



PROGRESS REPORT 2009-2017

Building Healthy Communities
by Advancing Environmental,
Policy and System Changes
in New Jersey



About New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids

The New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids is a statewide program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with technical assistance and direction provided by the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance.

The mission is to build and strengthen efforts to improve the overall health in low income communities and communities of color by helping children and families achieve a healthy weight.

The primary goals are to:

- Convene, connect and empower community partnerships, coalitions, and collective impacts.
- Create healthy, equitable communities where people live, learn, work, play and pray.
- Advance changes in the environment, policy and systems that support increased opportunities for healthy eating, physical activity, improvements in the built environment and community clinical linkages.
- Advance equity in policies and programs that address social determinants of health, and remove barriers to good health.

While the program places special emphasis on working in five key communities — Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton and Vineland — the objective is to inform all communities across the state and region about best practices to transform public policies and schools, and improve neighborhood conditions.

**“ALL CHILDREN DESERVE TO BE
HEALTHY AND LIVE UP TO THEIR
FULL POTENTIAL”**

*Darrin W. Anderson, Sr., Ph.D.
State Program Director
NJ Partnership for Healthy Kids*

NJPHK PRIORITIES



1

Build healthy, equitable communities.



2

Improve access to culturally appropriate healthy food.



3

Advance state and local policies to help communities create a culture of health.



4

Create healthy school environments in New Jersey.



5

Build knowledge and understanding through thought leadership platforms.



6

Implement evidence-based programs in early childcare environments.

A Message from NJPHK

Childhood obesity is one of the most urgent threats to the health of our nation. Today, more than 23 million U.S. children and teens — nearly one in three young people — are either overweight or obese.*

According to the New Jersey Department of Health, nearly one in four New Jersey children ages 10-17 are overweight or obese, leading to a plethora of health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. Sadly, these are the issues that have been generally associated with adults in the past. What's more concerning is if the prevalence of obesity continues to rise, New Jersey's obesity-related health care spending could quadruple to \$9.3 billion in 2018.

Since its inception in 2009, the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids (NJPHK) and its community partners have made great strides in grass roots efforts related to implementing more than 300 policy and environmental changes. The goal is to help children and communities achieve a healthy weight through prevention strategies that support access to affordable healthy foods and increase opportunities for safe physical activity.

We began this effort through community partnerships in Camden, New Brunswick, Newark, Trenton and Vineland. Since that time, NJPHK has expanded its impact to improve the health and well-being of children in more than 66 communities across New Jersey.

From assisting with the development of community and school wellness policies, renovating neighborhood playgrounds, securing commitments to provide healthier choices from local corner stores to creating bike lanes and co-sponsoring fun and fitness events in public places — it's about creating sustainable change in our communities.

Together with our community partners, we are building a foundation and making a difference in helping our children achieve a healthy weight, and look forward to an even brighter future for the next generation.



Darrin W. Anderson, Sr., Ph.D.

State Program Director
New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids

Executive Director
New Jersey YMCA State Alliance



David Carcieri

President
New Jersey YMCA State Alliance

President/CEO
Somerset County YMCA

*National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)

OUR LEADERSHIP



Michael Bright

President/CEO
YMCA of Newark
and Vicinity
Believe in
Healthier Newark



Sue Cornell

Healthy U Director
New Jersey YMCA
State Alliance



Marissa Davis

Project Director
Trenton YMCA
Live Healthy Trenton



Valeria Galarza

Senior Project Manager
Cooper's Ferry Partnership
Get Healthy Camden



Janet Heroux

Program Manager
NJ Healthy Communities
Network Community
Grants Program



Jaymie Santiago

President
New Brunswick Tomorrow
Live Well New Brunswick



George Steinbronn, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer
Cumberland Cape
Atlantic YMCA
Live Healthy Vineland

Today, more than 300 environmental and policy changes have been implemented to help promote a better quality of life through healthy eating and physical activity in numerous local New Jersey neighborhoods.

NJPHK At-A-Glance

Partnered on 300 environmental and policy changes

Supported the implementation of nearly 200 healthy corner stores, bodegas and concession stands



Co-sponsored the annual statewide "Culture of Health" Conference attended by 500+ public health professionals



Launched Greenwood Ave. Farmers Market in Trenton



Sponsored Healthy Family Weekends at Frost Valley YMCA, attended by more than 250 New Jersey residents



Installed bike lanes in New Brunswick, Trenton and Vineland



Led playground builds and park renovations in Camden, Trenton and Newark



Served as thought leaders at local and national health-related events and conferences

Implemented Complete Streets Policies/ street scale improvements in all coalition cities



NJPHK received one of the first NJ Department of Health Population Hero Awards



IMPROVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY FOOD



Proper nutrition is vital to good health and disease prevention. It's also essential for healthy growth and development of children and adolescents. Yet many New Jersey communities lack access to healthy foods and supermarkets. For this reason, residents must either travel a long distance to purchase healthy food, or buy less healthy food from nearby sources, such as convenience stores and fast-food restaurants.

NJPHK and its partners continue to make progress toward advancing health equity through a variety of environmental and policy changes. Among the community changes implemented are healthy farmers markets, healthy corner stores, community gardens and healthy restaurants.



Healthy Farmers Market

Launched in 2015 in partnership with the Trenton YMCA, the Greenwood Ave. Farmers Market (GAFM) is just one way that Trenton is helping to close the health gap and increase longevity. The market location began as a vacant parking lot, but today is the site of a bustling community hub where hundreds gather for healthy options every week from June through October.

Access to healthy, affordable food options, various health screenings, socialization and a safe place for children to run and play, are just some of the family benefits. More importantly, the market offers eligible families a dollar-for-dollar matching incentive which allows them to stretch their funds, while providing nutritious meals for their families.

With support of the USDA Summer Feeding Program, GAFM also provided 700 free meals in 2017 to Trenton children, helping to combat hunger when school is not in session.



“Each year, more than 5,000 residents visit the market, and nearly 2,000 take advantage of the health services.”

— Sam Frisby, CEO, Trenton YMCA





Currently, there are nearly 200 corner stores participating in the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative, including more than 50 enrolled by Campbell's Healthy Community Initiative in Camden.

Healthy Corner Stores

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative is a statewide program focused on increasing the availability and sale of healthy, affordable food in local corner stores/bodegas. NJPHK, in partnership with The Food Trust, works directly with corner store owners to sell and market healthier foods. Store owners receive education, tools and incentives to promote healthier food options to residents. A subset of stores also receive nutrition education, taste tests and health screenings.

Live Healthy Vineland also is exploring the feasibility of expanding the corner store model to create a Healthy Food Network, consisting of food pantries and restaurants, as well as corner stores. In 2017, Live Healthy Vineland launched its first Healthy Dining Week, with more than 24 restaurants offering healthy menu options to its patrons.



Healthy Choices On-the-Go

As a result of a mini-grant from NJPHK, Cape May County expanded healthy food and snack options at the community recreation center and the Cape May County Park and Zoo. Both facilities now include more non-sweetened beverages and more healthy food choices in their cafés. They also established a farmers market in the local park and created a community Walking Club, where participants walk along a marked trail that connects the Cape May County Park and Zoo with Middle Township.

“Far too many New Jerseyans live in communities where there are no well-stocked grocery or convenience stores in their neighborhoods, leaving them unable to make healthy food choices.”

— Ann Ramos, Senior Manager,
The Food Trust

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES THAT PROMOTE ACTIVE PLAY



Refurbished playgrounds, Born Learning Trails (a series of interactive activities), Safe Routes To School, bike lanes, park hops and Complete Streets are just some of the environmental changes implemented by NJPHK and its community partners. These efforts resulted in getting more than 500,000 New Jersey children and families moving.

NJPHK and its partners worked with KaBOOM to build playgrounds in both Trenton and Camden that now benefit thousands of children. Over 400 community volunteers came together to build the playground that was designed by the students at

Monument School in Trenton. The playground replaced empty and broken blacktop. School officials were once afraid to send kids out to play there, for fear they would be injured.

In North Camden, 400 volunteers also transformed an outdated and rundown park on Elm Street into an inviting space with brightly colored equipment, cheerful flowers planted all around the site and new picnic tables with game boards painted on top.

“This new playground is a true reflection of what lies in the hearts and minds of the children of our great city.”

— Dana Redd, Former Camden Mayor

Profile: Karen Merricks



Karen Merricks believes the Frost Valley YMCA changed her life and the lives of her sons. In 2015, NJPHK sponsored the Merricks family to attend a Healthy Family Weekend at Frost Valley.

The camp's emphasis on healthy eating and fun outdoor activities in a peaceful, mountain setting energized her family to continue those healthy life lessons when they returned home to Camden. Merricks later returned to Frost Valley as an ambassador, accompanying other Camden families and championing the camp's wellness philosophy.

"When I visited Frost Valley, I weighed 200 pounds, had high blood pressure and swollen feet and ankles," said Merricks, who has been a vegetarian for 32 of her 56 years. "You'd think that would keep me healthy." But after taking a new job with a Camden charter school, she overindulged on pasta and bread when she and her colleagues went out to lunch and her weight shot up in no time.

Today, she weighs 147 pounds and eats lots of fruits and vegetables that are low in starch. Her blood pressure is under control. She walks and stays active supervising and playing with the children at the charter school and those in her community, where she is president of her tenant association. She still eats out with colleagues, but she is now aware, substituting salad and extra vegetables for the previous high-carb meals.

Healthy Family Retreat

NJPHK sponsored four Healthy Family Weekends at Frost Valley YMCA — a camping environmental education and conference center located in Claryville, New York, and part of the Catskill Mountains. Nearly 100 families from Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Vineland attended the weekends. The overall weekend was about getting people out of their comfort zones and experiencing various outdoor activities.

During the weekends, families were divided into three groups. The first group prepared healthy food such as salsa, fajitas, and turnovers using apples they picked from the orchard and whole wheat tortillas. The second group visited the greenhouse and learned how to grow food in urban settings with limited space using community and container gardens. The third group participated in hiking, rock climbing, archery, and zip lining. The teams then alternated from one activity to the next every couple of hours throughout the day. Each family also completed an action plan to foster healthy eating changes at home.



"In New Jersey, nearly one in four children ages 10-17 are overweight or obese, leading to a plethora of health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol."

— Peri Nearon, NJ Department of Health



New Brunswick Residents Reclaim Streets With Ciclovía

Since 2013, on several weekends each year, New Brunswick closes its streets to vehicular traffic to make way for Ciclovía — a day when walkers and bikers enjoy their neighborhoods without the noise, commotion and hazards of cars and buses. The free, citywide event promotes healthy active living, with numerous activity and health-screening stations along a three-mile route. Each year, more than 4,000 residents and visitors walk, run, bike and skateboard in the vehicle-free streets, participating in music, dance, yoga and Zumba classes.

“Our follow-up evaluation showed that Ciclovía effectively increased the health and wellness of attendees on the day of the event. Participants said they engaged in more physical activity at Ciclovía than when they normally exercised.”

— Jaymie Santiago, President,
New Brunswick Tomorrow





Ensuring Safe Access Through Complete Streets

Complete Streets policies help ensure that residents and visitors, regardless of age, ability, income, ethnicity or mode of transportation, can safely and conveniently navigate throughout the community.

Today, over 500,000 residents are benefiting from Complete Streets Policies adopted in all five NJPHK communities — Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton and Vineland.

Efforts to make it easier for residents to move around the city safely earned Trenton recognition by The National Complete Streets Coalition for having one of the best policies in the nation. Of the nearly 130 communities across the country that submitted policies, Trenton ranked number eight on the list. The Trenton Complete Streets Policy included a number of proposed infrastructure improvements, such as a wellness loop throughout downtown that



included crosswalks in the downtown and Delaware and Raritan Canal areas, as well as the installation of crosswalks and repavement of North Warren Street.

Trenton’s policy should be a national standard; [it] takes a stand for everyone who uses our streets, including people young and old, whether they’re walking, driving, bicycling, riding a bus, shopping or sightseeing.”

— ***Stefanie Seskin, Deputy Director, National Complete Streets Coalition***

Vineland's Safe Routes to School initiative also focused on getting people moving and adopting healthier lifestyles. The city initially created two miles of downtown bike lanes on Wood and Elmer streets between East and West Avenues, as well as crosswalks.

Sabater Elementary School was chosen as the first Vineland-area Safe Routes project because more than 400 of the school's students bike or walk to school each day. Due to the success of Sabater Elementary, all 12 Vineland schools will have Safe Routes to School Travel Plans within the next three years. The travel plans will identify flaws in the existing built environment that inhibit safe bicycling and walking to and from school. They are a necessary step in gaining funds to make additional infrastructure improvements.

“Vineland schools also are educating children and parents about pedestrian safety, championing walk-to-school days, presenting bike rodeos and promoting the health benefits of walking and biking.”

— George Steinbronn, Jr.,
CEO Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA

Newark and Cape May Communities Install Born Learning Trails

The United Way's Born Learning Trails are a great way for a community to use outdoor space to promote literacy and social development. The activities tap into all the senses and keep children engaged. The Born Learning Trail provides 10 self-guiding and engaging, interactive activities to create early learning. By following a series of colorful shapes, signs and hopscotch squares, children can learn their numbers and letters through active play. NJPHK, United Way of Essex and West Hudson, and the YMCA of Newark & Vicinity partnered to launch the Born Learning Trail in Nat Turner Park in Newark, which serves more than 9,000 children annually. An additional Born Learning Trail was installed at the Cape May Zoo and utilized by more than one million annual visitors.



CREATING HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS



Local school wellness policies are an important tool in promoting student health, preventing and reducing childhood obesity, and providing assurance that school meal nutrition guidelines meet the minimum federal school meal standards.

NJPHK has been instrumental in encouraging New Jersey school districts to: adopt wellness policies and create councils that commit to providing students with healthy foods; ensure recess for all students; and make quality physical education a priority. Today, multiple school wellness policies have been adopted across the

state. NJPHK's participation in the Advocates for Children of New Jersey's (ACNJ) Food for Thought Campaign has resulted in more than 40,000 additional children receiving school breakfast throughout New Jersey.

“Without a healthy meal at the start of the school day, many students will struggle to concentrate and learn. ACNJ’s efforts in championing breakfast ensures students are getting the nutrition they need to concentrate, learn and succeed in school.

— Cecilia Zalkind, President/CEO ACNJ



Healthy U

In 2008, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance created Healthy U — a collaborative initiative to combat the obesity epidemic among New Jersey children. The goal of the program is to prevent childhood obesity through nutrition and education, increased physical activity and family involvement.

Healthy U utilizes the CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) curriculum to promote healthy behavior changes at home and in school that can last a lifetime.

The CATCH curriculum has been implemented in nine Newark preschools. CATCH was also launched at Columbus and MLK elementary schools in Trenton, helping thousands of children develop healthier habits earlier in their lives.



New Jersey ranks 27th in the overall prevalence of childhood obesity.

“Healthy U has proven that establishing healthy habits in childhood can promote behavior changes that can last a lifetime.”

—Jonathan Pearson, Executive Director, Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield NJ

HEALTHY ADULTS CREATE HEALTHY KIDS WORKSITE WELLNESS



More than 18 Vineland-area employers have discovered the value of improving, supporting and maintaining healthy behaviors in the workplace. It's known that healthy adults influence the behaviors of their children. Since 2015, Live Healthy Vineland (LHV) and the Vineland Department of Health have worked with local businesses and organizations to design and implement interventions that positively impact employee health.

Programs established at organizations such as Elwyn New Jersey, The Safeway Group and the City of Vineland — all early adopters of LHV's Healthy Worksite Program — serve as model participants, and were recognized for their efforts in fostering a culture of health and wellness at LHV's Healthy Worksite Enrichment and Empowerment Conference.



“It’s great to work in an environment that focuses on keeping employees healthy and is equipped with all of the necessary tools for employees to build healthy habits through diet and nutrition.”

—Christina Belony, Lead Technician, Dorothy Group Home, Elwyn New Jersey.

ADVOCATING FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

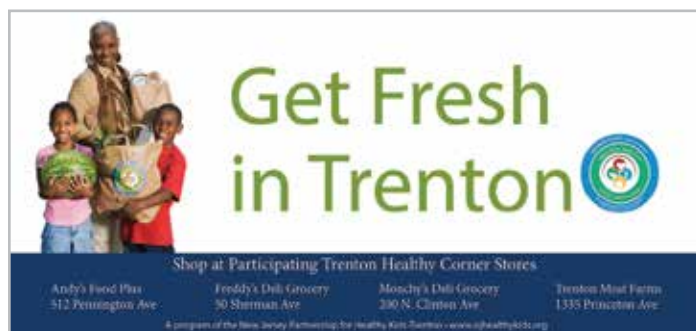
The New Jersey Healthy Communities Network Advocacy Coalition (NJHCNAC) believes that a healthy New Jersey starts with healthy, equitable communities embedded in public policies that ensure access for those most vulnerable. As a member of the NJHCNAC, NJPHK increased public awareness and support for several state and local policy initiatives. Below are a few examples:

Healthy Small Food Retailer Act in New Jersey

Many individuals face limited healthy food options in convenience stores in their neighborhoods. The Healthy Small Food Retailer Act will assist corner store owners with consumer education, marketing, and equipment to improve access to healthy food and give economic support for corner stores and bodegas. The next step is to work with public and government officials for scale and sustainability.

Recess in Schools

Children who are physically active can reduce their risk for obesity, high blood pressure, and type II diabetes while improving cognitive skills, concentration and attitudes. NJPHK educated the public about the benefits daily recess provides to young students. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed a bill requiring daily recess for elementary schools, leaving the decision up to schools and districts. We will continue to urge for recess, physical activity and quality physical education on behalf of our 1.3 million school-age children.



Proper Medicaid Coverage for Diabetes Prevention

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 8.4% of adults were diagnosed with diabetes. Many others have undiagnosed diabetes or pre-diabetes which can lead to poor health outcomes including nerve, kidney and eye damage. Diabetes affects seniors and lower income populations at a higher rate than the general population, and New Jersey's Medicaid program had significant coverage gaps. The 2016 NJ State Legislature approved a new law that requires Medicaid coverage for diabetes self-management education, training, services, and equipment for patients diagnosed with diabetes, gestational diabetes, and pre-diabetes.

CULTURE OF HEALTH CONFERENCE

For the fifth year, NJPHK co-hosted the Building a Culture of Health Conference attended by more than 500 public health professionals, including social workers, educators, dietitians and community leaders from across the state. Participants learned how communities can create policy and environmental changes that can increase opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity.

The day-long conference included local and national experts who led morning and afternoon plenary sessions and workshops on a variety of public health topics including: early childhood, transportation, food access, behavioral health, public/private partnerships, diversity and inclusion, and equity.



CULTURE OF HEALTH CHAMPIONS

Each year, Culture of Health Champion awards are presented by NJPHK in recognition of organizations and individuals who are committed to creating changes that surround kids and families with opportunities to make healthy choices.

Our annual Culture of Health Champions range from residents and businesses, to public health and healthcare professionals, and to New Jersey cities that have made a significant impact on the health of local communities.

2017

Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers
Community Health Advocate

In Memory of

Dr. Mary Ann Schierer
Research and Evaluation Expert

2016

Rutgers University
Culture of Health Champion

Joshua Pantoja, Jr.
Healthy Kids Champion

2015

City of New Brunswick
Active Living Champion

NJ Farm to School Network
Food Access Champion

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Community Champion

Campbell Soup Company
Business Champion

2014

Meishka L. Mitchell, ICP, PP,
Vice President, Neighborhood
Initiatives, Cooper's Ferry
Partnership

Michael G. Blackwell,
Superintendent of Recreation,
City of New Brunswick

Marguerite Leuze, DMH,
RN, Special Assistant for Health
and Nursing, Office of Health
Services, Newark Public Schools

Francis Blanco, Chief of Staff,
Office of the Mayor of Trenton

Barbara George Johnson,
Executive Director, John S.
Watson Institute for Public Policy,
Thomas Edison State College

Lee Burke, former University
Research Administrator,
Association Manager and
Professional Fundraising
Executive

2013

Dr. Nwando Anyaoku, former
Director of General Pediatrics,
Children's Hospital of New Jersey

Dan Fatton, Director of
Development, ECS

Lisanne Finston, former
Executive Director of
Elijah's Promise

Emma Lopez, Health Educator,
City of Vineland

Mariam Merced, M.A.,
Director, Community Health
Promotion Program, Robert Wood
Johnson University Hospital

Robin Waddell, M.P.H., County
Extension Department Head,
Senior Program Coordinator of
Nutrition Programs

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Co-Directors

NJPHK Camden—YMCA of Burlington and Camden Counties/United Way of Camden County/Cooper's Ferry Partnership

NJPHK New Brunswick—Raritan Valley YMCA/New Brunswick Tomorrow

NJPHK Newark—YMCA of Newark & Vicinity/Newark Beth Israel

NJPHK Trenton—YMCA of Trenton/Isles, Inc.

NJPHK Vineland—Cumberland Cape Atlantic YMCA/City of Vineland Department of Health

Statewide Partners



Community Partners





New Jersey Healthy Communities Network (NJHCN) Community Grants Program has expanded its efforts through a statewide funding collaboration, and has grown from supporting 10 nonprofit organizations to 66 in 17 counties. Since its inception in 2011, the collaboration has awarded more than \$3.2 million in community grants.

NJHCN grants are awarded to projects designed to have a lasting impact in building a culture of health in communities, schools, places of worship, early care and education centers, neighborhoods and municipalities. Each grant addresses at least one strategy to increase opportunities for physical activity and one strategy to improve access to healthy eating. Among the initiatives are: organizational and school wellness policies, farmers markets, open streets, healthy corner stores, bike rack installations, walk/bike/food audits and community gardens.



New Jersey Healthy Communities Network Community Grants Funders





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