



ANNUAL REPORT

2022

AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES,
ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY



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OUR ONGOING VISION

Dear Friends of CARE,

Discourse and action on community engagement has increasingly gained momentum in recent years, highlighting the crucial importance of authentically involving community members in decision-making processes and building power within their own communities. While the approaches to community engagement have evolved since our establishment in 2007, CARE remains unwavering in its commitment to amplifying voices from systemically disinvested communities, particularly Black and Brown communities and low-income residents, and ensuring their voices are meaningfully integrated into our work.

The path we tread is undoubtedly challenging, yet deeply rewarding. While our ultimate aim is to achieve the “gold standard” of community engagement, where residents lead decision-making and solution-based efforts, the most important aspect is approaching this work with utmost integrity and transparency.

For the past 16 years, CARE has been dedicated to creating spaces and initiatives that uplift and amplify community voices through various avenues. The CARE Health Leadership Programs have engaged nearly 150 residents from the New Haven area, providing workshops on health justice and helping to refine their leadership skills to effect change within their communities. In a significant expansion, we introduced one of our programs to Hartford this past year! Additionally, our Vaccine Equity Fellows Program has trained 13 residents on the vital importance of vaccinations, equipping them to serve as trusted messengers, delivering accurate and critical information regarding vaccines. Our exceptional community engagement team has actively connected with thousands of residents, involving them in a wide range of CARE and other health equity initiatives throughout New Haven. Moreover, we recognize the potential of coalition building to tackle larger, systemic equity issues, emphasizing the central role community members play in these collaborative efforts. In the past year, CARE has provided support to several coalitions, including the New Haven Coordinated Food Assistance Network, the New Haven Breast/Chestfeeding Task Force, the New Haven REACH Coalition, and the Safe Routes for All Steering Committee – all of which prioritize community voices at their core.

During these challenging times, as we collectively strive to advance equity for all, harnessing the strength and power of those most affected by inequities serves as a clear path towards achieving our goal. At CARE, we are steadfast in our commitment to this cause! We are grateful to the many residents and community partners who have joined us in the fight against all forms of oppression. Together, we forge ahead, unwavering in our pursuit of a more equitable future. Onward!

Alycia Santilli, MSW
Director of CARE



NUTRITION



Coordinated Food Assistance Network

Through our collaboration with the Greater New Haven Coordinated Food Assistance Network (CFAN), we continued to improve access to healthy food while addressing equity and justice. CFAN completed 50 community-driven actions since 2019, including initiatives to enhance food access, improve the food assistance system, and respond to COVID-19-related challenges. We documented our accomplishments in an academic paper, **“Coalition Building and Food Insecurity: How an Equity and Justice Framework Guided a Viable Food Assistance Network.”** Importantly, CARE coordinates the process of updating the New Haven Food Assistance Resource Guide in **English** and **Spanish** three times per year.

“The CFAN coalition makes space for those of us with lived experiences, to have a seat at the table to figure out best practices to get our needs met.”

– Kim Hart, CFAN Co-Chair

Supporting Wellness at Pantries

The Supporting Wellness at Pantries Program (SWAP) expanded to nine pantries, benefiting approximately 23,000 clients each year. Two pantries - NICE Center Food Pantry and Cathedral of Higher Praise Food Pantry - celebrated the one-year milestone of engaging in SWAP, and three new pantries were trained - Women of the Village Food Pantry, Varick AME Zion Church’s Food Pantry, and Upon This Rock Ministries Food Pantry. SWAP has led to an increase in the availability of healthier foods and a decrease in unhealthy options in some pantries. For example, one pantry experienced an increase in the amount of healthy food by approximately 6%. Similarly, another pantry saw a 5% increase in healthy foods, as well as a 3% decrease in unhealthy foods. Our team highlighted this work through a presentation on “Community Engagement to Boost Accessibility of Nutritious Foods in New Haven” at the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) Annual Conference.

“SWAP has helped us realize [what] our dream is, which is to provide healthier options to our clients and educate them at the same time.”

– The New Haven Inner City Enrichment Center



GREEN

Choose often; low in saturated fat, sodium and sugar; supports health

YELLOW

Choose sometimes; medium levels of fat, sodium or sugar; can contribute to good health

RED

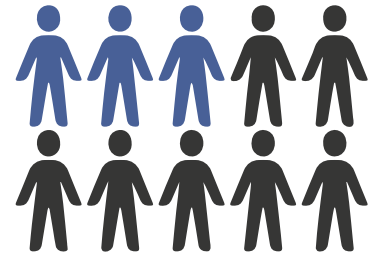
Choose rarely; high levels of fat, sodium or sugar; think of as treats; limited health benefits

In New Haven's low-income neighborhoods,

1 IN 3
RESIDENTS LIVE
BELOW THE
POVERTY LEVEL



3 IN 10
ADULTS EXPERIENCE
FOOD INSECURITY



(DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey, 2021)

#GiveHealthy

In partnership with CFAN, we organized five healthy food drives, raising an impressive \$10,105.20 worth of food.

Virtual Diabetes Prevention Program

In 2022, CARE continued to support recruitment and implementation for the Yale-Griffin PRC's core research project, a virtually-delivered Diabetes Prevention Program. Study participants were enrolled in a one-year online program with IncentaHEALTH and received nutrition webinars, recipes, exercise ideas, and personalized health coaching. Additionally, participants were matched with a local Community Health Worker to help connect them to local health and social resources.

Urban Agriculture

The City of New Haven Food System Policy Division (FSPD) received a USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production grant to develop the first New Haven Urban Agriculture City-wide Plan.

The City-wide Plan aims to remove barriers and information gaps that have been standing in the way of improving urban agriculture in New Haven. The goals are to simplify information and procedures, making it easier to understand and navigate city processes and to update land-use policies. The ultimate goal is helping urban agriculture projects grow in New Haven, especially among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and low-income communities. CARE serves as an external evaluator on this project. We are involved with developing and analyzing surveys, collecting data about urban agriculture resources in Connecticut, and providing research support to the FSPD team.



Promoting Equity in Breastfeeding



Guided by the New Haven Breast/Chestfeeding Task Force, we conducted research with local Black mothers and fathers and Latina mothers, which led to our collaboration with local partners to launch the “We Support Breast/Chestfeeding: Any Time, Any Place” campaign to foster a more breast/chestfeeding-friendly environment in New Haven. We developed a decal and other educational materials to distribute to local businesses and public spaces, including Community Action Agency of New Haven, which posted the decal and received the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition’s Breast/Chestfeeding Friendly Worksite Designation, and Union Station, which received approval to create a lactation space inside the train station.

“I had an office that I could just go in and pump during the day. And I think having those spaces made [breastfeeding] a lot easier for me.”

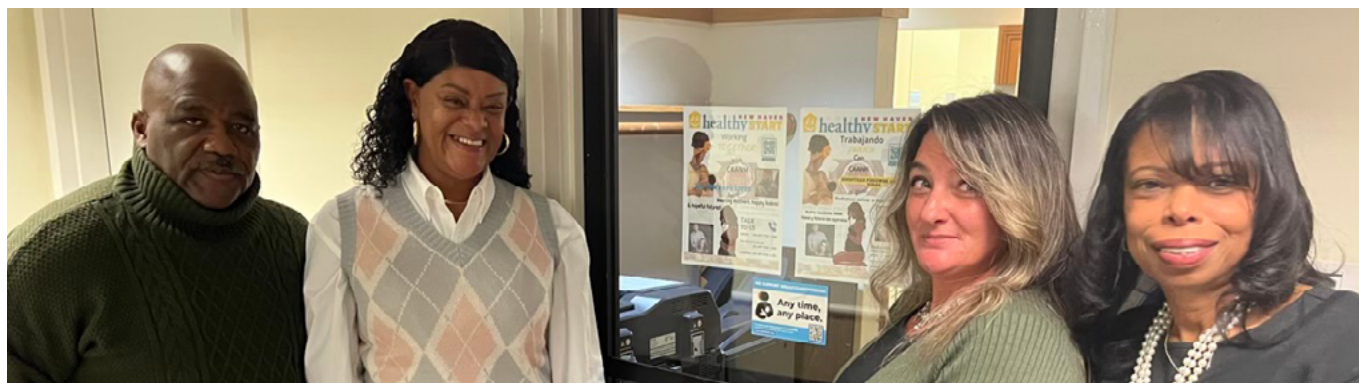
– Local New Haven Mother

Additionally, based on feedback from local parents and the Task Force about the need for high-quality, culturally-congruent lactation education and support, we developed a racial equity training for healthcare providers called “The Roots of Racial Inequities in Breastfeeding,” which has been presented to 12 healthcare providers from eight different offices for feedback and will be piloted throughout 2023 to promote knowledge and equity in breast/chestfeeding practices.

We also launched a website for the Task Force, which highlights local breast/chestfeeding resources.

“Recently, I feel like there has been an intentional push to encourage African American mothers to breastfeed their children.”

– Local New Haven Mother



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION



Safe Routes For All

CARE, in partnership with the City of New Haven Transportation, Traffic, and Parking Department, achieved a significant milestone with the Safe Routes for All (SRFA) plan. **Safe Routes for All, the Citywide Active Transportation Master Plan**, was approved by the Board of Alders in September 2022. Safe Routes for All is a blueprint for the City to build supportive infrastructure for walking, riding transit, and biking in the coming years. CARE was instrumental in supporting community engagement efforts of the plan - ensuring that residents from priority neighborhoods had a voice in its development.

In the past 18 months, our community engagement efforts have included:

- **SRFA Steering Committee:** 26 residents and partners provided direction and expert input.
- **Public Workshops:** 4 workshops were hosted with 80 residents participating.
- **Walking and Biking Surveys:** Led 8 surveys where over 70 residents rated street conditions on 9 routes, covering 22 miles over 29 streets in 13 neighborhoods.
- **Online Resident Request Systems:** Collected 240 entries through SeeClickFix.
- **Informing Residents:** Consistently communicated through emails, social media posts, and text messages to key constituents.
- **Neighborhood Presence:** Attended neighborhood meetings, events, and canvassed priority neighborhoods door-to-door with dozens of volunteers, distributing hundreds of postcards.

“Investing in active transportation and prioritizing disadvantaged neighborhoods is not just a matter of fairness; it is a crucial step towards building healthier, more sustainable, and inclusive communities.”

– Doug Hausladen, Chair of New Haven Coalition for Active Transportation



1 IN 3
New Haven households
rely on transit, carpooling/
rideshare, walking, or biking
to get around.



59%

of New Haven residents living in low-income areas feel unsafe to walk in the neighborhood at night compared to 40% of residents in high-income areas.



VACCINE OUTREACH & EDUCATION

CARE, alongside the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center, implemented a comprehensive outreach and education program to combat COVID-19 and influenza. CARE's outreach team participated in 643 outreach events which reached 10,599 residents, with 1,656 residents referred for vaccinations, the majority of whom are Black & Latinx.

We trained Vaccine Equity Fellows who serve as trusted messengers in their communities, reaching a significant number of residents, particularly those from Black and Latinx communities. Thirteen Vaccine Equity Fellows completed the six-month program developed by CARE. The program evaluation indicated nearly all of the Vaccine Equity Fellows increased their confidence in their ability to engage in conversations with residents who are hesitant about COVID-19 or flu vaccines, describe the benefits, and answer relevant questions.

CARE trained 30 partner staff from five organizations, including eight staff members from the New Haven Health Department, seven from Community Action Agency-New Haven, and six from Cornell Scott Hill Health Center.

643
EVENTS
REACHED
10,599
RESIDENTS
WITH
1,656
RESIDENTS
REFERRED FOR
VACCINATIONS





HEALTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

In 2022, our Health Leadership Programs fostered community power building and participation in health initiatives across New Haven. Nineteen participants completed the Community Research Fellows (CRF) program, and 12 individuals participated in the New Haven Health Leaders (NHHL) program, expanding our health leadership alumni network to 108 people. We also piloted the Future Health Leaders program, engaging five youth in New Haven to inspire the next generation of health leaders.



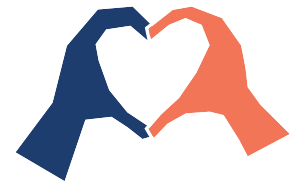
“[Being in the research environment] was a great experience... Just seeing people who looked like me on these teams, it was just amazing... My voice was able to be heard.”

- CRF Participant

Our 2022 program evaluation indicated that CRFs increased their confidence in working with Yale researchers, while increasing their knowledge of many components of the research process and health equity. NHHLs increased their confidence in leading effective meetings and their ability to discuss assets in their community, while increasing their networks in the community, particularly related to health.



COMMUNITY-CLINICAL LINKAGES



Community Health Workers

Our partnership with Project Access-New Haven developed strong relationships with clinical referral sites, enabling us to support patients in addressing social determinants of health needs. Through the Community Health Worker (CHW) program, we provided referrals and assistance in areas such as food insecurity, housing, employment, education, transportation, and primary care. In 2022, we enrolled 47 new clients in the CHW program, enhancing access to critical resources for those in need.



You need community in order to advance together. That's what is necessary.



LOOKING FORWARD

During the coming year at CARE, we will continue to explore innovative ways to amplify the voices of those most impacted by inequities in New Haven. As we wrap up our first five years of our pivotal grant award, Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH), funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we will look to sustain the community-level initiatives that address health inequities in New Haven while centering the voices of residents. We will continue to expand CARE's Health Leadership Programs, creating a pipeline for residents to become involved in health and social justice issues. While progress can feel slow and incremental in addressing inequities, we remain deeply committed to contributing to a healthier and more equitable New Haven!



PUBLICATIONS

CARE published three academic articles focused on health equity and justice.

In an article published in Maternal and Child Nutrition entitled, “Barriers and facilitators to exclusive breastfeeding among Black mothers: A qualitative study utilizing a modified Barrier Analysis approach,” the authors described facilitators to breastfeeding, including breastfeeding support and knowledge; access to appropriate breastfeeding supplies; and intention to breastfeed, particularly as it relates to saving money. Barriers to breastfeeding included lack of access lactation support and supplies, difficulties with pumping, latching issues, and perceptions of breastfeeding as time-consuming. This study has informed the work of CARE and the New Haven Breast/Chestfeeding Task Force.

Co-written by community partners and CARE staff, an article entitled, “Coalition Building and Food Insecurity: How an Equity and Justice Framework Guided a Viable Food Assistance Network” featured the work of CFAN. The article focuses on the importance of coalition building and community organizing in policy, systems, and environmental change and its potential to address equitable access to food. The authors describe CFAN as a potential community organizing model in food assistance systems.

In an article published in the Progress in Community Health Partnerships Journal, CARE staff and CRF participants described the evaluation results of the first two cohorts of the CRF program. Both cohorts significantly increased knowledge scores, including social determinants of health, health disparities, the process for conducting research and community-engaged research. Participants in both cohorts reported increased confidence for engaging in research and increased knowledge of ways residents can be involved in research. These promising evaluation results inform continued CRF program development.

FUNDERS

CARE is grateful for the funding support from the following partners:

- Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Connecticut Office of Health Strategy
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- City of New Haven – Food System Policy Division
- M&T Bank
- Southern Connecticut State University Foundation
- Yale Cancer Center

OUR STAFF

CARE’s work requires the steadfast dedication of an exceptional team that is committed to equity and justice. Learn about the CARE team on our website.

<https://www.carenhv.org/our-team>

