



# Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

2023 End of Year Report  
Year 2



*Cheektowaga/Sloan students hula-hooping*

## Centering Health Equity

With the support of many dedicated community partners, we continued implementing two five-year grants from the NYS Department of Health. We coordinate a multi-sector effort to reduce the risk of obesity in school districts and high-need communities by increasing demand for and access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. The grant period began June 1, 2021, and will continue through May 31, 2026.

Our work this year was centered on health equity. Health equity is defined as “fair and just opportunities afforded to everyone so that all people can attain their highest level of health; valuing

everyone equally with sustained efforts and resources heavily focused on eliminating health disparities.” We believe that health outcomes should not be dictated by zip code, school district, or financial status.

In this, we are working with schools, community worksite and daycares to strengthen their wellness policies, improve nutrition and increase opportunities to participate in physical activity. Some of this work includes:

- Procuring playground equipment for children with disabilities
- Reducing classroom celebrations that focus on food
- Improving cross walks and access to public parks
- Increasing access to food pantries
- Providing clean drinking water

We continue to develop policies and programs that make healthy choices easy choices and are excited to share

our Year 2 progress with you in this report. We look forward to continuing this momentum throughout Year 3 and beyond.

Erie 1 BOCES is thankful to partner with the Healthy Community Alliance, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County and GObike Buffalo to implement the grant.

Our incredible grant team is instrumental in providing technical assistance, coaching, and procuring resources for eight school districts and multiple communities across three Western New York counties. They enable communities to implement sustainable policies, build systems, and inspire environmental changes that create a “Culture of Wellness.”

Yours in good health,

**Kate Huber**  
Grant and School Coordinator  
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# COLDEN BIKE TRAIL

For the 160 students at Colden Elementary recess has been re-vamped thanks to the creation of a new walking and biking trail around the perimeter of the school campus.

The Colden Wellness Committee saw an opportunity to increase physical activity in their school while saving some sneakers in the process. Students had to traverse a lawn to access the school's outdoor classroom and basketball courts. When it rained, this lawn would quickly become a muddy mess and led to limited access to these outdoor features.

Alongside the installation of a walking and bike path, Colden purchased a class set of bikes. Bicycling will be offered as part of their curriculum, giving students who may not own or have learned to ride a bike the opportunity to ride at school.

Funding from CHSC was used to purchase the gravel and landscape fabric for the bike trail. The installation in Summer 2022 was complete by Giordano Excavation, who generously donated the labor to complete the project.

To purchase their new twenty-five bike fleet and helmets for students the wellness committee relied on community donations and grant funding. The Colden community raised \$5,900 and a grant from "All Kids Bike" brought in an additional \$3,700. The community rallied again to add fun and challenges to the bike path. A trail kiosk was installed, and playground features were added with their support.

To prepare students to take full advantage of the new bike path, GoBike Buffalo visited students to host a bike safety class. They also supported the installation of two new bike racks for students to encourage them to ride their own bikes to school.

With the support of Tom's Pro Bikes, a local Colden bike shop, fifth and third grade students were given a bike skills class to help them either learn to ride or increase their biking capabilities. Colden intends to expand this program to other grades next year. Chandra Anderson, 1st grade teacher, says "The primary students are in awe watching the older students bike ride. They cannot wait to take on the bike trail in the fall!" Starting in Fall 2023, Colden physical education classes will include the "All Bike" curriculum.

**"AS PRINCIPAL, I LOVED SEEING THE GROWTH OF THIS WHOLE PROJECT FROM THE START. OUR STUDENTS ARE EXCITED TO GET OUTSIDE AND RIDE OUR BIKE TRAIL. OVER TIME, THEIR CONFIDENCE IS GROWING AND SOME STUDENTS WHO HAVE NEVER RIDDEN A BIKE ARE LEARNING HOW TO RIDE! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE THIS GOES AND AM THANKFUL FOR OUR PARTNERS AT CREATING HEALTHY SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FOR THEIR PARTNERSHIP!"**

**- BROOKE LANGWORTHY**



"Since implementing biking at a Colden Elementary there is a noticeable excitement amongst the students. Students are all at different skill levels. Despite that they are all cheering for each other's accomplishments as they tackle the challenges of the bicycle playground features and trail riding. The joy felt being a part of the progression and milestone moments such as watching a student pedal for the first time is indescribable." Says Erin Georger, a parent volunteer with the bike program.

The Colden bike program intends to grow into the future. The Wellness Committee is working on bringing a bike storage shed to campus to move their bike fleet out of the building and into outdoor secure storage. The trail will be resurfaced with a mixture of clay and slit to create a safer, smoother riding surface. This will make it easier for younger students to ride. Nearby, there is a larger Rail Trail that supports biking throughout the region. The committee is working to connect these two trails.





# CONNECTING CATT COUNTY

The Town of Great Valley is beginning to research bringing complete streets to their community. A workshop was held to start discussions of the project.

In partnership with the Seneca Nation and Pennsylvania Environmental Council, we are working to advance trails that will connect Western PA to Western NY.

We advanced a feasibility study for improvements to 5 Mile Rd in Allegheny, NY. The goal is to promote safer connection and access for students. We hosted two public town hall-style meetings at Allegheny-Limestone Middle-High School.

## COMPLETE STREETS: CHEEKTOWAGA

This year we made strides in ensuring communities have safer streets around key areas for play! In Cheektowaga two intersections had crosswalks painted and bump-outs installed.

The first intersection leads directly to the Youth Recreation Center and the other is inside Cheektowaga Town Park. These projects were completed in early June.

We partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Cheektowaga to collaborate with youth artists in creating art for the bump-out installations.





# SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Maryvale Primary students snow shoeing



Annabella enjoying the new adaptive swing at Maryvale Primary



Educators participating in Yoga 4 Classrooms training at the Erie 1 BOCES Education Campus

## TRAINING & WORKSHOPS

Again, this year, we provided numerous training and professional development opportunities to our community. Educators, administrators and community partners from throughout the region came together to learn and network with each other.

8

Wellness Wednesday Webinars were held virtually

8

School districts participated in the Wellness Policy Training held in October and December

55

Educators attended the Making a Difference Wellness Conference in March

2

Early childcare centers received PALS (Physical Activity Learning Session) Training and Nourishing Healthy Eaters Training



# IMPROVED ACCESS TO FOOD

Utilizing CHSC funds, the Resurrection LIFE Food Pantry in Cheektowaga installed a state-of-the-art digital Smart Board and uses new iPads to communicate with their community.

One of the primary populations served by the Resurrection LIFE Food Pantry are Deaf and hard of hearing. Through this new technology the patrons of the food pantry are able to communicate with volunteers. They can ask questions about the foods they have been given, as well as inform pantry workers about dietary restrictions or allergies they may have.

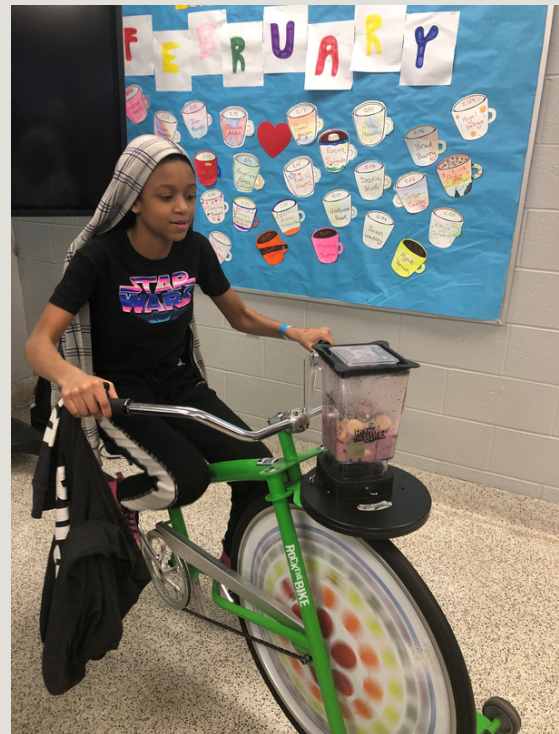
The Smart Board and iPads can also connect pantry patrons with healthy recipes that can be made with the food given!



The Resurrection LIFE Food Pantry and their new technology was featured in news segments with WKBW- Channel 7 and Spectrum News!



*Cheektowaga-Sloan tower gardens are being used in conjunction with science, garden and FACS programs,*



*The Lackawanna Middle blender bike was used as part of a healthy reward for students who met behavioral and academic goals.*



# IMPROVING NUTRITION IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Water bottle fill stations are being purchased for worksites, schools and community sites to emphasize the importance of drinking water for employees and families. 5 have already been installed on the Villa Maria College campus!



Our team was on site in Randolph to play fruit and veggie taste test game!



The Lackawanna Open House provided families with information about joining the district wellness committee and offered coloring sheets for kids.



The Maryvale Middle STEM girls club is planting vegetables to grow in their new tower gardens.



# COMPLETE STREET FUNDING

Through grant writing and partnerships with elected officials, the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant team was able to procure additional funding to further their complete streets work in our region.

## \$1M

in capital dollars and \$50,000 for a feasibility study for Cheektowaga trails through Assembly member Monica Wallace

## \$108K

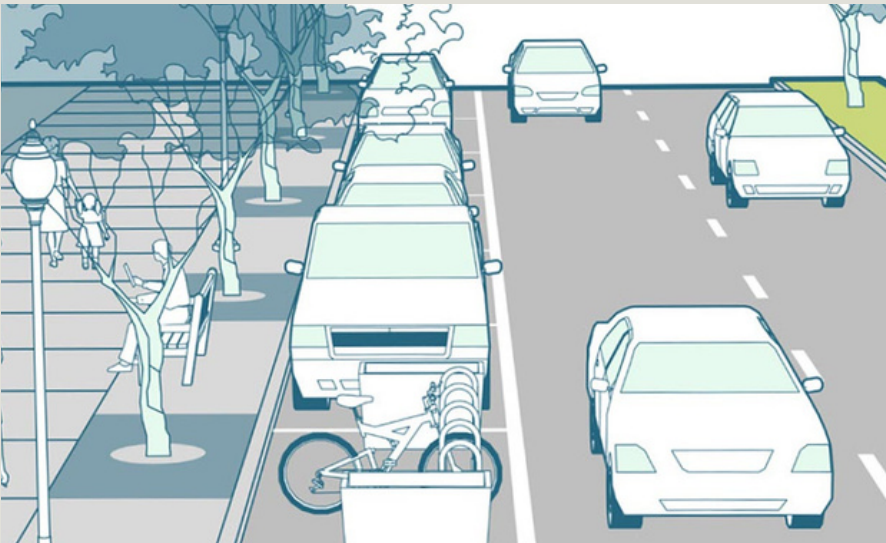
secured through Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council to advance Cheektowaga Trails feasibility study

## \$7.5M

federal RAISE grant for the Southern Tier Trail was procured in partnership with Cattaraugus County Economic Development Office

## \$44K

contracted with the Town of Allegany School Trail Feasibility Study project



*Complete streets mock-up*

## WHAT ARE COMPLETE STREETS?

Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.





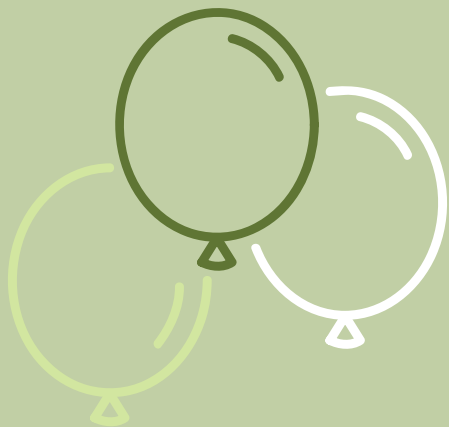
# STRENGTHENING POLICY

Creating systemic change and encouraging our communities to put health and wellness into writing as a policy is among our most important work. These long-term commitments to wellness establish a culture that includes nutrition and physical activity as priorities for generations to come.

Here are a few examples of policies that are being written and updated in our region to reflect improved nutrition and more access to physical activity.

## STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS

- Establishing enough time to eat school meals
- Limiting caffeinated beverages
- Requiring at least 20 minutes of daily recess in elementary schools
- Rethinking food rewards
- Encouraging healthy classroom celebrations and fundraisers



In-school birthday celebrations that feature cupcakes may unintentionally be non-inclusive to students with food allergies or those who are fasting for religious observances. Reimagining what classroom celebrations look like allows everyone to participate!

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

- Establishing "Complete Streets" to allow for pedestrians, bikers and vehicles to share the road.
- Creating guidelines for placement of healthy foods in food pantries at eye level.
- Promoting healthy celebrations and meetings

## STRENGTHENING WORKSITES

- Ensure safe, fresh drinking water is available and accessible to all staff
- Promote healthy food and beverages
- Incorporate healthy foods and beverages into meetings and celebrations



# OUR IMPACT

## Villa Maria College

### *Cheektowaga*

Villa Maria College has been added as a worksite, community site and food pantry!

## Walking/Bike Trails

### *Cheektowaga/Lancaster*

Met with Cheektowaga Town Board, Town and Village of Lancaster elected officials on the development of three regionally significant trails connecting to surrounding municipalities.

## Healthy Reward

### *Lackawanna Middle School*

Students who met academic and behavioral goals were invited to a healthy celebration with games and snacks!

## Indoor Recess

### *Cheektowaga-Sloan*

Theodore Roosevelt Elementary provided an indoor recess space for students to use when the weather does not allow for outdoor activities.

## Making a Difference Wellness Conference

### *Cheektowaga*

Attendees heard from speakers and community partners at the annual conference.

## Healthy Choices

### *Salamanca*

Connecting Communities in Action, has partnered with Harvest Moon, a Native American owned restaurant, to provide healthy lunches to employees and to stock their snack bar.

## Healthy Snacks

### *Olean*

Staff sample healthy snack options to add to the vending machines at Total Senior Care







## **2023 WELLNESS CHAMPION: KATRINA (KATE) M. O'STRICKER**

It is obvious from the first few minutes of our conversation, that Kate is a woman who gets things done. Her voice alone conveys commitment, enthusiasm and success. No wonder she is our first Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) Wellness Champion for 2023.

Even if you have not yet met Kate, you most certainly have experienced the benefits of her professional determination and unyielding commitment to the community's health. Kate is the Senior Development Specialist for the Cattaraugus County Economic Development, Planning and Tourism Department. In this role

she is able to emphasize the health and wellbeing of her community while promoting the region's unique assets. Since 1997, when Kate had her first experience as a member of a worksite wellness grant, she knew that wellness would drive her career and would be foundational in the work she does for her community. Kate has incorporated extensive experience in family wellness, nutrition and teaching to enrich the experiences of everyone she meets.

Although Kate has been instrumental in promoting wellness through numerous programs, her most recent focus centers around movement. As a key member of the COMPLETE STREETS initiative with GoBike, Kate worked to build safe and connected facilities that encourage active transportation.

She is most proud of the work she has done with GoBike on creating the area trail system which starts to fill in the gaps of the trail systems in Cattaraugus, through GPS, kiosks and a comprehensive signage system. This \$8m grant allowed for the design and alignment of the southern tier trail bringing Springville through Ellicottville, Salamanca, Olean and eventually Hinsdale.

"Keep Moving" is her driving mantra and with her efforts, we can all be confident that Cattaraugus County will continue to be a beacon for community movement in our region.

Married 25 years, Kate has two boys and plenty of animals (two horses, three cats, three dogs).





## 2023 WELLNESS CHAMPION: ANGEL FISHER

We all want to feel better, clearer, lighter with more energy and less aches or pains. But what are we doing about it? Well newest Healthy Champion Angel Fisher, the Brand and Data Manager at Connecting Communities in Action (CCA) is showing Cattaraugus County how to do just that.

As a mom and granny, Angel has recognized that the changes brought by age are not always welcome or necessary. After a busy work day feeling stiff or mentally drained, there is not much to give to your family. With a healthy goal and a desire to help her coworkers and friends, Angel has taken responsibility for her quality of life and those around her.

Addressing both nutrition and movement, Angel has been instrumental in the success of two recent wellness projects: the implementation of the organization's Healthy Vending Initiative and the ongoing Destination Walk Challenges. The healthy vending initiative involves partnering with local restaurants to

provide a variety of healthily lunch options and snack alternatives to the staff. Healthy vending recycles funds or funds itself. Angel couldn't be prouder as the options are sold out nearly every week. As for movement, she focuses on the Destination Walk Challenges. This spring's challenge covered a 14 week cycle and experienced fantastic participation. To ensure that different people are interested in and can participate in these movements, Angel is also involved in Kindness/Self-care bingos, an Amazing Race event and several other summer activities.

Angel's enviable energy and drive can be attributed to her mantra "But what if I fall? But oh my darling, what if you fly"! Angel gleefully notes that "you don't know what works until you try - so try?" Her mentor Tina Zerbian (CEO of CCA) and her supportive family help her maintain her motivation and high level of excitement. Her positive attitude is contagious!

So what can we do? Angel would like to see more of her community getting involved. Get out there and be join in any way you can, whether as a participant in a wellness event or a driving force for better food choices. We can all take inspiration from our healthy champion Angel.







# Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

## OUR TEAM



**Kate Huber**

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Founder of GoBike, founder of GO Buffalo Niagara and vice-chair of Scajauada Corridor Coalition



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Cornell Cooperative Extension Community Wellness Educator & CHSC Community Coordinator for Cheektowaga and Lackawanna



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**Sarah Whiteway**

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Erie 1 BOCES School Coordinator on CHSC grants in Cattaraugus County, Cheektowaga, Lackawanna, and Springville

## WELCOME LAURA!

Laura Corrin is our new Community Wellness Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County. Laura's professional background is in nutrition and wellness education. She has worked closely with low income and food insecure communities in and around New York City to provide nutrition and wellness education to children and adults. Laura successfully created a well-received and affordable after school program called HEALTHY KIDS CLUB. She worked closely with NYC employees through a city initiative called WORK Well NYC and for various nonprofit organizations like, City Harvest, Fan4Kids and Red Hook Arts Project.

## CONNECT WITH US



[e1b.org/creatinghealthy](http://e1b.org/creatinghealthy)

# ABOUT THE GRANT

NYS Department of Health Grant initiative awarded to Erie 1 BOCES to reduce the risk of obesity and chronic disease by increasing demand for and access to healthy food and physical activity. The grant period is June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2026.

Our goal is to create meaningful sustainable change through the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental improvements.

Erie 1 BOCES is proud to collaborate with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, Healthy Community Alliance and Go Bike Buffalo to lead the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) initiative, a coordinated, multi-sector plan designed to increase demand for and access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for daily physical activity in high-need school districts and their associated communities.

The school districts currently involved in this effort are Salamanca, Randolph, West Valley, Springville Griffith Institute, Lackawanna, Cheektowaga Central, Cheektowaga Sloan and Maryvale. We will be working in Cattaraugus County, the Town of Cheektowaga, the City of Lackawanna and the Town of Springville.

## SCHOOL INITIATIVES

- Develop wellness committees
- Increase opportunities for physical activity
- Improve the nutrition environment
- Improve SEL Competencies

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- Develop wellness committees
- Develop complete streets and safe routes to school
- Improve food guidelines at worksites community settings and day care centers
- Increase physical activity in day care centers

