



## Executive Summary 2023-24

### And Strategic Plan 2024-25

#### Exciting Vision for Healthy Community Lifespaces: Promoting Health and Equity

**Our Vision:** At Healthy Community Lifespaces (HCL), we envision a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive in a balanced, inclusive, and healthy environment. We believe that by empowering communities and fostering diverse talents, we can create sustainable Lifespaces that support holistic well-being for all.

---

#### Our Mission:

To promote equity and foster inclusive, healthy environments through innovative strategies and education, empowering individuals and communities to make evidence-based choices for healthier Lifespaces.

---

#### Our Values:

- **Empowerment:** We believe in uplifting communities and individuals, providing them with the resources to create sustainable, healthy Lifespaces.
  - **Diversity:** We celebrate the unique talents and abilities of every individual, recognizing that diverse perspectives strengthen our communities.
  - **Health & Wellness:** We are committed to creating environments that support holistic health including physical, mental, and emotional well-being for all.
- 

#### What Are Lifespaces?

Lifespaces encompass the physical, social, and psychological environments of individuals. This includes their homes, communities, and the surrounding factors that influence their lives. By understanding the interplay of these elements, we aim to create supportive networks that enhance well-being and promote healthy behaviors.

---

#### Current Partnerships:

**State Level:** Our Director regularly collaborates on work groups for the PA State Health Improvement Plan and ENGAGE PEH to integrate health initiatives and foster community connections through virtual and in-person meetings throughout the year.



## **Objective**

- Through active participation in work groups this initiative seeks to align efforts across state agencies, local health departments, and community organizations to create a comprehensive approach to health improvement.

### **Summary for 2023-24**

Healthy Community Lifespaces participates in this dialogue among stakeholders, including healthcare providers, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PDH), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and other community organizations. These collaborations lead to the development of innovative strategies that address critical health issues, enhance access to care, and encourage healthy behaviors. By sharing in prioritizing underserved populations and sharing data-driven insights, we aim to cooperatively create inclusive environments that support holistic well-being.

This group has provided grants and information that HCL was able to share with school districts and other community members. Insights were able to be shared with other programs to enhance their equity in working with children through evidence-based articles. PDE shares and promotes HCL student contest with schools.

### **Goal for 2024-25**

Continue to attend bi-monthly meetings for ENGAGE HPE and collaborate with the Goal 2.1 workgroup for the Pennsylvania State Health Improvement Plan (PA SHIP) in virtual sessions. Maintain ongoing communication about student contests to encourage participation and support healthy initiatives within the community.

## **Caregivers & Recovery Homes:**

Developing wellness webinars and virtual training for caregivers, alongside biannual visits to Thistle Hills to promote healthy cooking and gardening.

**Objectives of Caregiving Training-** These objectives aim to create a comprehensive training program that enhances the skills and knowledge of caregivers, ultimately benefiting the individuals they care for

- Promote Wellness
- Understand the components of wellness and how they impact both caregivers and those in their care.
- Identify strategies to enhance the quality of life for individuals through holistic care practices.
- Confidence in Physical Abilities

- Emphasize the importance of presuming competence and confidence in individuals' abilities to walk and engage in daily physical activities.
- Learn how to effectively communicate with healthcare providers to assess and adapt activity levels based on individual capabilities.
- Sensory Awareness and Regulation
- Explore sensory awareness and its significance in caregiving.
- Implement activities that promote sensory regulation, helping individuals manage sensory input for improved comfort and engagement.
- Outdoor Engagement for Mental Health
- Highlight the mental health benefits of outdoor activities and nature exposure.
- Develop strategies to incorporate outdoor time into daily routines, enhancing mental well-being for both caregivers and care recipients.
- Nutrition Awareness
- Recognize the critical role of nutrition in overall health and well-being.
- Learn how to provide balanced meal options and promote healthy eating habits in caregiving settings.

### **Summary 2023-24**

Established training objectives and secured partners to host training sessions.

### **Goal for 2024-25**

**Training for Caregivers** with focus on health and we may partner with True friendships project with Values in Action

Complete the webinar and virtual training, ensuring that participants can earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for their attendance.

### **Gardening and Healthy cooking program at Thistle Hills**

<https://www.thistlehills.org/partners>

#### **Objectives of Thistle Hill Visits**

- Recognize the critical role of nutrition in overall health and well-being.
- Learn how to cook simple balanced meal options that include fresh vegetables and fruits to promote healthy eating habits



- increase knowledge about gardening as being outdoors benefits both mental health and gardens provide fresh vegetables

#### **Current Summary 2023-24**

Provided garden plants, assisted with planting, and conducted a cooking session in the spring. Organized a "Days for Girls" volunteer session to offer at-home volunteer opportunities for residents.

#### **Goal 2024-25**

Conduct a fall cooking session and expand the spring garden program based on feedback from surveys that measure the success of the initiative.

### **Children's Garden Program at Upper Merion Community Garden**

#### **Objectives of Children's Garden Program**

- Recognize the critical role of nutrition in overall health and well-being.
- Provide opportunity for children in UMArea school district including charter, cyber and home schooled children to learn about gardening
- Promoting healthy eating to exposure to vegetables in the vegetable bingo game
- Improve mental health by exposing children to nature and the outdoors and the importance of connecting with nature highlighting its benefits for youth well-being.

#### **Current Status 2023-24**

With the support of local gardeners, HCL nutritionists, and our director, we established a children's garden and hosted a fall harvest and tasting bingo event for 20 children. Survey results indicated that all participants enjoyed the program and reported an increased knowledge of gardening and health. One parent shared that their child began requesting to try new vegetables at home as a result of the program. Additionally, we contributed to the garden program at "We Are Better Together."

#### **Goal 2024-25**

Provide at least two sessions, one spring planting and fall tasting bingo, increased number of gardeners helping and students attending. increase promoting at local schools to increase to 4 sessions

### **Innovative Teen Program to get Teens involved in promoting health**

#### **Objectives of the Teen Program**



- Collaborative Platform: Provide a nonprofit platform for teens to collaborate on innovative projects that promote health in their communities. This includes supporting teen-initiated health projects to foster community engagement and peer influence.
- Teen Blog Management: Run a blog written by teens for teens, emphasizing the importance of health. Contributors will share their experiences, current research, ideas, and insights to help one another live their healthiest lives. Topics will include stress management tips and other relevant health issues.
- Social Media Engagement: Teens manage HCL Instagram account to foster a supportive community where teens can learn from each other and promote health among their peers. Teens will also have the opportunity to promote contests sponsored by Healthy Community Lifespaces (HCL).

#### **Current Summary 2023-24**

This year, we successfully formed a group of teens from various locations across the U.S. and added a teen position to our board.

#### **Goals for 2024-25**

Goal Development in progress to empower teens to develop specific goals for their health projects and blog contributions. Ongoing support will be provided to evaluate progress and maintain the Instagram account and blog. Active Instagram account to be started.

#### **Annual Student Contest to promote Health**

<https://hclwellness.org/harnessing-the-power-of-contests-to-engage-students-in-health-promotion/>

#### **Objectives of the Student contests**

- State Vegetable and Fruit Selection: Encourage student participation throughout Pennsylvania in selecting the state's vegetable and fruit. This initiative aligns with the State Health Improvement Plan's objective to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables and supports the State Farm to School Program.
- Advocacy for Healthy Eating: Emphasize the importance of consuming fruits and vegetables, encouraging students to advocate for healthy options at athletic events.
- Legislative Efforts: In 2023-24, several student winners were identified, and efforts were made to introduce their selections into legislation, though it has not yet passed.

#### **Summary for 2023-2024**



Partnered with HABI to provide helmets and HCL provided money to help student winners engage in a physical activity of choice. See contest winners here

<https://hclwellness.org/harnessing-the-power-of-contests-to-engage-students-in-health-promotion/>

### **Goals for 2024-25**

Continuation of the Contest: Sustain the contest until Pennsylvania officially designates a state fruit and vegetable, following the example of other states. Develop new contests with input from teens to keep the program engaging and relevant

### **Helping Schools Implement Wellness Plans**

**Schools:** We are partnering with public, charter, and private schools to engage all students, staff, parents, township, and the community in health initiatives, including:

#### **Wellness Plan Implementation**

We are actively collaborating with Upper Merion School District to achieve the following goals:

- Integrate DEI into Wellness: Ensure that all wellness plans are inclusive and equitable, reflecting the diverse needs of the student body and the community while actively involving students in the planning process.
- Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day: Launch a powerful initiative that promotes safe routes to school while celebrating diversity and inclusion.
- Assess & Improve Participation: Continuously evaluate our strategies to enhance and engage all students, staff, parents, and the community in wellness and create meaningful experiences.
- Encourage Public Use of School Facilities: Promote community health by facilitating access to school facilities in alignment with the State Health Improvement Plan and the new PDE health and physical education standards being developed.

### **Summary for 2023-2024**

Engaged with students and community members interested in health to identify their concerns. Students from the school district created videos to promote health, which can be found here.

Student written and produced <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymm2FKzhMvs>



The director and HCL nutritionist met with the new superintendent to discuss student wellness and community concerns regarding the use of the school track, and safe routes to school. As a result, the school track was opened to the public, the sidewalk to school was repaired and a review of the student wellness policy was scheduled. The school district wellness leader agreed to partner with Healthy Community Lifespaces to work towards the implementation of the school student wellness policy

Started walking school bus with 6 students

Ruby Bridges walk to school day to took place on November 14, 2024

School reopened Track to the public for community use

Sidewalk fixed and other improvements in safety for school routes to school continue to be worked on.

#### **Goals for 2024-25**

The goals outlined in the wellness plan implementation will continue to be addressed and developed. Continue partnership with **Upper Merion Area School District**

We are working towards partnering with **T/E School District** next when funding is available to help these schools implement projects.

### **Advocating for Health Equity in School Wellness Plans, Community Agencies, and Athletic Events**

#### **Objectives**

- Raise awareness of the need for environments that support healthy lifestyles.
- Increase awareness of resources and current evidence-based knowledge promoting healthy lifespaces.
- Provide resources, collaboration, and assistance in implementing wellness policies.

#### **Summary for 2023-2024**

See Blueprints talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqISs5ISMj4>



Virtual webinar for PEAC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBUMSpbkLJ0&t=103s>

Contacted and collaborated with various providers of children's services

Researched and posted monthly articles on promoting health

## **Goal for 2024-25**

### **Newsletter**

Continue to follow up with those interested, develop email list for **newsletter**, coordinate strategies for the PA SHIP. Additional interviews to promote awareness released in September

### **Future Collaborations with Family Promise serving Homeless**

See the importance of providing nutritional food and healthy activities for homeless here

<https://hclwellness.org/homeless-health/>

currently working towards collaborating with Family Promise to partner in Chester and Montgomery County

**Advocating with NAEYC and EasterSeals** working on getting standards updated to include wellness plans in preschools and prevent the giving of food rewards and candy to preschoolers,

## **Partnering with Universities**

### **Objectives**

- Increase youth awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles in colleges and universities.
- Encourage and assist university students in promoting evidence-based knowledge and healthy lifespaces among peers and the community.
- Provide resources, collaboration, and assistance in implementing wellness policies in university environments and community collaboration.

### **Summary 2023-2024**

Interns play a pivotal role in advancing the PA State Health Improvement Plan and Health Community Lifespaces. HCL partnered with Eastern Washington University (EWU) to offer competency-based, nonclinical educational experiences for Health Services Administration, Health Informatics Technology & Management, and Master of Public Health students. An EWU intern developed a project advocating for women's health equity by raising awareness of period poverty in PA. For more information about period



poverty, visit:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/15wIxbK89X3kZNuEOfKQnJHpYvpa\\_qOUo/edit?usp=sharing&oui=104096949007092993695&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15wIxbK89X3kZNuEOfKQnJHpYvpa_qOUo/edit?usp=sharing&oui=104096949007092993695&rtpof=true&sd=true)

### **Goal for 2024-25 Future Collaborations with Universities :**

We are excited to explore partnerships with universities focused on health equity and community wellness. Together, we can develop innovative programs that advance our mission and amplify our impact.

### **Goal for 2024-25 Future Collaborations with Libraries encouraging them to sign up with our partner Let's Move in the Library and the Healthy Eating challenge and create Storywalks**

Our HS Intern Narayani with our Emily Hodsons of our new Library committee started with Whitpain township, Wisahickon Library, and Boyscout troop 98 partnership planning to complete a Storywalk in the spring.

### **Fundraising and Corporate sponsors 2024-25 Goal**

We hope to gain two corporate sponsors, start fundraising for our Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day Promotions, Gardening Program and Storywalk.

Explore Grants

---

### **Join Us!**

We invite individuals, organizations, and communities to join us in our mission to create healthier Lifespaces. Together, we can build a more equitable future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Let's empower each other and make a lasting difference!