel their bodies on a daily basis.

We knew that Tower Gardens would be a great way to introduce the importance of empowering the students and staff to grow healthy food and give back to the community.

***“By exploring how food insecurity impacts the Brentwood community, we can help to foster empathy and awareness among the students while also empowering them to take meaningful action and contribute to solutions that alleviate hunger and promote healthy eating habits.”***

*-Mrs. AnnMarie Madsen, BSD Science Staff Developer*

#### Integrating Tower Gardens

Integrating Tower Gardens into the elementary science curriculum perfectly aligns with the district's goal of enriching academics through practical, hands-on learning experiences in food cultivation,

## CHSC | Success Story

while also exploring the fundamentals of aeroponic gardening.

In March, CHSC provided Twin Pines Elementary School with a Tower Garden, where it lives in Mr. Melo's third grade classroom. Furthermore, the district procured another Tower Garden for Ms. Molinari, the school library media specialist, to display in the library. These additions supplement the already flourishing Tower Garden housed in Ms. Zembrzycki's fifth grade classroom.



**Twin Pines teacher and students assembling Tower Garden**

In April, CHSC provided Laurel Park Elementary School with a Tower Garden, where it is being maintained in Ms. Pinto's fifth grade classroom. The school already had a Tower Garden from previous years and the district was able to procure one more recently. These two Tower Gardens are housed in the cafeteria where Ms. Schneller, Ms. Dennehy and Ms. Jones' classes are nurturing the produce on a regular basis. Displaying these towers in the cafeteria enables all students to see and experience them, showing the students the benefits of the garden.



**Ms. Lety Algeri teaching students and teachers at Laurel Park Elementary School about Tower Gardens**

In May, CHSC provided North Elementary School with a Tower Garden that is living in Ms. Kollmer's third grade classroom. The district was able to procure one other Tower Garden which was placed in Ms. Walsh's fifth grade classroom. Both the third and fifth grade classes have been taking care of the towers and produce.



**Educators at North Elementary**

A significant factor in our success was the involvement of Ms. Lety Algeri from School Seeds throughout these projects. Ms. Algeri collaborated closely with students and teachers to establish the new Tower Gardens across the Brentwood School District. She provided expert explanations on the mechanics and benefits of aeroponic gardens, highlighting their suitability and vertical designs, making them perfect for classrooms and small spaces.

### **Harvesting Knowledge: Students Enjoy Fresh Greens and Hands-On Learning with Tower Gardens**

The Tower Garden project has allowed for the students to have access to fresh greens through the end of the school year. They were able to harvest and taste the delicious produce right in their classroom. For example, Twin Pines Elementary School hosted a salad harvest day thanks to support from Central School and Twin Pines Administrators and Educators. District and building educators, the School Seeds Educator, the CHSC Coordinator and third grade students attended the wonderful harvest. Students presented a power point demonstrating knowledge of

science, technology, and math, and talked about their observations and understanding of related topics such as the plant life cycle, nutrition, the environment and food insecurity.



### Salad set up at Twin Pines Elementary

Third and fifth grade students at Laurel Park Elementary recently enjoyed a two-day harvest and tasting event. On the first day, they picked, measured, and studied the greens. The greens were then stored in the refrigerator overnight. The students then prepared salads with delicious fruit and dressing. For many of the students, this was their first time trying salad, and many were excited to discover that they liked it and said they would eat it at home.



Greens harvested from Laurel Park Elementary Tower Garden

### Next Steps

There are big plans for these Tower Gardens next year. Through these problem-based learning activities, students in the Brentwood School District will continue to tackle food insecurity in their community and beyond. It requires students to develop essential skills such as collaboration and communication. They are gaining knowledge in NYS Science Learning Standards, Social Studies Practices, Computer Science and Digital Fluency

Standards, and most importantly, students will get to experience the joy of cultivating their own nutritious food!

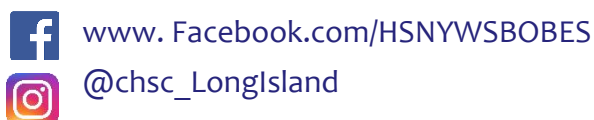
Thanks to the introductions from CHSC and the motivation from Science Staff Developer AnnMarie Madsen, the Brentwood School District has decided to purchase additional Tower Gardens from Lety Algeri at School Seeds. These new Tower Gardens will be distributed across the eight remaining schools, ensuring that all elementary schools in the district have access to this wonderful resource.

The district looks forward to continuing this project next year, with a strong focus on addressing food insecurity and giving back to the local community. By connecting with school wellness committees, school pantries, and local community pantries, they plan to donate their freshly harvested produce throughout the school year. Western Suffolk BOCES will continue to support this initiative, strengthen school wellness committees and provide assistance with maximizing resources and partnerships.



Laurel Park Tower Gardens housed in the cafeteria

To learn more about our work visit:



Email:

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[kkirschb@wsboces.org](mailto:kkirschb@wsboces.org)

*\* While this template attempts to cover the most important points, CHSC grantees are expected to be familiar and comply with grant requirements and guidance for success stories/annual report.*