

# ShapingNJ grants awarded in SJ

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Noticed anything different about your community in the last few years? Say, the addition of community gardens, fresh produce in corner stores, expanded school breakfast programs or walking paths?

Thanks to nearly \$1 million invested through the state Department of Health's "ShapingNJ" initiative since 2009, more than 200 organizations are working to help residents make healthy choices.

That's because more than one in four adults in New Jersey are obese, and another 36 percent are overweight. Three South Jersey counties have the highest obesity rates in the state: Cumberland, Salem and Gloucester.

In 2016, 19 community organizations will receive a total of \$190,000 in ShapingNJ grants to increase access to healthy food and physical activity. Five organizations in South Jersey have each won a \$10,000 grant to fund community health programs in neighborhoods facing an increased risk of obesity.

Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA will use \$10,000 to expand its New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative to 12 stores in Atlantic City and bring the YMCA's "Healthy U" program into five of the city's public schools.

The YMCA reached a similar agreement with the Vineland Health Department through a 2014 grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control.

Currently, 23 stores are part of the Live Healthy Vineland initiative.

"Corner store owners have welcomed the initiative with open arms," said David Calderetti, director of Collective Impact at Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA. "They recognize that there are many members of their communities that lack easy access to grocery stores and rely on corner stores and other small retailers to buy the items they need to feed their families. We provide guidance in making the right choice the easy choice."

Calderetti said the YMCA is doing similar work in Millville and Bridgeton with the help of a United Way grant.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey will use its award to improve access to federally funded child nutrition programs during the summer and after school.

The nonprofit group is working with Bridgeton to build local support for expanding the programs, with plans to add Atlantic City, Millville and Vineland.

The organization helps lead the state's Food for Thought School Breakfast Campaign, which has boosted the number of low-income students eating school breakfast by 75 percent since 2011.

National Park School District will use its grant to maintain a children's community garden through the summer months. Last year, the elementary school used its ShapingNJ grant to establish the garden at the borough hall and to support an existing garden at Red Bank Battlefield.

This year, the money will also support the school's "Just A Bite" program to encourage children to try new vegetables such as beets, radishes and various lettuces, Principal Carla Bittner said.

Work is also underway to create safe walking and biking routes to school, and to add equipment like stationary bikes, treadmills or standing desks at the school. The district has also worked with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension to add more physical activity to the children's school routines.

Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers will use the money to expand its

Faith in Prevention program from nine faith-based organizations to 22 congregations in Camden. The program helps churches and mosques develop healthy food and nutrition policies, and apply them to new or existing community food pantries. The program will also encourage more physical activity and help congregations install walking paths or bike racks.

The Camden Tri-State Transportation Campaign will use its grant to improve the safety of walking and bicycling in the Waterfront South neighborhood. Last year, the organization used the grant to study ways to make the area safer, including the redesign of a dangerous intersection and improving pedestrian access to a neighborhood garden. This year's grant will be used to put those recommendations into place.

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