



# South County Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Initiative South County Health Equity Zone (HEZ) Year 1 Spotlight

## Promoting Health Equity

South County residents deserve every opportunity to live healthy lives. Health happens in the community, schools, and places people spend their time. With funding from the Rhode Island Department of Health, two local hospitals, all five community health centers, seven school districts, both YMCAs, the community action agency, the community mental health center, Washington County Coalition for Children, municipalities, and other social service organizations are working together to ensure health for all South County residents.

Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds (HBHM) was launched in April 2015. This comprehensive community initiative aims to improve physical and emotional wellness through efforts to **increase awareness**, **community capacity**, and **collaboration**. HBHM is about breaking down silos, uplifting residents, and changing systems so that everyone across the County has access to the resources and opportunities essential for health.

### HBHM Strategies:



**Data Dive.** A community engagement and empowerment effort aimed at addressing community identified health priorities.



**Healthy Food Access.** Strategies aimed at improving access to healthy, affordable food at local farmers' and mobile markets.



**Reach Out and Read.** An evidence-informed program that builds on the relationship between parents and medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children ages 6 months to 5 years.



**5210.** An evidence-based campaign to bring awareness to healthy behaviors: eating 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day, limiting screen time to no more than 2 hours per day, engaging in at least 1 hour of physical activity per day, and drinking 0 sugar sweetened beverages.



**Youth Mental Health First Aid.** An evidence-based training program designed to help adults assist adolescents (ages 12-18) who are facing a mental health or addictions challenge and/or are in crisis.

*"This funding has given a number of very passionate partners an opportunity to collaborate and shine the light on some key health issues in South County."*

*-Susan Orban,  
HBHM Director*



Building a deep understanding of the pockets of poverty in South County helps to inform the decisions made by agencies and institutions concerning the investment of resources and the design of interventions to address health disparities. Health disparities are both an outcome and a cause of poverty, and addressing these issues requires a deep understanding and concern for the root causes of both and the dynamics of the communities in which they occur. The Data Dive is an effort to devise a replicable model for 1) small geography data collection concerning health and public safety, 2) developing knowledge of community dynamics, and 3) engagement strategies for both institutions and community members to work together to devise interventions. The model will be tested in five neighborhoods in conjunction with each community health center.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Bradford Village, **a neighborhood in Westerly**, was chosen as a targeted area based on **37 key informant interviews**
- Input regarding health concerns and social and cultural strengths and challenges was collected from a number of **diverse partners** including school personnel, town employees, health and mental health providers, as well as **56 Bradford Village households**
- Information Technology staff from Westerly Hospital, South County Health, Wood River Health Services, Thundermist Health Center and Gateway HealthCare collaborated to create a **diagnostic profile** for Bradford Village
- A unique method was utilized to identify street names within a census block to ensure **demographic and health data** were linked
- Public safety and school officials have committed to **collecting and sharing data**
- The School Committee agreed to distribute a parent survey to the **630 families** with children in Bradford Village
- A community meeting was held in Bradford Village to share findings which resulted in **7 parents** agreeing to work as an **Advisory Committee** for the ongoing intervention
- Peace Dale was identified as the second targeted neighborhood following **15 key informant interviews**



2 South County neighborhoods have been engaged





## Healthy Food Access

Accessing food, especially healthy food, is a challenge for far too many Americans. Numerous individual- and community-level factors make food insecurity a persistent problem throughout the country, including South County. Access to affordable, healthy food plays a role in food security, especially among WIC and SNAP recipients. Food access is shaped by the retail food environment, including the availability of grocery stores, corner stores, and other food outlets such as farmers' markets. As part of HBHM, Thundermist Health Center is leading efforts to improve food access for South County residents and to support greater redemption rates of WIC and SNAP benefits on fresh fruits and vegetables using incentive funds.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- **2 trainings** were provided on the farmers' market program, SNAP, and WIC with **30** participants representing **10 agencies**
- **6 new WIC and SNAP access points** were offered in South County – 4 summer markets and 2 winter markets
- All eligible **farmers' markets in South County now accept WIC** and **1 accepts senior coupons**
- **3 cooking classes** were offered once a week for 6 weeks reaching 45 people (15-65 years old)
- **2 fruit and vegetable pop-up markets** were offered by Wood River Health Services
- **"Food on the Move"** ran **19 mobile markets** at **5 sites** including the South County YMCA, Westerly Hospital, Indian Run Village, and Westerly Housing resulting in **\$5,897** of produce sales
- **324 EBT transactions** occurred at the farmers' markets totaling **\$6,915** in sales
- **363 WIC checks** were accepted at the farmers' markets totaling **\$1,913 (\$3,522 Bonus Bucks)** in sales

**19 mobile markets helped to increase access to healthy food**





## Reach Out and Read

The first five years of life offer a critical window for learning as rapid brain development happens at this time. When children are read to, they are exposed to more words which increases the likelihood that they will start school on track and reach their full educational, social, and life potential. Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based program incorporated into regular pediatric checkups. It builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to ensure children develop critical early reading skills.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Expanded programming beyond the existing **3 pediatric groups** and **3 community health centers** to also include all **5 health centers**
- A total of **717 books** that focus on nutrition, physical activity, and feelings have been purchased to create starter packs for the HBHM sites

7 organizations helped children develop early reading skills



5210

5210 focuses on increasing opportunities for healthy eating and active living. The program encourages behavior change through a simple evidence-based message: **5 or more** fruits & vegetables; **2 hours or less** of recreational screen time; **1 hour or more** of physical activity; and **0 sugary drinks**, more water. Partnering organizations promote the message.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Building on 3 years of implementation at Narragansett Bay Pediatrics, Dr. Celeste Corcoran has continued to champion the promotion of the 5210 message by recruiting Dr. Lisa Manlove and other South County healthcare providers to spearhead efforts at **2 South County health centers**: Wood River Health Services and Well One Primary Medical & Dental Care
- As trusted voices in the neighborhoods, Drs. Corcoran and Manlove have presented 5210 at **4 school district wellness committee meetings** and **2 community settings**
- 5210 has been incorporated into the programming at **4 South County community-based organizations** including South County YMCA (preschool, after school and day camp), Tower Street Community Center (out-of-school program), Charlestown Early Learning Center, and South County Community Action Head Start
- Walking school buses are being implemented at **2 elementary schools** in South Kingstown in conjunction with Healthy Places by Design



## Youth Mental Health First Aid

One in five Americans has a mental illness and oftentimes may not get help until it is too late. Many people with poor mental health are reluctant to get help or may not know where to turn for care. In addition, the symptoms of mental illness can be difficult to detect. As a society, we largely remain unaware of the signs and symptoms of mental illnesses. As part of HBHM, the local school departments and Washington County Coalition for Children are implementing the Youth Mental Health First Aid training designed to introduce adults to risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns, build their understanding of the impact they can have on the lives of youth, and identify common treatments.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- **21 trainings** have been conducted
- **335 adults have been certified** as First Aiders (270 of which were school personnel)
- The majority of participants report an **increased confidence in addressing youth mental health** 3 months post training

**335 adults have been certified as First Aiders**



## HBHM Communication

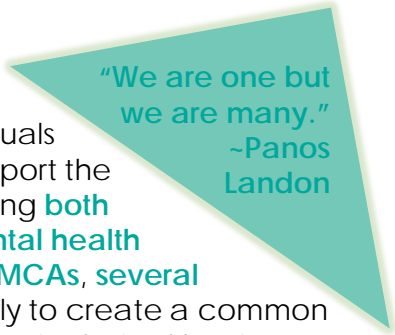
Communication is extremely important to a “social change” initiative such as HBHM and begins from the moment someone shares her passion and connects with others through the exchanging of information and collaboration. Communication provides a structure for advocacy and activism and is key in sustaining efforts and in shaping how the efforts influence social change. A number of communication efforts were implemented during this first year.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- A **HBHM brand**, including logo and style guide, was created to increase awareness and recognition of the initiative
- A HBHM website ([www.bodiesminds.org](http://www.bodiesminds.org)) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SChealthybodieshealthyminds/>) have been developed
- A **kick-off event** was held in September 2015 for partners and collaborators
- Governor Gina M. Raimondo and HEALTH Director Alexander-Scott visited South County Hospital in October 2015 to **highlight the Health Equity Zone initiative**
- A **county-wide database** of institutional stakeholders who can generate, receive, and spread resources was established
- **2 e-newsletter prototypes** have been created and distributed
  - “Spread the News”
  - “South County Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds”

## HBHM Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, comprised of organizations and individuals from across the South County region, has rallied to lead and support the work of South County HBHM. Over the past year, partners including **both local hospitals, 5 community health centers, the community mental health center, 7 schools districts, the community action agency, both YMCAs, several social service agencies, and 2 local coalitions** have met regularly to create a common agenda and maximize collective impact. The Steering Committee is chaired by Jim Berson, past President & CEO of the Greater Providence YMCA and resident of North Kingstown. Other members include:



"We are one but  
we are many."  
~Panos  
Landon

- Donald DeHayes, Provost, University of Rhode Island
- Lou Giancola, CEO, South County Health
- Laurel Holmes, Director of Community Partnerships & Population Health, L+M Westerly Hospital
- Chuck Jones, CEO, Thundermist Health Center
- Michael Lichtenstein, CEO, Wood River Health Services
- Celeste Corcoran, MD, Pediatrician, Coastal Medical/Narragansett Bay Pediatrics
- Susan Stevenson, Children's Service Director, Gateway HealthCare
- Susan Bradanini, Community Health Nurse, Narragansett Indian Health Center
- Laura Jones, Government Relations, RI Parent Information Network
- Lori Ann Hiener, Head Start Director, South County Community Action
- Jeff Broadhead, Executive Director, Washington County Regional Planning Council
- Roy Seitsinger, Superintendent, Westerly Public Schools
- Teresa Tanzi, Representative, RI General Assembly
- Rev. Joanna Hertzog Betkoski, Associate Pastor, St. Andrew Lutheran Church
- Rob Panoff, Founder & Consultant, RPG Strategies
- Kristen Di Santo, Executive Vice President Human Resources, Washington Trust Company

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- **26 additional partners** collaborated with the Steering Committee to implement the strategies and ensure success
- **3 subcommittees** have been established with the goal of moving the shared work forward: Visioning and Metrics, Policy, and Behavioral Health System
- **4 workgroups** have been formed specific to program/activity roll out: Children's Mental Health Advisory Board (overseeing Youth Mental Health First Aid), 5210 Planning, Food Access, and South Kingstown Data Dive Planning
- Findings from a **social network analysis**, completed by the Steering Committee and its partners, suggest a:
  - **moderately dense** network (52%) in which members are likely to share common beliefs or values, influence one another, and get information out to one another's constituents
  - **moderately centralized** network (52%) in which members are willing to support the initiative's goals.
  - **high level of trust** (79%) among the network as a whole

## Moving Forward

Multi-strategy program, policy, and environmental change interventions such as HBHM are challenging. These efforts require an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, non-profits, and residents to achieve significant and lasting social change. Partners must abandon their individual plans and collaborate on a common agenda, shared measurement, and alignment of efforts. HEZ funding has provided the foundation for partners to establish relationships and build integrated systems. During Year 2 of the grant, partners will continue to leverage resources and facilitate conversations focused on establishing systems that link food providers, mental health support, social service, and healthcare agencies to improve access for all South County residents.

## We're in. Join us

Community involvement is vital to sustain the exciting work of HBHM. For more information, call Susan Orban, HBHM Director by phone at (401) 788-2347, email at [sorban@southcountyhealth.org](mailto:sorban@southcountyhealth.org) or visit the [www.bodiesminds.org](http://www.bodiesminds.org) page.

## Acknowledgements

### This report was authored by:

Tamara Calise, DrPH, M.Ed  
Daniella Dominguez, MPH  
Amanda Ryder, MPH



A special thanks to Susan Orban, HBHM Director, and the organizations that provided information and support for this report.