



# SUCCESS STORIES 2021



Ohio

Department  
of Health



## Dear Colleagues and Public Health Partners,

It is our pleasure to share the 2021 Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) Success Stories. Funded by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CHC is working to increase opportunities for physical activity and improve access to and affordability of healthy food in 23 Ohio counties. In this booklet, you will find information about our statewide initiatives as well as a success story from each of our 23 communities.

2021 was the second year of the five-year grant cycle. Over the course of this year, CHC coordinators across the state have activated and engaged local partners and community residents through coalitions to accomplish objectives and ensure sustainability. Though COVID-19 continued to present challenges, many successful interventions were completed. Across Ohio, CHC programs implemented food service guidelines, built community gardens, installed bike infrastructure, renovated parks and playgrounds, and so much more. In 2021 alone, the CHC program impacted more than two million Ohioans and leveraged more than \$6 million to support these sustainable changes. We hope you enjoy reading about how CHC is making the healthier choice the easier choice where Ohioans live, work, and play.

Our work would not be possible without the ongoing support of our organizational partners. This year, we have included two tables which outline the partnerships established and maintained by the CHC state staff. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the enrichment that these partnerships bring to CHC. Two of our primary partners, Professional Data Analysts and Toole Design, support the work of CHC through funded contracts. As you read these success stories, please be mindful that these named partners and many more unnamed partners helped to make this work possible.

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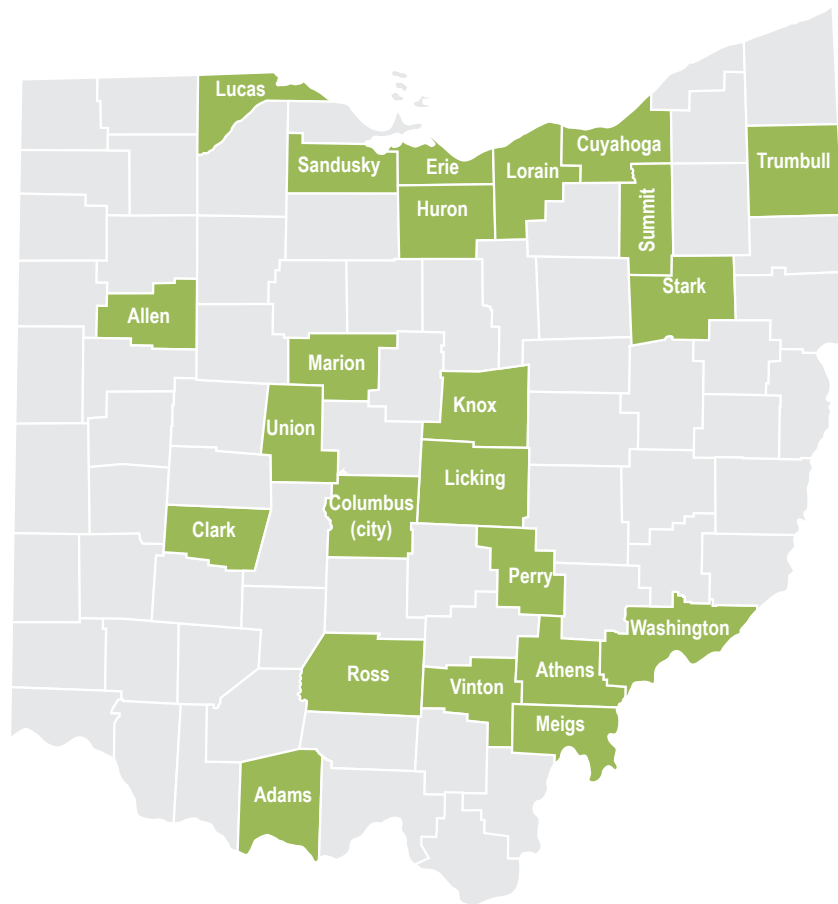
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# CHC Funded Communities, 2021



## **Vision:**

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

## **Mission:**

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

## **Commitment to Equity:**

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

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# Training and Technical Assistance

Due to COVID-19, CHC did not organize any in-person trainings in 2021. Instead, trainings were conducted via virtual formats such as Zoom meetings with breakout rooms for small group discussion. A list of training topics including guest presenters and facilitators is listed below.

**JAN**

**Peer Networking — Challenges Faced in 2020**

**FEB**

**Community Engagement<sup>1</sup>**

**MAR**

**Evaluation Principles<sup>2</sup>**

**APR**

**PSE Changes, Local Sharing<sup>3</sup>**

**MAY**

**Zoning Codes<sup>4</sup>**

**JUN**

**CHC 2022 RFP Overview – including an increased focus on community engagement**

**JUL**

**Open Spaces – CHC Coordinators networked with each other around the topics of active living, healthy eating, and community engagement**

**AUG**

**“Telling Your Story” – Active Living Demonstration Projects<sup>4</sup>**

**SEPT**

**Healthy Eating Work with Schools<sup>5</sup>**

**OCT**

**Food Service Guidelines**

**NOV**

**Engaging Communities through Committees<sup>1</sup>**

**DEC**

**Local Sharing/Peer Networking**



<sup>1</sup>



Professional  
Data Analysts

<sup>2</sup>



OHIO  
SNAP-ED

<sup>3</sup>



<sup>4</sup>

Ohio

Department  
of Education

<sup>5</sup>





# Healthy Eating Initiatives

## Statewide Partnerships

ODH participates in a number of statewide networks and coalitions to ensure alignment of activities related to increasing access to healthy foods. The table below shows the different networks and committees that CHC is involved in.

Network/Committee	Description
<b>Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network (OHNIN)</b>	OHNIN is a partnership of Ohio healthy food retailers, producers, state agencies, national experts and local partners working toward a shared vision of affordable access to healthy, local foods.
<b>Ohio Food Policy Network (OFPN)</b>	OFPN seeks to communicate, connect, and collaborate to collectively achieve greater progress toward shared goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for the growth and production of farms in all areas of the state.</li><li>• Increase access to locally grown and healthy food for all Ohioans.</li><li>• Develop aggregation, distribution, and processing networks to connect producers and utilizers within the system.</li><li>• Increase institutional utilization and participation in the Ohio food system.</li></ul>
<b>State Nutrition Action Committee (SNAC)</b>	SNAC consists of representatives from various agencies, programs, and organizations throughout the state that work to increase access to healthy, affordable foods. It is led by the director of Ohio SNAP-Ed, and also includes the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Education, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, representatives from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at the Ohio Department of Health, and state representatives from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
<b>Farm to School</b>	The Ohio Farm to School team began its second year of funding from the Farm to ECE Implementation Grant (FIG). The FIG team consists of representatives from the Ohio State University, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Education, and Children's Hunger Alliance, as well as local farmers, Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers, and chefs throughout the state. The workplan for year 2 includes expanding and strengthening the state-level coalition, developing information sheets and videos to assist ECE providers in incorporating school gardens or foods from local farmers into their meals and lesson plans, and developing specific resources for procurement for ECE sites.
<b>Healthy Business Council of Ohio (HBCO)</b>	The HBCO is a group of Ohio employers sharing best practices for a healthy workforce, as part of a statewide effort to improve the health of Ohioans.

## Food Service Guidelines (FSG)

### State Agency Partnerships

In 2021, ODH continued to work with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), a partnership that began in 2020. The focus for 2021 was implementation and promotion, including hanging of Good Food Here (GFH) posters in high-traffic areas of their 28 institutions, such as commissaries and clinics. Education about the GFH labeling program was also provided to the people who are incarcerated to assist them in making healthier choices.



### Nutrition Standards Cheat Sheet SNACK FOODS (except nuts, nut/fruit mixes, and grain-based bars)

Instructions: Use this cheat sheet to determine if a snack food meets the Good Food Here nutrition standards.

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>≤ 200</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b>	%
Saturated Fat	≤ 1g
Trans Fat	0g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	%
<b>Sodium</b>	≤ 240mg
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	%
Dietary Fiber	%
Total Sugars	%
Includes	Added Sugars
<b>Protein</b>	%
Vitamin D	%
Calcium	%
Iron	%
Potassium	%

\*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**GOOD  
FOOD  
HERE**  
EAT RIGHT OHIO

- Step 1: Look at nutrition facts label on package.
- Step 2: Check the values for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.
- Step 3: Compare these values against the highlighted values below.
- Step 4: If the values align with the highlighted values, the product is approved.

Regular chips and candy (except sugar-free mints and gum) are not permitted

### Resource Development

ODH staff also continued work on FSG resources for local CHC coordinators and other people involved in FSG implementation, by adding additional items to the healthy product list developed in 2020, and by developing a nutrition standards reference sheet to be used when purchasing food items.

## Food Banks and Pantries

To continue supporting the adoption of nutrition standards at food banks and pantries, ODH staff have established connections with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, as well as with several Ohio regional food banks, to connect CHC coordinators with the food banks that serve their counties. ODH also convened a Food Pantries Work Group as an opportunity for CHC coordinators to meet bimonthly to discuss successes and challenges in working with food banks and food pantries in their communities.





# Active Living Initiatives

## Statewide Partnerships

ODH participates in a number of statewide or regional networks and coalitions to ensure alignment of activities related to increasing access to opportunities for physical activity. The table below shows the different networks and committees that CHC is involved in.

Network/Committee	Description
<b>Ohio Department of Transportation's Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)</b>	The Ohio Department of Transportation published the first statewide active transportation plan, Walk.Bike.Ohio in 2021. The ATAC is responsible for monitoring progress towards the goals of Walk.Bike.Ohio and for creating partnerships and opportunities for collaboration to advance walking and biking across Ohio. The ATAC meets twice annually, with the first meeting held in autumn of 2021.
<b>Ohio Department of Transportation application review committees</b>	The Ohio Department of Transportation facilitates several grant programs that align with the active living goals of CHC. Several example programs include the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and the Small Cities Grant. In 2021, CHC staff served as application reviewers for the SRTS grant and the Small Cities grant, providing an important public health perspective to the application review process.
<b>Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Ohio Trails Advisory Team</b>	ODNR is responsible for convening two committees to facilitate the implementation of the 2019 Ohio Trails Vision plan. The first is the Ohio Trails Advisory Team. The Advisory Team is comprised of public, private, and non-profit organizations dedicated to maintaining, enhancing and expanding Ohio's statewide trails network. The Advisory Team meets every other month and ODH attends to provide updates on CHC funded trail projects
<b>Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Interagency Trails Group</b>	The Interagency Trails Group meets every other month to discuss the role that Ohio's state agencies play in the implementation of the 2019 Ohio Trails Vision plan. ODH participated in the interagency trails group to receive updates from ODNR staff that might impact trails projects in CHC communities. ODH also plays a role in promoting health equity and healthy communities as a consideration in trails development across all involved agencies.
<b>Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) National Walkability Action Institute</b>	From mid 2020 through mid 2021, ODH designated the Healthy Places Coordinator to serve as a member of NOACA's steering committee for their Walkability Action Institute project. The Action Institute, a project of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, provided funding and technical assistance to the steering committee to address pedestrian safety in the NOACA service area. ODH participated to ensure alignment with statewide SPAN goals and to connect NOACA with other resources across the state.



# Active Living Initiatives

## Technical Assistance



ODH contracts with Toole Design to provide technical assistance to CHC counties on active living projects. Toole provides technical assistance in the form of phone calls, emails, local workshops, document review, policy review and analysis, background research, and countless other tasks that help meet the need of CHC's 23 funded communities. Additionally, Toole provided technical assistance to the state CHC team. In 2021, Toole reviewed and provided comments on all 23 CHC workplans and applications. Toole's active living expertise provides an additional layer of quality assurance and oversight to the projects included in those workplans. Toole also assists the statewide team in tracking and reporting performance measures.

## Active Transportation Action Institute

In 2021, three CHC communities (Village of Beverly, Knox County, and City of Niles) participated in the Ohio Action Institute (OAI) to receive assistance in the development of local active transportation (AT) plans. Two multi-day workshops were held. The first covered topics such as evaluating existing conditions and engaging communities. Teams then completed a draft active transportation network, engagement messaging, and an action plan for the summer. During the second workshop, the AT network maps and an implementation plan were completed. All three teams finalized their AT Plan, resulting in the following proposed projects: 23 miles of sidewalks, 18 miles of on-street bikeways, 52 miles of shared use paths, and 52 spot improvements, such as crosswalks.



Participants in the Canton (Stark County) professional development ride.

## Professional Development Rides

One way to activate community leaders and introduce them to the world of AT is to take them on a Professional Development (PD) ride around their city, town, or village. Hosted by Toole Design, these three-hour rides take decision-makers on a variety of roadway designs and to common destinations. Each ride includes several stopping points where riders can discuss what was comfortable about the roadways and what could be improved. In 2021, eight PD rides were conducted, three of which as part of the OAI. The rides engaged 44 decision makers representing public health, transportation, education, parks and recreation, and law enforcement.

# 2021 Local Impact



- 16 Community Gardens
- 13 Food and Beverage Guideline Policies
- 6 Food Pantries
- 5 Farmers' Markets
- 4 Healthy Food Retail Improvements
- 2 Produce Prescription Programs
- 2 Food Access Policy and Planning
- 1 Safe Routes to Healthy Food Project
- 1 Farm to Institution



- 17 Parks or Playgrounds
- 11 Bike Infrastructure Improvements
- 10 Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements
- 5 Active Transportation Plans
- 4 Worksite Active Commute Support
- 4 Complete Streets Policies
- 3 Multi Use Trails
- 3 Safe Routes to School Project
- 3 Public Transit Improvement
- 1 Transportation Demand Management Program



Ohioans Impacted




Ohioans Impacted

Total Impacted: More than 2 million Ohioans

# Leveraged Funds

In 2021, \$2.9M was awarded to the 23 funded CHC communities, who leveraged nearly \$6.5M in return from additional grants and donations.

Strategy	\$ Amount Leveraged
Healthy Eating	\$305,469
Active Living (Parks)	\$1,370,685
Active Living (Bike/Ped)	\$4,679,510
In-Kind Labor	\$88,284
Workshops/Training	\$5,000
Coalition Building	\$5,000
	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,453,948</b>

# Adams County

## Sowing Seeds of Life

Peebles agriculture class renovates school garden for farm to table project.

### Challenge

Obesity and the availability of nutritious food are consistently identified as health problems for Adams County. In the past decade, each of the five villages in Adams County supported a grocery store with a wide selection of fresh produce. Now, only two villages offer this resource. When healthy foods are not available, people often settle for foods that are higher in calories and lower in nutritional value, which contributes to excess weight gain. According to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, 49% and 46% of Adams County 7th and 10th grade students, respectively, are overweight or obese. Additionally, 27% of Adams County children are food insecure, a rate 30% higher than the state and U.S. rates. Providing healthy, fresh food options in the school cafeteria, and growing these foods in a school garden, are behavioral design strategies in action.

### Approach

At Peebles High School, Agriculture Educator Becky Minton integrates garden activities with classwork. The Peebles Sowing Seeds Garden created a unique learning atmosphere that would reach far beyond the garden. The Sowing Seeds Garden got its start 10 years ago through a fund memorializing a former Peebles FFA student and local farmer who was an advocate for learning. Working with the Adams County CHC Program, a complete garden renovation project was completed prior to the planting season in 2021. In addition to garden beds for tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and blackberries, a grape arbor and strawberry trellises were added to increase the offerings provided to the Peebles School Cafeteria.

### Results

64 students participated in the garden project, which provided more than 230 pounds of fresh vegetables and fruit to the school cafeteria. 52 staff and 411 students have access to 356 meals during the school year. Incorporating fresh vegetables and fruits from the school garden ensures they have access to healthy, fresh food options. Receiving this fresh produce resulted in a purchasing cost savings of nearly \$500. Students participating in the garden reported learning far more than just growing vegetables. They learned life skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and food source sustainability. "The Sowing Seeds Garden allows students to participate in every stage of the farm-to-table process; it gives them an amazing opportunity to learn the basics of production agriculture," states Becky Minton.



### At A Glance

Ask a kid if they like cucumbers and you'll probably get a confident "no." Do it again after he's had a chance to grow it at school and he'll probably change his mind. 27% of Adams County children are food insecure, a rate 30% higher than the state and U.S. rates. Sixty-four students participated in a garden program at the Peebles School Sowing Seeds Garden, partnering with the Adams County CHC Program to help combat this public health problem. More than 230 pounds of fresh vegetables and fruit were provided to the school cafeteria, where 52 staff and 411 students eat two meals a day for 178 days each year.



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# Allen County

## Food Pantry Encourages Healthy Eating

New guidelines contribute to more healthful diets of clients.

### Challenge

Chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes, are the leading health issues affecting Allen County adults. Lack of fruit and vegetable consumption is a contributing factor to increased risk of chronic disease. According to the most recent Community Health assessment, almost 90% of adults in Allen County are consuming fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, 53% are eating less than one vegetable serving per day and 18% of adults report eating no fruit servings in the past seven days. In addition, residents in Allen County have limited access to healthy foods, especially fresh produce at a low cost. Risk factors like obesity, high blood pressure, and lack of fruit and vegetable consumption, along with lack of access to healthy foods, are all major contributors to poor health outcomes of Allen County residents.

### Approach

Using Feeding America's *Foods to Encourage* framework, Mizpah Food Pantry is encouraging healthier options for the clients they serve. The framework is more consistently inclusive of food items that meet the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and are widely accepted as contributing positively to good health. The food pantry has adopted practices to promote these healthier items and developed a method for identifying these "foods to encourage." To help clients make healthier choices, they have labeled the foods offered by using colored notecards to identify the foods to choose often (green), the foods to choose sometimes (yellow), and the foods to choose rarely (red). Clients are encouraged to choose the green foods first. These items are also prioritized for boxes that are put together for clients to be picked up.

### Results

The Mizpah Community Center has improved and expanded access to healthier foods to clients of their food bank, following the *Foods to Encourage* framework improving healthy food consumption while increasing food security. The food pantry can continue to offer hunger relief but now with healthy eating opportunities for individuals and families with low incomes. Clients are able to get a broader range of healthy options that meet the dietary guidelines. The foods that are provided to the food pantry are now more conscientiously obtained to make sure that the foods provide a variety of options for healthy choices. Healthy food initiatives are also conducted through on-site cooking demonstrations and education through the SNAP-Ed program. Through the options provided at the food pantry, this area of the city can begin to improve the health of its residents and improve the health of the community at large.



### At A Glance

The Mizpah Community Center has a history of service to the community, supplying foods to help families in hard times through their food pantry. In recent years, it has become concerning that the rates of diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and other serious diet-related diseases and conditions has increased in the community. Due to this, the Mizpah Food Pantry has adopted guidelines to encourage their clients to choose healthier foods. These guidelines communicate to clients, affiliated local pantries and other agencies, donors, government programs and the community-at-large that they are committed to providing healthful foods to clients.



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# Athens County

## Growing Inclusive Communities Through School Gardens

Athens City Elementary Schools rebuild gardens after district restructuring.

### Challenge

The Athens City School District (ACSD) has always valued the learning opportunities and access to healthy food that has come with having gardens on their campuses, but not every student could experience the benefits of the gardens. In 2018, when the ACSD announced they would begin developing a master plan that promoted equity at new and renovated school facilities, many people were left wondering what would happen to the gardens. The CHC Coalition, Community Food Initiatives (CFI), and the ACSD Nurse took advantage of this opportunity to advocate for new, permanent gardens at Morrison-Gordon and East Elementary Schools—gardens that would be equitable and accessible for all students.

### Approach

To assess the level of interest in the new school gardens, the CHC Coalition distributed a survey to staff of the ACSD elementary schools and to the Beacon School, a nearby educational facility under the Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities. In total, 57 teachers and faculty responded. All felt it was important to have gardens at the new sites, with 77% indicating that gardens were “very important.” Special Education teachers, aides, and counselors rallied behind the effort and provided many creative ideas for school garden usage. Teachers were similarly excited for a natural, outdoor environment for children to explore, play, and learn. Additionally, the CHC Coalition reached out to CFI, a garden design partner, to gain additional support. To create an accessible garden that would last many years, additional funding was sought and awarded from OhioHealth.

### Results

Garden construction has begun, but it was delayed many times due to the re-construction of the main school buildings and the start of a new school year. Partners faced many challenges with finding a local vendor, but thankfully, a local construction company was identified, and the garden layout and base were completed just before winter. Additionally, a paved lighted path now connects the Beacon School with the garden at Morrison-Gordon Elementary. CFI will be implementing their “Sprouts” garden program and be providing education to the students. In Spring 2022, the garden infrastructure will be installed, with hopes that planting can occur before the end of the school year. While there has been delays that presented many trials, they created an excellent opportunity to share with students all the components that go into creating a garden.



### At A Glance

The Creating CHC Coalition, Athens City School District (ACSD) Healthy Schools Committee, and the local PTO partnered with the ACSD to increase accessibility to school gardens and grow an inclusive community. Permanent inclusive gardens will now be located at the newly renovated Morrison-Gordon Elementary and East Elementary Schools. Upon the completion of the gardens, Community Food Initiatives will also be offering students their “Sprouts” garden program. The curriculum includes teaching children where food comes from, the connection between healthy gardens and healthy bodies, and a deeper understanding of the environment and sustainable agriculture.



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# Clark County

## Virgil A. Mabra Park gets a Facelift

Park improvement provides opportunities for physical activity.

### Challenge

According to the 2019 Clark County Community Health Assessment, 28% of residents reported physical inactivity and 36% described themselves as being slightly or very overweight. The percent of Clark County individuals who reported adult obesity is 4% higher than the state of Ohio. Located within Springfield, Virgil A. Mabra Park often goes underutilized because it is viewed as run down, unsafe, and lacks inclusive equipment. With over 1,000 residents within 1/2 mile of the park lacking a safe place to play, the coalition's main objective was to replace the basketball courts and overgrown trails.

### Approach

In 2021, The Clark County Combined Health District through the CHC Coalition contracted with National Trail Parks and Recreation District to make much needed improvements on the parks in the community. The CHC coalition worked to explore options for environmental change and, based off a survey and conversations with the community, determined that improvements to Virgil A. Mabra Park would make the strongest impact. The coalition hoped it would result in a measurable increase in physical activity by way of trail, and basketball court usage and improved connectivity within the neighboring nature preserve.

### Results

The improvements include resurfacing the two basketball courts, establishing prairie and wildflower areas, improving hiking trails and installing an information kiosk. The additions gave more than 1,000 residents within a half-mile radius access to a place to play and get necessary exercise. The coalition noted that a potential increase in foot traffic and publicity will create a place of safety in the neighborhood. The updates made in Virgil A. Mabra Park is one of many steps Clark County CHC will be taking to increase wellness and fight against chronic disease in the county.



### At A Glance

With the physical inactivity of residents reaching above 25%, obesity reaching close to 40% and the many associated health risks, an intervention was needed. Clark CHC provided a forum to plan for ways to increase physical activity in the neighborhood. Community input was collected, and with help from National Trail Parks and Recreation District (NTPRD), the basketball court was repaved, and the hiking trails were cleaned up. Now, residents have access to a safe place to play and exercise.



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# City of Columbus

## Columbus Program Takes Active Transportation to the Streets

Ambassadors lead hands-on trainings to shift travel behaviors.

### Challenge

Columbus, Ohio's transportation network has been built to prioritize the safe and efficient movement of cars and freight above other roadway users. Residents of the Linden and Franklinton neighborhoods, experience disparities in social determinants of health including housing stability, food insecurity, educational attainment, living with poverty, and employment. These health disparities have led to a disproportionately high prevalence of chronic disease. Both neighborhoods are classified as having "low vehicle access" by the USDA and almost half of their residents did not meet federal physical activity guidelines. To increase the mobility and physical activity of residents in these neighborhoods, Columbus Public Health (CPH) worked with community champions to develop and implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program.

### Approach

In a heavily automobile-oriented city, people need help navigating other mobility options. With the support of Toole Design Group, Columbus Public Health developed a pilot TDM program to provide one on one experiential learning opportunities for residents of Linden and Franklinton. CPH worked with community-based partners Remember Us Urban Scouts and Franklinton Cycle Works to recruit and manage Travel Ambassadors – individuals who live, work, or play in the communities of interest – to implement the program. The Travel Ambassadors earned \$15 per hour to deliver the program curriculum over two months. The TDM curriculum provided information and training to community members interested in safely riding bicycles for transportation and navigating Columbus by bus.

### Results

Ten Travel Ambassadors - six paid, four volunteers - were trained over the course of six weeks. Over the following two months, they delivered 93 trainings to people within their circles of influence. In addition to the services they provided, the Travel Ambassadors - particularly the high school students who were recruited - reported significant personal growth in the form of leadership and communication skills. Program participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences. Some described having been skeptical at the beginning but learned surprising tools and skills, such as how to combine bike and bus, or the difference between biking for recreation and transportation. One participant stated, "West was great at explaining how to ride bikes on the road and he helped me understand the different major trails and roadways that connect different parts of the city. He helped me feel way more confident riding a bike on the road. I normally ride trails to work but after this ride I'm going to start using roadways more often to travel the city."



### At A Glance

To address both transportation insecurity and physical inactivity in health-vulnerable neighborhoods, Columbus Public Health worked with partners to develop a Transportation Demand Management pilot program. Travel Ambassadors were equipped with the tools needed to teach others how to safely ride bicycles for transportation and navigate Columbus by bus. Ten ambassadors delivered 93 travel trainings to community members over the course of the two-month pilot program, with overwhelmingly positive outcomes for both the ambassadors and the program participants.



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# Cuyahoga County

## Collaboration Re-establishes Maple Heights Grocery Store

Non-profit steps up to re-open critical grocery store amidst pandemic.

### Challenge

Most of the city of Maple Heights is considered a food desert, defined as a lower income area more than a half mile away from a supermarket. A recent study from Virginia Commonwealth University's Center on Society and Health found that residents in Maple Heights are expected to live seven years less than residents in a community just 11 miles away. In addition, the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic caused one of Maple Heights's only grocery stores, Farmer Jones Market, to close. This was a devastating blow to the community as Farmer Jones Market had provided quality, fresh produce to the neighborhood for over 60 years.

### Approach

Cuyahoga County Board of Health's CHC program connected with the Rid-All Green Partnership, the new owner and operator of Farmer Jones Market, to discuss the vision, priorities, and funding opportunities for the market, as well as an urban farm Rid-All was developing. A partnership was then formed, and collaboration began among CHC, Rid-All, and the Mayor of Maple Heights to address the gaps in food access. At Farmer Jones Market, Rid-All seeks to build entrepreneurial skills among staff and foster a healthy lifestyle environment that will flow back into the community and the workers' families. For the urban farm, the goal will not only be to provide locally grown produce to be sold at Farmer Jones Market but to also grow nutritious food with adults and youth while training them on wellness, urban farming, and environmental sustainability.

### Results

To help stabilize Farmer Jones Market and develop an urban farm, CHC provided funding for new refrigeration, a hoop house, electronic signage, community outreach materials, and farming and cooking supplies. Farmer Jones Market re-opened amidst the pandemic in August of 2020 with a focus on local healthy eating options. Since re-opening, the market has been going strong, demonstrated by employing 10 staff members, including high school students, local community members, and veterans of Rid-All's agricultural training program. Customer traffic and revenue has also increased, and record revenues over the 2021 holiday season. Rid-All has led strategic marketing efforts by reaching a younger audience via radio and working with community leaders.

*"The grant dollars helped us buy a beautiful freezer that we use to extend the shelf life of fresh foods that we can offer to the community and allowed us to expand our urban farm in the City of Maple Heights."* – Keymah Durden, Co-founder, Rid-All Green Partnership.



### At A Glance

Many residents of Maple Heights have limited access to a grocery store and healthy foods. To help stabilize the re-opening of Farmer Jones Market and support the development of an urban farm, the CHC joined forces with the owner, the Rid-All Green Partnership. CHC provided Rid-All with \$60,000 in strategic funding for new refrigeration, a hoop house, farming and cooking supplies, and other priority improvements. Their coalition also seeks to build resident participation in the process of growing and selling local healthy foods. Since re-opening, the revenue of the market has experienced record highs and the urban farm has been able to expand its reach and provide more fresh foods.



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# Erie County

## Supporting the Active, Working Community of Erie County

Bike racks and repair stations increase access to active commute.

### Challenge

75% of Erie County adults were overweight or obese based on body mass index (BMI), according to the 2019 Community Health Assessment. 53% of Erie County adults met CDC recommendations for physical activity and 26% of adults do not participate in any physical activity (2019 CHA). This puts Erie County adults at an elevated risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers, and stroke. According to CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, the average employee spends 7.6 hours a day at their workplace, limiting the amount of time dedicated for physical activity.

### Approach

Worksite active commute programs enable employees to significantly increase their physical activity, decreasing rates of obesity. According to the Ohio Department of Health Active Commute Toolkit, employers that encourage physical activity during the workday have reported less absenteeism and higher productivity due to lack of illness, obesity, injury, or chronic conditions. Through active living initiatives, the CHC program at the Erie County Health Department targeted businesses in Sandusky and Huron to develop worksite active commute support systems. With available grant funding, businesses installed bike racks, bike repair stations, and water filling stations to incentivize employee participation in exercise. Employers were further motivated to display posters that were visual reminders to create habits of physical activity like taking the stairs.

### Results

Worksite active commute support systems were installed at four different locations in both Sandusky and Huron, Ohio in 2021. A total of six bike racks, five water filling stations, and three bike repair stations are available to employees and community members. One employer, the Firelands Regional Health Center, installed bike racks, repair stations, and water filling stations on both their Main and South Campuses. This health center employs more than 1,500 individuals across both campuses and serves thousands of community residents. Bike racks and repair stations will also be placed along the Sandusky Bay Pathway, a 13-mile-long multimodal route that connects restaurants, businesses, and parks. The active commute support structures enable access to physical activity for thousands of individuals.



### At A Glance

75% of Erie County adults and 33% of youth are overweight or obese. A review of data from the 2019 Community Health Assessment for Erie County revealed that 22% of Erie County residents believed that improvements to existing parks, trails, and paths would increase their level of physical activity. Coalition members installed bike racks, bike repair stations, and water filling stations to incentivize active transportation and connect multimodal trails. A total of 4 different businesses with 1,913 employees and more than 100,000 annual visits are now equipped with these support structures.



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# Huron County

## Willard Community Garden Increases Access to Healthier Food and Self-Sustainability

Willard citizens now enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Challenge

According to the 2020 Huron County Community Health Assessment, 47% of Huron County adults are obese, compared to the state average of 35.5% (BRFSS 2020). Additionally, the average weekly fruit and vegetable consumption among adults is 6.5 servings in a 7-day period, falling short of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans' recommendation of at least 3.5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. This lower consumption of fruit and vegetables in Huron County is a contributing factor to the elevated rates of obesity.

### Approach

The coordinator for Huron County's CHC program approached the City of Willard with the idea to build a community garden. After receiving feedback from Willard residents on the location, a large piece of land was secured on North Main Street situated among low-income housing. A parking lot, garden plots, and shed were constructed, and garden supplies were secured. Applications were promoted through the City of Willard's website and Facebook page as well as Huron County Public Health's Facebook page. A total of 14 adult gardeners and three children registered for the 2021 planting season.

### Results

Construction of the garden began in April 2021 and the Willard Community Garden was fully operational by the end of May. The garden offers a concrete foundation with a shed for storing gardening tools and accessories as well as two raised accessible beds. There was an array of produce planted during the season consisting of tomatoes, peppers, melons, corn, beans, pumpkins, squash, peas, cucumbers, sunflowers, and more. According to a post-season survey, 44% of the gardeners donated the produce that they harvested over the course of the summer to family and community members. Huron CHC is hopeful that the Willard Community Garden will continue to produce large quantities of fruits and vegetables in the future—and continue to nourish at-need residents and reduce obesity rates within the county.



### At A Glance

Thanks to the collaboration between Huron County CHC, Huron County Public Health, and the City of Willard, an unused plot of public land in Willard was converted into an all-inclusive community garden. With nearly half of Huron County adults being obese, and the average consumption of fruits and vegetables falling short of the daily recommendations, approximately 6,000 residents in Willard now have access to locally grown produce. Plans are in place to expand the garden to allow for even greater access to fruits and vegetables and to develop programs that will educate, promote, and encourage healthy lifestyles.



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# Knox County

## Trail Users Enjoy New Place to Rest and Rehydrate

Bike amenities installed at the Mohican Valley Trail terminus in Danville, Ohio.

### Challenge

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Knox County, with over two-thirds of the adult population overweight or obese (Knox County Community Health Assessment 2020)—putting them at greater risk. Participating in regular physical activity can help individuals maintain a healthy weight and decrease their risk of heart disease; however, access to options for physical activity can be a challenge in Knox County. Some trails in the county's multi-use trail system often go underused due to a lack of amenities that make the trails safe and convenient, making access difficult for residents to enjoy the many health benefits of walking, running, biking, or rolling.

### Approach

Trails with accessible and convenient amenities such as water, restrooms, and wayfinding signage attract bicyclists and walkers. Knox Public Health-CHC partnered with the Village of Danville and the Knox County Park District to assess the trail system and identify areas where access to amenities was limited. They discovered that many of these amenities are found along the Heart of Ohio Trail (HOOT) and Kokosing Gap Trail but are absent at the MVT terminus. As a result, trail counts showed the HOOT was seeing approximately 62 more visitors a day compared to the MVT. The CHC Coordinator and the director of the park district met with the mayor and village administrator to share these findings and discuss implementing improvements.

### Results

Residents of Knox County can now enjoy new amenities at the MVT terminus. CHC provided funds for a new water line and water bottle filling station, as well as a kiosk that holds a map of the village to connect trail users to local businesses. Lighting was installed to improve safety, and a new picnic area and accessible restroom were put in. A local business owner also helped beautify the area by clearing brush and adding new siding to a nearby building. Additionally, bike sharrows and wayfinding signage now direct trail users through Danville to the Kokosing Gap Trail terminus located on the opposite side of the village. When the weather has been nice, many users can be seen enjoying the new trail amenities, with some sharing that the restrooms and water station make it possible to park and begin their ride at the MVT instead of across town at the Kokosing Gap Trail terminus. Next steps will be to install 14 bike racks at four separate locations and reevaluate trail usage by conducting a second set of trail counts.



### At A Glance

Knox County's multi-use trail system offers opportunities for residents to live healthy active lifestyles and help reduce the current elevated rates of overweight and obesity, but some trail locations lacked amenities to entice users. Knox Public Health-Creating Healthy Communities partnered with the Village of Danville and the Knox County Park District to install new bike and pedestrian infrastructure at the Mohican Valley Trail (MVT) terminus in Danville. Individuals now using the trail can benefit from a new rest stop, water bottle filling station, and a wayfinding kiosk.



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# Licking County

## Fighting Food Insecurity One Garden at a Time.

Licking County agencies receive produce donations for residents.

### Challenge

Everyone should have access to fresh, healthy, affordable foods. For many individuals living in Newark this is not the case. Approximately 20.5 percent of Newark residents live at or below the federal poverty level. In addition to poverty, residents in Newark also face issues with transportation, substance use disorders, homelessness, and lack of access to a full-service grocery store downtown. There are many resources available in Newark; however, getting the resources to individuals in need can be a significant challenge. For residents in Newark, a local community garden organization has been making the healthy choice the easy choice by donating produce to community organizations serving vulnerable groups.

### Approach

Together We Grow Gardens (TWG), is a community garden organization that has been fighting food insecurity in Newark since 2012. They host U-Pick Markets at 4 of their 7 community gardens where residents can pick produce for a small donation if financially able. At the beginning of 2021, the CHC program at the Licking County Health Department met with TWG to develop a process to address their abundance of produce and how to further expand their reach. There are several homeless outreach programs, recovery facilities, and other organizations in Newark serving populations struggling with food insecurity. TWG decided to focus their efforts on donating their extra produce to these organizations on a weekly basis.

### Results

During the 2021 garden season, 13,000 pounds of produce were grown between the seven TWG gardens. TWG donated 3,345 pounds of extra produce to 10 agencies in Newark and throughout Licking County. The agencies included homeless outreach, women's shelters, and recovery facilities. TWG tracked the pounds of produce donated and surveyed the agencies receiving donations to find out how they would use the produce. The homeless outreach organizations reported putting the produce in their food pantries, while the recovery facilities and shelters used the produce in meals made on-site. The two women hired along with the program director, delivered the produce each week. Produce varied week to week with everything from tomatoes and peppers to watermelon.



### At A Glance

Many Newark residents face challenges accessing fresh, healthy, affordable foods and as a result suffer from poor health outcomes. In 2020, Together We Grow Gardens (TWG) gardens had so much bounty there was excess after many of the markets. In 2021, TWG staff worked with CHC and began exploring ways to expand their reach to other groups. With help from CHC, TWG developed a formal distribution process. TWG also received a grant to hire 2 part-time individuals to help with produce distribution and other garden programs from Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities.



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# Lorain County

## Supporting Safe Routes to School for Oberlin City Students

A road map for safe walking and biking to school.

### Challenge

The City of Oberlin is home to over 8,000 residents, including 3,000 students enrolled at Oberlin College and Conservatory. According to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), there were seven pedestrian and 21 bicycle crashes in the City of Oberlin between 2017 and 2021, all of which were within two miles of a city school. Thirty-nine percent of Oberlin City Schools (OCS) students walk and/or bike to and from school. Eighty percent of students live within walking or biking distance (2 miles) of their respective school, but according to surveys and parent interviews, students face multiple barriers in active transportation such as heavy traffic near school campuses, lack of shared use path/trails near school, safety concerns at crossings, and lack of adult supervision.

### Approach

In the spring of 2020, Lorain County Public Health (LCPH) established a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) oversight committee responsible for developing a School Travel Plan (STP) to guide decisions that support students biking and walking. Committee members included city representatives, council members, school administrators and educators, and leaders of community organizations. Together they developed a mission and vision statement that aligned shared values and guided the planning process. The committee met regularly, hosted public meetings, and distributed community surveys to design a STP that prioritized projects that would improve safety and encourage families to choose walking and biking. The final STP recommended changes to both the built environment and policies and programs that would support students and the school community. Having an active and approved STP is the final step in ensuring a community is eligible for local and state funding.

### Results

In the spring of 2021, LCPH applied for ODOT non-infrastructure funding that would support student walking and biking. The community was awarded \$20,000 to support SRTS programming for the 2021-22 school year. In accordance with the STP, LCPH, OCS, and community partners will support community-wide safety campaigns with local advertising, yard signs, school newsletters, and social media. Messaging will focus on promoting safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. OCS will also implement in-school safety education through curriculum changes and walk to school days. OCS will establish a student safety patrol to support and reinforce all SRTS efforts as well as engage students in leadership roles. The strong partnership between LCPH, OCS and the City of Oberlin serves as a successful model for developing and implementing an STP to support local SRTS programs.



### At A Glance

In 2020, Oberlin City Schools relocated their two elementary schools to the existing high school campus, with the long-term goal to also relocate the middle school. The eventual creation of one large school campus spurred the need to plan for student travel needs, especially when it comes to walking and biking. Oberlin City Schools, the City of Oberlin, and Lorain County Public Health lead a year-long planning process to develop a school travel plan that captured the voices of the community and ensured students could safely walk and bike to and from school.



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# Lucas County

## Making Active Transportation a Priority in Lucas County

Feedback from community residents define active transportation focus.

### Challenge

According to the 2019/2020 Lucas County Community Health Assessment, nearly 72% of Lucas County adults were overweight (34%) or obese (38%). 25% of adults and 18% of youth did not participate in any physical activity in the past week. Lucas County adults also report using the following modes of transportation on a regular basis, walking (11%), public transportation (9%) and biking (3%). These same individuals reported needing more accessible walking paths, bike trails, designated safe routes, and improvements to existing infrastructure.

### Approach

By providing safe, accessible active transportation facilities, more people will be able to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives resulting in less driving as well as improving overall health outcomes. Extensive community outreach was conducted during the months of May-September 2021 throughout Lucas County. Important partnerships were developed with both stakeholders and community organizations to assist with the engagement process. Different methods employed by the steering committee included social media posts, pop-up events/tabling, printed ads, online surveys, and paper surveys at different locations around the county. The purpose of the community engagement was two-fold: introduce the concept of active transportation to residents as well as understand the needs and wants of the people who live, work, and visit the county, in hopes of gaining community support for the adoption and implementation of the final Active Transportation Plan.

### Results

Over 650 Lucas County residents responded to the online and in-person surveys. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of survey respondents reported walking most days for transportation, while 21% of respondents reported bicycling most days to get to their destination. Respondents stated that better maintained or new sidewalks would improve walking in and around Lucas County. Continuous bicycle facilities, designated bike lanes, and protected bike lanes are most needed to improve bicycling in the county. The online map received close to 300 comments relating to popular destinations and good routes for walking and bicycling along with opportunities for improvements. Information gathered during engagement efforts was used to develop a draft bicycle network, pedestrian safety toolkit, and recommendations for programs and policies to support active transportation.



### At A Glance

Lucas County residents report walking and biking for transportation on a regular basis. Providing access to safe and accessible infrastructure will allow Lucas County residents the opportunity to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives and positively impact how an individual arrives to their destination. Lucas County Creating Healthy Communities collaborated with Toole Design Group and the Active Transportation steering committee to conduct community outreach throughout Lucas County to understand the transportation needs of the residents. The results from the extensive outreach effort was used to develop a draft county wide active transportation plan.



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# Marion County

## Prioritizing Equitable Access to Quality Nutrition

Local food pantries adopt new guidelines to improve access to healthy options.

### Challenge

Food insecurity is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. According to Feeding America in 2019, over 15% of Marion County residents were identified as being food insecure. From the same source, this was projected to increase to 16.1% of residents in 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Two main factors influence food security: employment status and poverty. Marion County suffers from a higher incidence of poverty (14.8%), children living in poverty (20%), and lower household incomes (50,608) per US Census 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. These hardships and inequities were amplified in the wake of the pandemic.

### Approach

Food pantries can serve a vital role in providing dietary needs to residents experiencing food insecurity. Through implementing nutrition guidelines in food pantries, two local organizations were able to not only provide food items, but also improve highly nutritious offerings to their consumers. In the spring of 2021, Marion County Public Health's CHC and Building Resilient Inclusive Communities (BRIC) coordinators began assessing readiness in area food pantries to implement Feeding America's *Nutrition in Food Banking Guidelines*. Once interested organizations were identified, local coordinators used this guide as a framework to draft localized policies that were reflective of each organization's needs.

### Results

Buckeye Food Alliance at the Ohio State University Marion Campus and Buckeye Community School in Marion County formally adopted these nutrition guidelines in 2021. Marion County Public Health was able to work with local, regional, and state partners to help inform other communities and key leaders on the implementation of these newly released guidelines. Funding was leveraged from the American Heart Association for costs related to technology and transportation. In addition to infrastructure improvements provided by grant funding, local pantries expressed that the guidelines provided a framework that helped to define pantry goals and missions, improved messaging and communication through the utilization of color-coded nutrition ranking and provided a tool to prioritize foods to procure. The adopted guidelines were designed to serve as a continuum of increasing healthy food access in the pantry setting. These two pantries have increased the ability to access healthy foods for the 4,654 low-income individuals living within a 0.5-mile radius of the pantries.



### At A Glance

Residents in low-income areas often experience food insecurity and have limited access to healthy foods. Improving access to nutritious foods improves health outcomes and increases equity. Local Creating Healthy Communities and Building Resilient Inclusive Communities coordinators partnered with two pantries to adopt guidelines that would prioritize offering of nutritious foods. Grant funding further supported the purchase of refrigeration and freezer units to store fresh foods like produce, milk, and meats. The color-coded healthy food ranking system, "Choose Often, Sometimes, and Rarely," helped reinforce healthy food choices.

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# Meigs County

## Fields of Dreams

Rural community ballfields score a new playground.

### Challenge

With a population of 50 persons per square mile, the Chester community in rural Meigs County has limited opportunities for youth activities, as the nearest public playground is at least eight miles away. Forty-two percent of Meigs residents surveyed feel that safe play areas are insufficient in their communities. A playground in the Chester community has not existed since school consolidation closed the Chester Elementary School in the 1990s. Area youth baseball and softball leagues utilize the Angela Eason Memorial Ballfields in Chester for organized sports, which was a dream of a local family in remembrance of a loved one. There was plenty of open space for children's active living opportunities, but minimal financial resources were available to develop the park to promote unstructured play.

### Approach

A survey of local families indicated that a playground area was a much-needed asset for the Chester community, and data suggest that fewer recreation opportunities may contribute to higher rate of childhood obesity in rural Southeastern Ohio. The Meigs County Health Department's CHC program stepped up to the plate with ballfield organizers and local residents to gather feedback and determine community needs. After a suitable playground area was designated, new playground equipment was installed, as well as safety surfacing, border, and an ADA compliant ramp.

### Results

This Chester community playground was made possible by the Angela Eason Memorial Ballfields, Chester Youth League, and CHC funding. The playground equipment and swings add additional play and activity opportunities at a frequently visited community gathering place in rural Meigs County. Despite equipment availability delays throwing a curve ball into the endeavor, the project was completed in late 2021—in plenty of time for 2022 youth league ball seasons. The freestanding playground unit installed includes slides, steps, climbers, and ladders. Additionally, a separate, two-seat swings component completes the installation. The playground's 28' x 56' area is surfaced and bordered for safety.



### At A Glance

Access to safe play areas is a challenge in rural Meigs County, yet play facilities are an important tool to help combat childhood obesity. The Meigs County Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with the Chester community to install a new playground at Angela Eason Memorial Ballfields, a local gathering place for organized team recreation. With the closest playground being eight miles away, youngsters in the Chester community now have access to a safe, accessible public play area close to home.



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# Perry County

## New Lexington's Journey to a Safe Route to School

Lack of sidewalks encourage school officials to apply for ODOT funds.

### Challenge

Perry County survey data noted that one third of Perry County youth are considered overweight. The New Lexington School District is located in an area that has no sidewalks, therefore school officials discourage students from walking to school. Creating a safe, easily accessible walkway for students to walk to school has the potential to impact the rate of obesity among the children within the school district. A project of this magnitude requires cooperation among many government entities including the school board, the township trustees, the village council, and the county board of commissioners. The CHC program located at the Perry County Health Department accepted the challenge of uniting the forces to move the initiative forward.

### Approach

The CHC program approached the New Lexington School District about pursuing an Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Safe Route to School (SRTS) application in the late winter of 2020. Community partners, led by CHC, were investigating Safety Grant funding for sidewalk along State Route 345, the connector highway to school property. It was determined that a SRTS application for Panther Drive would be necessary if students were to be able to walk to school. A team of individuals collected data regarding the number of students within a two-mile radius of the school, the poverty level of those students and the number of vehicle crashes in the vicinity. The ODOT SRTS funding was submitted in the spring of 2021. CHC continues to work for sidewalk funding for State Route 345 with plans to submit the ODOT Safety Grant in the fall of 2022.

### Results

The SRTS application submitted by the New Lexington Village Council on behalf of the New Lexington School District was awarded \$364,000 in the spring of 2021. The project will install sidewalk along Panther Drive to the school campus and provides 317 students living within a one-mile radius of the school the opportunity to walk to school. This SRTS funding will complement the New Lexington Village Council's ODOT Safety Grant application being submitted in the fall of 2022. The Safety Grant application is requesting over \$500,000 to provide sidewalk along Carroll Street. Sidewalk along Carroll Street creates safe, walkable access to the New Lexington shopping district and direct access to the SRTS project located along Panther Drive.



### At A Glance

Lack of access to sidewalks is not uncommon in rural communities. Most boomtown communities were not established with active transportation in mind. The New Lexington School District applied for Safe Routes to Schools funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to create opportunities for physical activity as one third of the districts' youth are considered overweight. Safe Routes to Schools funding will be utilized to install sidewalk along Panther Drive allowing for children to safely walk to school.



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# Ross County

## Actively Addressing Chronic Health Issues in Ross County

The development and adoption of an Active Transportation Plan.

### Challenge

The built environment of a community directly impacts health outcomes (Pinter-Wollman, Jelic, and Wells, 2018). Health disparities in Ross County are associated with its limited infrastructure. There are few ADA-compliant sidewalks and crosswalks, bikes lanes and racks, and protective bus shelters. This has resulted in a struggle with chronic health and safety concerns for the community. Diabetes and obesity continue to be persistent issues in Ross County. According to the most recent County Health Ranking's findings, the prevalence of diabetes (15%) and adult obesity rates (39%) increased from 2020 to 2021. Ross County performs worse than Ohio overall when comparing access to exercise opportunities (71% vs. 84%), physical inactivity (32% vs. 26%), and life expectancy (75.3 years vs. 77 years).

### Approach

Residents of walkable communities are twice as likely to get the recommended amount of activity as citizens in non-walkable areas (Huston, Evenson, Bons, et. al., 2003). Pucher, Buehler, Bassett, and Dannenberg (2010) found that residents with abundant active transportation (AT) infrastructure had lower rates of obesity. Thus, the Ross County CHC program opted to design and adopt an AT plan. Ross County was accepted into Toole Design Group's Ohio Action Institute. A team of community partners including government and health stakeholders led the development of the plan. In addition to workshops, a walk audit and community surveys were conducted, and a Wikimap was created, to inform the plan.

### Results

The AT Plan was adopted in 2021 by city and county officials. The plan included many miles of proposed sidewalks (7.79 miles), on street bikeways (22.33 miles), and shared use paths (15.05 miles). Since then, several AT activities have occurred. The CHC program and their partners were able to host a bike rodeo, conduct a professional development ride, create a free bike share program, install over 20 bike posts, and implement and improve over 10 bike lanes, sharrows, and crosswalks in Chillicothe. The city of Chillicothe received the AARP Community Change grant that allowed them to provide new protective bus shelters at bus stop hubs. Lastly, the Chillicothe City School District was successfully awarded over \$200,000 in Safe Routes to School funding to be used in 2026.



### At A Glance

The built environment and culture have a significant negative impact on chronic health outcomes and life expectancy in Ross County. The Ross CHC program and community partners were able to design a data-driven Active Transportation (AT) Plan. Since adoption, several AT activities and improvements, including bus stop shelters, bike lanes, crosswalks, bike posts, bike rodeo, professional development ride, bike share program, and being awarded Safe Routes to School funding, were completed.



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# Sandusky County

## New Inclusive Park Brings Community Together

Play park built to provide access to play for people of all abilities.

### Challenge

The 2019 Sandusky County Community Health Assessment reported that 20% of children aged 0-11 years were classified as obese, and 14% were overweight by BMI calculations. Parents reported that only 46% of this age group was physically active for at least 60 minutes every day. The CDC recommends children be physically active every day with a variety of activities. The Sandusky County Board of Developmental Disabilities serves more than 600 individuals with various developmental disabilities, with half being under the age of 21 and more than 30% younger than 13. There were no inclusive playgrounds in the county, which impacted many children and their caregivers. Engagement in physical activity helps improve physical and mental health and well-being for all.

### Approach

Many community organizations, businesses, and people that live and work in Sandusky County stepped up to fund the \$575,000 project. In early 2021, Sandusky CHC joined the Kiwanis Play Park Committee to assist in designing, planning, and building an inclusive play park. Members representing the Kiwanis Club, Sandusky County Board of Developmental Disabilities, City of Fremont, ProMedica hospital, and other organizations rose to the challenge of addressing barriers of access to physical activity for residents of all ages and abilities. The largest city park was determined to be the location for the most impact due to its amenities. This park consists of a large green space, multiple ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, and accessible restrooms.

### Results

The local Kiwanis Club took the lead collaborating with key community stakeholders to plan, design, and build the play park with the help of 150 volunteers over the span of 3 days. The accessible and inclusive play park covers a 10,100 square foot area, was designed with safety surfacing, and includes a play fire station and market café, outdoor musical equipment with chimes and drums, crawling tunnels, gliders, learning panels to promote auditory, sensory and visual stimulation, an inclusive no-transfer swing for families, and much more. Since the opening in October 2021, there has been positive feedback and an increase in playground usage among people of all ages and abilities.

*"It's a fantastic place! Perfect for young kids and kids with different disabilities to all play together!" — local mom.*



### At A Glance

The Sandusky County Public Health Creating Healthy Communities program partnered with The Kiwanis Club of Fremont, the Sandusky County Board of Developmental Disabilities, City of Fremont, and other key community stakeholders to build a new inclusive play park at one of most widely used parks in the Fremont. The 10,100 square foot space was designed with safety surfacing to allow people of all abilities access to various inclusive structures and the opportunity to move throughout the play space safely and independently. Now, children of all abilities can engage in play together and build relationships.



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# Stark County

## Children's Learning Garden Established at YMCA in Alliance

Kids get a chance to exercise their green thumbs.

### Challenge

In Ohio, 17.2% of youth ages 10 to 17 are obese, giving Ohio a ranking of 17 among the 50 states and D.C. (State of Childhood Obesity). Obesity has reached epidemic levels, with obese children at increased risk for many health problems, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, asthma, and joint issues. Further, the 2019 Stark County Community Health Assessment has listed obesity as one of the top five health related issues to address, and community health leaders have identified lack of access to fruits and vegetables as the biggest healthy lifestyle issue. If these disparities aren't addressed, children will have a greater chance of developing obesity later in life, further increasing their risk of chronic disease.

### Approach

Most children spend time in care outside of their home, making Early Care and Education (ECE) settings and schools some of the best places to reach children with obesity prevention efforts. CHC collaborated with the Greater Alliance Community Garden Association (GACGA) to implement a children's learning garden at the Alliance Family YMCA. In an attempt to use environmentally friendly material and increase sustainability, two metal 2-foot by 6.5-foot raised garden beds were purchased by CHC. In addition, seeds, garden supplies, and other resources were procured to help sustain the gardens and produce a fruitful yield for the growing season. The harvested produce from the garden will be used to help educate children on nutrition and healthy eating. A resident who is a Master Gardener requested to oversee the garden and will also be providing gardening education to the kids.

### Results

In July, the Alliance Family YMCA hosted a community volunteer day to install the garden beds. In attendance were GACGA members and health educators from the Stark County Health Department. Tomatoes, peppers, herbs, basil, green beans, and zucchini were planted in the Italian-themed learning gardens. Over a dozen children participated in sessions to learn more about the importance of healthy eating, nutrition, and gardening. The children also helped to harvest the vegetables and prepare the beds for the following growing season. Next year, two more garden beds will be added to expand the garden and provide more educational opportunities.



### At A Glance

According to the latest report from the State of Childhood Obesity, approximately 17% of Ohio youth ages 10-17 have obesity, ranking Ohio in the bottom third among all fifty states. Additionally, the 2019 Stark County Community Health Assessment lists lack of access to fruits and vegetables as the biggest healthy lifestyle issue. To address this public health concern, community volunteers came together to install a learning garden at the Alliance Family YMCA. Produce grown in the gardens will be used to teach children about gardening and the importance of healthy eating.



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# Summit County

## Kerr Park Becomes West Akron's Newest Destination

Neighborhood kids take the lead on designing play space.

### Challenge

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans states that children ages 6 through 17 years should get 60 minutes or more of physical activity daily. According to the 2018 Summit County Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, 44% of middle schoolers and 42% of high schoolers do not meet these recommended levels. Additionally, the neighborhood surrounding West Akron's Kerr Park has a history of resource depletion, resulting in over 30% of households living below the poverty level. This compounded by other factors has been linked to lower levels of physical activity, putting youth at greater risk of becoming overweight and obese, and ultimately developing a chronic disease.

### Approach

Summit County Public Health's Creating Healthy Communities Program collaborated with the City of Akron, Akron Parks Collaborative, United Way of Summit County, Summit County Think Tank, GAR Foundation, and KABOOM! Playground to build a new kid-designed, community-defined play space. The process focused heavily on community engagement. The collaborative started by recruiting diverse voices that provided representation of the community. This was done by connecting with corporate and neighborhood partners and tapping into the existing network of community advocates. Kids were then asked to draw their dream play space. Overarching themes were then incorporated into two design options, which were presented online and in-person to the community for feedback and to vote on the final design.

### Results

Volunteers from the neighborhood, area businesses, and organizations came together to install the community-designed play space at Kerr Park. The build took place over four days, with multiple shifts. The park now features ground-level play, a zip line, and sensory play equipment. A rubberized surface was installed under the play space to address both accessibility and safety concerns. Landscaping was done surrounding the new equipment to beautify the space and make it more inviting. Kerr Park is slated to receive additional investment to improve amenities. The playground installation served as a catalyst for further engagement to transform the remainder of the park. Over 4,100 residents young and old in West Akron now have a new place to play, be active, learn, and thrive.



### At A Glance

West Akron residents lack safe, inclusive, public areas to be active. With the physical inactivity rate of Summit County youth falling just below 50%, and the many health risks associated with such inactivity, an intervention was needed. Residents and community leaders united to comprehensively plan, fund, construct and install new play equipment at Kerr Park. The brand-new play space is complete with slides, swings, a zip line, and traditional play and climbing structures. The new equipment is a testament to the power of the collective community. Now West Akron residents of all ages have access to a safe and equitable place to play and be active.



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# Trumbull County

## Niles Advances Active Transportation Plan

Activating local communities to enhance quality of life.

### Challenge

The City of Niles is in Trumbull County and has a population of around 18,000 residents. The city has an obesity rate of 39.2%, and 34% of residents reporting no participation in physical activity in Trumbull County. The city is looking to improve the health of its residents by providing increased opportunities to stay active. Poorly maintained and missing infrastructure has not been an ally to physical activity in Niles. Existing data from Eastgate, a Metropolitan Planning Organization, shows sidewalk gaps throughout the city and, where there are sidewalks, unsafe conditions for walking. Coupled with no designated bike lanes located in residential areas, accessibility is of major concern for those with limited access to physical activity and travel.

### Approach

With the increased need to move away from a car-centric network into a more human-powered network to improve rates of physical activity, the city participated in the Ohio Action Institute. The process involved the Trumbull County Creating Healthy Communities Coalition, local and state governmental bodies, and other partners to create an Active Transportation Plan that would address connectivity issues within the city. Through planning and engaging in community conversations, the City of Niles was able to create a plan that focuses on connecting neighborhoods and residents to the rest of the community for health-related purposes.

### Results

The City of Niles adopted its Active Transportation Plan on November 3rd, 2021. Planning has begun to implement projects outlined in the plan, such as the development of a bike lane in a neighborhood street to improve accessibility, connectivity, and safety. Niles will hire a city planner to help the city accomplish the goals of the plan and will seek additional funding sources to complete projects. With 45 proposed projects and approximately 10 miles of infrastructure improvements incorporated into the plan, this will have a major effect on the community.



### At A Glance

Residents of Niles have limited access to their community due to lack of infrastructure. With high obesity rates and low access to healthy foods and physical activity, prioritizing accessibility, connectivity, and safety in the community will help to improve outcomes. Niles participated in the Ohio Action Institute in order to design an Active Transportation Plan. The plan will help build a well-connected network within the city in order to improve health outcomes and accessibility. Since adoption of the plan, the city has started the process of completing projects.



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# Union County

## Marysville Municipal Pool Offers Healthy Snack Options

Healthy snacks, increased pool visits convince leaders to adopt policy.

### Challenge

Ohio children rank 17th in the nation and third in the Midwest for obesity, according to the most recent 2021 State of Childhood Obesity Report. Additionally, the 2018 Union County Health Assessment found that 67% of adults in Union County are overweight or obese. These elevated overweight and obesity rates can contribute to heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases—which account for 70% of all deaths in the United States, according to the CDC’s Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. Although a lack of physical activity can be to blame, unhealthy eating habits learned at a young age and lack of access to healthier foods are also contributing factors to overweight and obesity that must be addressed.

### Approach

The Marysville Municipal Pool (MMP) in Union County is a popular destination for many residents, but many options at their concession stand include snacks and beverages high in sodium, fat, and/or sugar. CHC Coordinator, Tamisha Matus, reached out to the Pool Manager at the MMP to gauge interest in offering healthier options. CHC then shared information about the Good Food Here (GFH) Program and provided nutrition education to help pool managers and lifeguards conduct an assessment of their current food offerings and identify gaps. Taste tests of healthier options were then conducted to help plan for and identify new snacks and beverages to be added to the concession’s menu.

### Results

The City of Marysville and the MMP agreed to adopt the Good Food Here Menu as part of their concession policy. From June through September, more than 33,000 people of all ages visited the pool. Sales of concessions increased over 21% compared to 2019 concession totals, and the additional healthier snack options, which included fresh fruit, peanuts, and ice fruit bars, accounted for roughly 40% of the total menu. According to an end of season survey, 42% of pool patrons had tried the new menu, with the most favorite option being fresh fruit. Future seasons will incorporate new data tracking software to help monitor concession sales and enhance tracking of healthier food expenditures.



### At A Glance

To help increase access to healthier foods and curb high levels of overweight and obesity in Union County, Creating Healthy Communities worked with the City of Marysville and the Marysville Municipal Pool to add healthier options to the pool’s concession stand. Families visiting the pool can now enjoy affordable healthier snacks as part of the new Good Food Here (GFH) Menu. During the 2021 season, more than 33,000 pool guests were able to choose from many different snack and beverage options that met the GFH nutrition standards. Concession sales increased by 21%.



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# Vinton County

## Wyman Park Renovation: A Significant Improvement for Vinton County

Upgrades increase accessibility and physical activity opportunities.

### Challenge

Vinton County ranks 85 out of 88 counties in Ohio for health behaviors. This is partially due to the high obesity (33%) and physical inactivity (29.1%) rates which both exceed the state's averages according to the 2019 Vinton County Community Health Assessment (CHA) Report. The CHA also reports that, 55.5% of residents feel there are no safe places for children to play within their community. In an effort to improve this, the Vinton County Health Department's (VCHD) CHC Coalition has partnered with the Wyman Park Board, the Vinton County Board of Developmental Disabilities (VCBDD), and the Village of McArthur to renovate Wyman Park in McArthur. With physical inactivity rates on the rise, increasing opportunities for recreation is more important than ever.

### Approach

During a meeting in early 2021, Wyman Park was found to have several items in disrepair and only one inclusive element on site. The groups decided to replace several play structures with ones with multiple ground-level elements to encourage inclusion. The CHC program and the VCBDD funded the purchase and installation of 13 new items for the park. These items were split between the two separate play areas. To address accessibility, the Wyman Park Board will fund an ADA-compliant surface and the VCBDD will sponsor a sidewalk and accessible parking spaces – both on the right side – in Spring 2022. The CHC program was also able to purchase parking stops and signs to support this effort.

### Results

Wyman Park play areas were closed during renovations. Through hard work and dedication of volunteers, the equipment removal and installation were completed in late Fall 2021 and one side of the park was reopened. The new equipment greatly increased safety, accessibility, and inclusivity of the park. There are now at least 8 accessible elements at Wyman Park. Once the ADA-compliant surface and sidewalk are completed, one side of the park will be fully accessible by all visitors regardless of ability. The other side's surface will be updated once additional funding is available. The groups have received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from the community. The community will be invited to celebrate these improvements at a grand reopening event in Spring 2022.



### At A Glance

According to the 2019 Community Health Assessment, 55.5% of Vinton County residents do not feel their children have a safe place to play within their community. The county has physical inactivity and obesity rates higher than the state average as well. The Vinton County Creating Healthy Communities program and its partners aim to address this by renovating Wyman Park in McArthur. The groups have replaced several play structures at the park to increase safety and accessibility for visitors of all ages, regardless of limitations. Additional upgrades will take place throughout 2022.



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# Washington County

## Coalition Boosts Collaboration and Impact

### Challenge

With six times as many members actively involved today than there were just two years ago, and 19 new partners joining coalition efforts since 2019, the WCCHCC has experienced significant growth. This organizational growth created a welcome challenge for coalition leadership and members. Members recognized the need to strengthen the coalition systems through which they work to support a larger membership, effectively use limited resources, and maintain strong connections during difficult times. The COVID-19 pandemic added another level of difficulty to collaborative work, making it even more critical to examine how coalition members work together to accomplish the CHC mission.

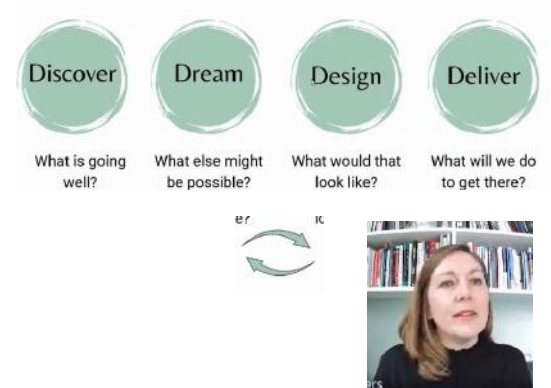
### Approach

Maven Lane partnered with the coalition to facilitate an organization development process known as Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on recognizing, appreciating, and fully employing the strengths of individuals, organizations, and communities to accomplish even greater outcomes. At the start of 2021, more than 40 WCCHCC members participated in the launch of this process providing an outpouring of useful information to guide the work. Throughout the year, members used participation packets to prompt reflection ahead of meetings, collaborative brainstorming, discussions, and surveys to generate and capture ideas. In August, a strategic leadership team began to drive detailed work on a strategic plan to strengthen the coalition. These efforts helped the members visualize the future of the coalition and set that vision in motion.

### Results

The Appreciative Inquiry process resulted in a strategic plan focused on implementing the coalition-strengthening ideas developed by members. A key part of that plan—the creation of working groups—has been implemented to empower members to more easily connect and collaborate with others who share similar passions. The four working groups (Healthy Eating, Active Living, Health Equity, and Communication) are aligned with CHC principles, interrelated, and designed to provide a system of connection and support to advance health outcomes in the community. The remaining elements of the strategic plan will be set in motion in 2022 to boost coalition development, community engagement, and health equity initiatives. A change process is not easy, especially during a pandemic that heightens challenges to already demanding work. However, members volunteered to join and lead the newly formed working groups.

### Appreciative Inquiry



### At A Glance

Through funding made available by Sisters Health Foundation, the Washington County Creating Healthy Communities Coalition (WCCHCC) partnered with Maven Lane, a local consulting agency, to embark on a year-long strength-based approach to identify and fully harness the positive core strengths of the coalition. The goals were to (1) more fully discover the talents and resources of coalition members and (2) develop strong communication and collaboration systems for the coalition to support effective long-term health advancement efforts. The Appreciative Inquiry process resulted in a strategic plan focused on implementing the coalition-strengthening ideas developed by members.



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**Ohio**

Department  
of Health

