



HEALTHY HENRY COUNTY

HEALTH EQUITY PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative increased awareness of health determinants and equipped participating communities with an action plan to address areas identified in the needs assessment phase of this project.

Over the last 9 months, four rural communities were selected with the goals of:

- 1 increasing their knowledge about health determinants,
- 2 assessing the needs in their community,
- 3 prioritizing the needs they identify, and
- 4 developing an obtainable action plan to develop programs to address health disparities.

Within each of the grantee communities, a community team or coalition was established to guide the grant objectives. When creating these community teams, IRHA worked with grantees to identify potential cross-sector partnerships and ensure all members of the community were being considered in the work. The result of the Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative is four successful health equity projects across the state of Iowa. While the projects vary in many ways, each project increased community partnerships, infrastructure, and community knowledge of the social determinants of health.

Healthy Henry County addressed two areas where health can be improved in their community: brain health access and food security. In their 2020 community health needs assessment, survey respondents identified mental health (75%) and access to mental health care (64%) as top health issues in Henry County. Additionally, Henry County has seen an increased use of food pantries as SNAP benefits were reduced and difficulty in securing fresh produce. Being an established coalition, Healthy Henry County used IRHA grant funding to push forward existing goals.

Healthy Henry County utilized a holistic approach to community outreach and education through an intensive marketing campaign, toolkit creation, community events, and updates to community resources. As the grant progressed, it became apparent that a new line of communication needed to be established between the six area food pantries. Healthy Henry County had an established relationship with one of the six pantries prior to the grant and expanded this relationship to encompass all six providers. The coalition facilitated a meeting, inviting all pantries to attend to learn from each other and brainstorm how they could better serve Henry County residents. As a result, a new community garden was established in New London, a flyer promoting all six of the pantries was created, and the “Grow Another Row” campaign was increased. The “Grown Another Row” campaign encourages community members who garden to plant an additional row of produce that is then donated to the community. Healthy Henry County partnered with public libraries, city halls, and community centers to establish a produce drop-off area where community members can access fresh produce options.

As identified in the community needs assessment, mental health access was a priority for Healthy Henry County. One barrier identified was the community resource directory was only available in English and there is a large Hispanic population in Henry County; Healthy Henry County worked closely with one of their community partners to translate the directory, increasing access. The coalition organized a Family Fun Fair to bring community members together and provide mental health resources. The event focused on fun activities and a meal for attendees but opened the door for conversations around the importance of mental health and what resources were available in the community. Healthy Henry County also marketed 9-8-8 with reusable grocery bags, flyers, weekly newsletters, and yard signs in each of the small communities in Henry County. The impact that each of these activities has on the community is impressive, and the coalition is excited to continue the work that was moved forward with this grant opportunity.

This grant helped our coalition focus on a few specific projects from ideas that we’d been kicking around for a while. The funding and the imposed timeframe helped us to prioritize short-term projects, many of which will have a long-term impact. We have come a long way in 10 months promoting brain health and increasing food access in Henry County!” — Kelly Carr, Healthy Henry County

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With these funds, we were able to purchase raised garden beds that will be able to be re-used for many years to come. We have also purchased fruit trees which will also benefit the community and environment for years to come while providing food for our neighbors and habitat for animals. Building this garden has established a sense of community among our friends and neighbors and sparked interest in the healthy hobby of gardening.” — *Kate Reuter, Master Gardener*

CONTACT HEALTHY HENRY COUNTY

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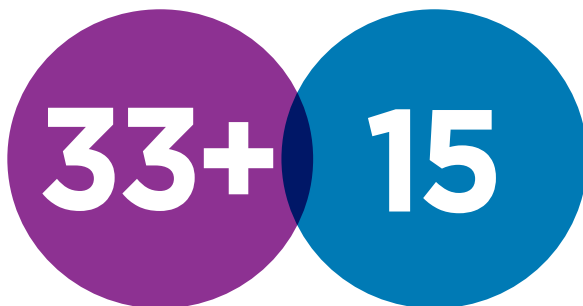
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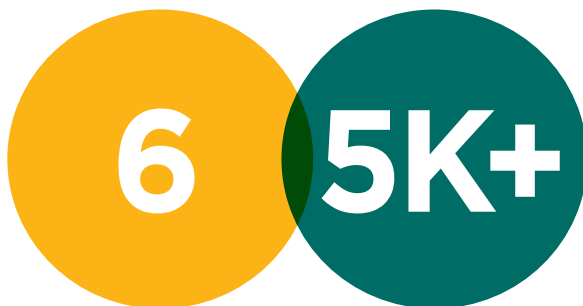
BEST PRACTICES

- Learn from community members, they are your subject matter experts when it comes to the needs of the community.
- Utilize the skills each of your partners brings to the table.
- Action doesn't have to be grand, sometimes the small things can be the most impactful.
- Google Sheets and Docs. are great for multi-organizational collaboration.
- Celebrate your successes!
- Sometimes the unexpected partnerships are the most fruitful.



33+ PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED, EXPANDED, OR MAINTAINED

SHARED COALITION GOALS AND ACTIVITIES AT 15 COMMUNITY MEETINGS



6 MARKETING PLATFORMS UTILIZED

5,000+ COPIES OF RESOURCES DISTRIBUTED



I am so glad that Mandi came into our facility and asked about our pantry! We are located at the end of town, and many aren't aware of us. The flyer that was created by Healthy Henry County showing all the pantries and their information was a great asset to our community. We had not had an updated list for a while so this not only helped our clients, but it also helped us here at Community Action as well! I forwarded it to our planning director, and she has put it on our web page!"

— *Patty Keagle, Community Action of Southeast Iowa*

ABOUT IRHA

The Iowa Rural Health Association aims to provide leadership on factors that influence healthy living in rural Iowa. The Health Equity grant has been instrumental in allowing IRHA to imagine new and creative ways to facilitate health improvement for rural Iowans by allowing each community to prioritize their own needs and approaches. Throughout this process, IRHA has been able to foster unique strategies for health improvement in rural areas.

We've learned so much from the creative programs, projects, and processes our partner communities have implemented to address their community's needs and are excited to share their successes to aid leaders across rural Iowa improve the lives of those they serve. We look forward to continuing to play the role as convener and cohort-facilitator for more communities in the years to come!

Audrey Tran Lam, IRHA Board President



Public Health
Iowa HHS