LISC
Pawtucket | Central Falls
Health Equity Zone
HELPING NEIGHBORS BUILD
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

2017 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
Tremendous strides have been made on the Pawtucket Central Falls HEZ initiative after just the first two years of a four-year commitment. We are enormously proud of being able to provide leadership services and act as the backbone agency for this hard working collaboration of community leaders.

When we think about good health, we understand that where we live plays a big role in our well-being and quality of life. Since LISC is dedicated to helping local partners transform neighborhoods into resilient and sustainable communities, working to improve the social determinants of health fit squarely within the LISC mission.

When faced with the challenge of managing a Health Equity Zone in arguably the most underserved region in Rhode Island, we were resolved to approach the issues with a hard-working team of dedicated partners. What has evolved has exceeded all expectations.

Our plan is well-grounded in specific community needs. RI LISC pioneered a new methodology for an intensive resident engagement campaign that yielded tremendous results. From this, we created the Building Healthy Neighborhoods Action Plan and began to build a rich collaboration of partners.

After just a year of executing the plan, we are already seeing the benefits to the community. We are making strides on expanding access to nutritious food and increasing levels of activity; we are developing programs to foster intergenerational relationships, diabetes education and management, and HEZ partners are focused on creating affordable housing solutions.

There is still work to be done, but by leveraging relationships, identifying best practices and encouraging the work by community partners, we are able to foster the teamwork necessary to produce a much greater impact. We’re excited to see the next phase of this effort.

Jeanne Cola
Executive Director
Rhode Island LISC
In 2014, RI LISC received a grant from the RI Department of Health with the support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create a Health Equity Zone (HEZ) in Pawtucket and Central Falls to address and improve health determinants of their residents. This area was one of 10 HEZ initiatives, and encompassed the most critically underserved communities in the state.

LISC brought together a coalition of community partners who had been serving the Pawtucket/Central Falls community, but with individual missions and goals. The new team met quarterly, participated in working groups, conducted intensive listening sessions and then reviewed the results of the community assessment to produce and ratify the Building Healthy Neighborhoods Action Plan.

Six focus areas were identified, along with key strategies to address health outcomes. The HEZ collaborative would focus on strategies to improve access to healthcare and healthy foods, improve access for housing and address homelessness, increase youth and elderly engagement, improve fitness and the overall quality of life, and work to improve outcomes in economic development in order to increase jobs and income potential.

As the year passed, the collaborative grew to more than 20 organizations which pledged support for the work being done. This led to the growth of organic partnerships within the group and an increase in the ability to leverage funds to ensure the work continues to advance.

The LISC Rhode Island team is working to strategically integrate and leverage the talent and resources within these two cities to find the best way to achieve goals. After the first year of a four-year implementation phase, there have been significant strides. While LISC Rhode Island has acted as the backbone coordinating agency for the initiative, it’s the work of the collaborative of community partners that is propelling this success.

Some of the successes are profiled in this report and include the creation of walking paths in both Central Falls and Pawtucket, increased participation in Diabetes Prevention and Diabetes Self-Management programs, the creation of the youth led Pawtucket Central Falls Youth Coalition, construction of 76 community garden beds at Galego Court in Pawtucket, and a fully resident-led redesign of Garfield Street Park. We are on our way to making real changes in the lives of the residents. Here are just some of our stories.
With the goal of the HEZ to reduce health disparities among residents, improving access to high-quality and preventative medical and behavioral health care services became a top priority. A variety of strategies were identified including the development of programs to enhance health services, health promotion and prevention programs, and improve diabetes prevention and management. This expansion and promotion of services has translated to real success for residents.
Changing one’s lifestyle and adopting healthy habits can be an overwhelming experience for someone who might not know where to begin. For Pawtucket resident Mirna Rivera this was the ongoing issue she faced. Although Mirna was motivated to live a healthier lifestyle, she was unsure of how to set herself on a path to success. The Diabetes Self-Management Education Program (DSME) offered her the jump start she needed to make real changes in her life. Looking toward the future, Mirna made the decision to enroll in the 6 week DSME program at Blackstone Valley Community Action Program. During the class, she learned ways to change her behavior and gained the support she needed to develop personal diabetes management goals. Mirna completed the classes, and continues to live by the new lifestyle she learned in the course. She is now committed to eating three, healthy meals-a-day and getting regular exercise, she is now off of her diabetes medication and is even trained to deliver diabetes management classes.

Mirna has noticed a difference in the way she feels. She has been able to use the tools to reach a healthier weight and credits this to the lifestyle changes she learned through the program and incorporated into her daily routine.
Providing access to fresh fruit and vegetables is critical to improving everyone’s health but availability, transportation, and cost issues negatively impact access for residents in Pawtucket and Central Falls. Ensuring availability of good nutrition, regardless of someone’s ability to pay, is a key component of improving health determinants.
HEZ Collaborative partner Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT) has worked this year to manage the construction of a community garden within the Pawtucket Housing Authority property at Galego Court. The large garden area is divided into 76 large plots, and is available to anyone in the community. SCLT also planted a native pollinator habitat that includes fruit trees and berry bushes.

In addition, SCLT placed two apprentice growers on the Galego Court farm. These apprentice farmers, and the education provided by SCLT staff, benefits residents with support and guidance as they begin to grow food for their families.

On average, a single community gardener can expect to save between $500-$650 on grocery bills each year, while some growers report as much as $1,000 in savings. And for many, that means families can eat from their gardens year-round in the form of frozen vegetables during the off season.

SCLT also is turning the Garfield Street Park into the city’s first community garden. Through an interactive process with the surrounding community and public officials, and the support of funding from Citizens Bank/LISC Growing Communities initiative, as well as the United Way of RI, these projects are continuing to grow and provide residents with fresh vegetables to augment their food budget.
This year, the City of Central Falls created Youth Employment Opportunities Supporting Seniors to foster relationships between youth and seniors in the community, as well as provide the youth with employment opportunities. To kick off this new partnership, the city implemented a very successful snow removal program. Twenty students were paired with 32 senior households throughout the winter, and then expanded the area to include as many as 50 households for each snowfall. Each teenager to participate received a new pair of heavy winter gloves, job training skills, and a stipend which was crucial for many who were helping their families provide food and housing.
Rob Sayre-McCord, Director of Central Falls Parks & Recreation highlighted the success of the program stating: “We’ve received more ecstatic calls from senior residents than I’ve ever gotten about any program in my time with the city. They think the kids are wonderful workers and they are incredibly pleased that someone is paying attention to them, listening to their problems, and caring for them.”
Improving participation for youth leads to improvements in the quality of life and emotional health, as well as improves ties to the community.
HEZ funding to the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket meant expanded reach to some of the community’s most at-risk youth. Grant funding helped recruit 471 new members and renew 519 members for programs at the Elson Clubhouse. The outreach impact was deepened even further thanks to the support of Pawtucket Central Falls Development Corporation and additional funding leveraged through the Citizens Bank/LISC Growing Communities initiative. The Club was able to add more transportation services for members and include additional stops in Central Falls which helped to accommodate the growth in demand from members, and also provided a safe way for those in the Central Falls community to reach the Club each afternoon.

The Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket delivers daily programs focused on helping members reach their full potential. Youth participate in activities designed to improve academic success, good character & citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. All are designed to encourage improvement with employment skills, including: communication (reading, writing, speaking); problem-solving (math, science, technology); healthy living (being mindful of diet and exercise, avoiding risky behaviors); and building character and citizenship (civics, volunteerism and civility).

NEW HEZ PARTNER

CHILDHOOD LEAD ACTION PROJECT

Since 1992, the Childhood Lead Action Project has worked to eliminate childhood lead poisoning through education, parent support and advocacy. The Project is the only organization in Rhode Island devoted exclusively to this critical issue. Childhood lead poisoning remains the most pervasive, yet preventable environmental health problem in Rhode Island. It is one of the most insidious indicators of environmental injustice – children of color continue to have alarming rates of poisoning.

Over the years, the Childhood Lead Action Project has come to be recognized as a leading education and information resource by the community and as a catalyst for social change.
IMPROVE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE
The HEZ, in collaboration with the American Heart Association worked with the City of Central Falls to refurbish a walking path that encircles the city.

The new walking path uses an updated route that better reflects commonly walked areas of the city. The new route passes by established city landmarks, historical sites, and various points of interest and it connects the two main business and restaurant thoroughfares to encourage interaction with local businesses. The path deliberately incorporates city schools and elderly resident high-rises with the addition of specific, shorter loops for people who are looking for a shorter stroll. In addition, the city is working closely with the Central Falls Housing Authority to expand a walking club which currently has 25 members and is growing. The City will further expand the Mayor’s Health Walks and continue the initiative that began in 2016. This initiative allows residents to walk with the Mayor, other municipal and state representatives, senators, and dignitaries.

This new walking path will also be used as the “Walking School Bus” program grows in the community.
Many thanks to all of our Collaborators

American Heart Association
Blackstone Community Health Team
Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center
Blackstone Valley Community Action Program
Blackstone Valley Community Health Center
Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket
Care New England
Central Falls Housing Authority
Central Falls Parks and Recreation Department
Central Falls School Department
Childhood Lead Action Project
City of Central Falls
City of Pawtucket
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
Food Strategy Director, State of RI
Fuerza-Laboral
Gateway Healthcare

American Heart Association
worked with the PawSox to include
new heart-healthy menu options
at McCoy Stadium.

Central Falls Housing Authority
– When faced with a shortage of
transportation for some of the area’s
youth, the CFHA stepped up and
provided transportation. They said
they had the vans, of course
they would help!
Many thanks to all of our Collaborators

Memorial Hospital
Nursing Placement, Home Health and Hospice
PawSox Baseball Club
Pawtucket Central Falls Development Corp.
Pawtucket Housing Authority
Pawtucket School Department
Progreso Latino
RI Dept. of Health
Rhode Island Parent Information Network
Rhode Island Public Health Institute
RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Seque Institute for Learning
Southside Community Land Trust
The Empowerment Factory
The Providence Center
Women and Infant Health Care Alliance
YMCA of Pawtucket

The Empowerment Factory was an important driving force behind the new Baldwin Loop walking trails in Pawtucket – it is the first of many that are planned.

The Providence Center helped provide technical assistance to many of our partners that helped them get grounded in behavioral health treatment options. That guidance was phenomenal.

Food on the Move takes a big bite out of food deserts in all the HEZ zones in Rhode Island. Look for their mobile market at Woodlawn Community Center, Fogarty Manor and Forand Manor.
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