

# CREATING HEALTHY PLACES to LIVE, WORK & PLAY GRANT

## 2010 to 2015 PROJECT SUMMARY



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**We're all role models,  
make it count!**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the accomplishments of the Creating Healthy Places (CHP) to Live, Work & Play Grant in Cayuga County from October 2010 to September 2015. This grant was one of 22 CHP grants in New York State funded by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Divisions of Chronic Disease Prevention and Nutrition. The overall goals of the interventions were to establish sustainable environmental and policy changes to increase access to physical activity and increase consumption of healthier foods to decrease obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases.

The grant Creating Healthy Places to Live Work & Play was the next five-year phase of obesity prevention grants from the NYSDOH after the Eat Well Play Hard Grants from 2004 to 2010. The Eat Well Play Hard Grant was structured to focus on initiatives to stem the increasing obesity in children and reduce the long-term chronic disease risks associated with increasing weight gain. The target group was primarily children from 2 to 12 years of age in elementary schools and the community in general. The strategies were based on increasing time spent in developmentally appropriate physical activity; increasing consumption of low-fat or fat-free milk and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The Cayuga County Health Department implemented the Eat Well Play Hard Grant from 2004 to 2010. Many of the practice changes have been sustained and are still in existence to today. One such practice change was the adoption of healthy fundraisers in elementary schools. The Union Springs Elementary and AJ Smith Elementary Schools adopted a walkathon format as their main form of fundraising in lieu of selling unhealthy candy and snacks. Not only do parents and children benefit from one fundraiser per year, 100% of the money raised is kept for the students rather than paying a middleman for a product. The Union Springs School District completed its 8th walkathon this year in 2015. Other Auburn elementary schools incorporate healthy fundraisers to a lesser extent. Developmentally appropriately play areas were added to the Calvary Food Pantry and Head Start which did not have an indoor gym. The sport of cup-stacking was introduced to all 13 Cayuga County elementary schools and two parochial schools and the sport is still popular today. Trail improvements were also made at the Sterling Nature Center, Everest Park and the Cayuga Village Recreation Trail. The list of highlights from the EWPH Grant can be found at the end of this report in the Appendix.

In 2007, Eat Well Play Hard conducted a community opinion survey asking Cayuga County residents their opinions about childhood obesity. Of the 638 respondents, the top three opinions offered by adults to curb childhood obesity were:

- Upgrade and/or add to existing parks, trails, playgrounds and sidewalks to increase walking, biking and multi-use recreational opportunities.
- Increase the number of available free/low-cost activities for children and families in the community.
- Increase the number of opportunities for children to enjoy physical activity and/or healthy eating through environmental or facility changes where children and families frequent.

Coincidentally, eight years ago Cayuga County residents identified that creating a healthy environment where physical activity options were free and more accessible would be a factor to decrease childhood obesity. The initiatives chosen by the Cayuga County Health Department under the CHP grant did exactly what residents thought would be the best path in 2007 for our county to reduce childhood obesity: increase opportunities to be more physically active by creating and enhancing trails. Additionally, to further encourage active transportation, CHP initiatives to create policy and environmental changes to ensure streets are safer for foot and bicycle travel contributes to increased access to physical activity. To increase access to healthier foods; the other initiatives were: creating community gardens to increase consumption of more fruits and vegetables; and working with restaurants and patrons to increase healthier options when eating out.

## Why Obesity Matters

In New York State, 62% of all deaths are the result of preventable chronic diseases which include: heart disease, cancer, stroke and type 2 diabetes. Obesity is directly related to each of these chronic diseases. The national average for overweight and obese adults combined is 69% (www.cdc.gov/nchs 2011-2012). In Cayuga County, the percent of adults which are overweight or obese is 63.6% (www.healthny.gov) compared with 59.3% for NYS (exclusive of NYC); a few points less than the national percentile. Our children are also overweight and obese at alarming rates of which the national average is 33%. In NYS (exclusive of NYC), 33.7% of students are overweight and obese. In Cayuga County, 38% of school students are overweight or obese which is higher than both the state and national percentiles (www.health.ny.gov/statistics).

Overweight children are more likely to remain overweight and obese into adulthood and are currently contracting chronic disease symptoms once only seen in adults. Due to the increasing weights in children, this is the first generation that will have a shorter lifespan than their parents. Therefore, it is imperative that we as a society create an environment that offers equitable opportunities for everyone to eat healthfully and choose safe convenient modes of active transportation to ensure a healthy quality of life. A livable community is one that is health promoting in all aspects: one where it is safe to live; has accessible modes of transportation; is socially and culturally welcoming; and healthy food is readily available.

The two root causes of overweight are **physical inactivity** and **poor nutrition**, or rather over-nutrition of low-nutrient foods. The initiatives of the CHP Grant were to create supportive and accessible community environments to facilitate lifestyle changes which will improve, and slow the factors which lead to being overweight.

## Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work & Play Grant 2010-2015

The projects of the new CHP grant built on the lessons and sustainable initiatives of the Eat Well Play Hard Grant. Four initiatives were chosen by the Cayuga County Health Department to address physical inactivity and increase the availability of fresh produce in Cayuga County:

1. Establish or enhance and promote the use of trails.
2. Develop transportation policies and environmental changes to ensure streets are safe, accessible and convenient for all users of the roadways.
3. Increase availability of fresh fruits and vegetables by creating community gardens.
4. Work with local restaurants to increase the availability of healthier menu items.



## Be A Super Model! Model Healthy Choices!

Early in the grant, it was important to build an identifiable logo and brand. Role modeling is one of the most important social and cultural behaviors that is often times unconsciously imitated. Every person is a role model, but especially parents whom are the most influential role models for children in their early years when nutrition and physical activity habits and practices are formed. Be a Super Model is essentially a reminder that we all influence everyone around us. We can all role model healthy behaviors such as eating more healthfully, choosing active transportation such as walking or biking for errands or even eating more appropriate portion sizes. There is no end to ways we can influence each other and our families by practicing a health promoting lifestyle. It's the small changes that will add up to big benefits in our quality of life. See the website at [www.modelhealthychoices.com](http://www.modelhealthychoices.com).



## TRAILS – INCREASE ACCESS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



The purpose of enhancing trails is to make existing trails more attractive to users. People know physical activity is good for them, but making activity accessible, pleasurable and practical by connecting places people want to go will increase the likelihood of people using the trails. Eleven trails were enhanced and/or created in Cayuga County.

In the City of Auburn, three urban walking tours were created by middle school students participating in the West Middle School LOFTY Leadership Program in the school year 2011-2012. Five very hard-working students spent many hours researching the history of landmarks and homes in Auburn to create the walking tours. The students then brought other community organizations together to fund what is known as *Auburn's Enlitenment Map*. The three urban walking tours are: the **Downtown Loop, Fort Hill Cemetery and Historic South Street**. Funds from CHP were used to enhance two of the urban trails with new signage. South Street is a tour of grand and historic homes in Auburn ending at the famous Harriet Tubman home. Due to the historic designation of South Street, no signs were permitted along this trail. From City Hall on South Street to the Harriet Tubman Home is 1.0 mile.

The Fort Hill Cemetery Association chose to have a large map of the cemetery depicting the roads and burial plots of famous Auburnians on display at the entrance to the cemetery on Fort Street. This historic replica map was installed on pillars made by the cemetery staff to match the design of the beautiful stonework of Bradley Chapel (1893) marking the entrance. Another cemetery map but smaller, was installed at the rear entrance to the cemetery off Fitch Avenue. Placard signs were also installed which coincided with the numbers (burial plots) on the maps, making it easier to find the points of interest. The maps were based on the current maps used by the Fort Hill Cemetery Association on their website and in print. There are two routes in the cemetery and both are hilly. One trail is 1.0 mile and the other is 1.3 miles in length.



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**A Farm Tour** map was created for Cayuga County which lists the locations, hours and contacts of local produce stands and farmers' markets. This tour was created to increase awareness and promote local produce and products. Eighteen county businesses and farmers' markets are listed.

The Town of Brutus received a mini-grant to enhance two trails; **Aqueduct Park Trail** which is part of the Erie Canalway Trail and the new **West Shore Trail** (3.5 miles) near the Weedsport High School which follows an abandoned railroad bed and connects to the Erie Canalway Path. This trail is frequently used by the high school sports teams for training and residents of the village. Previously, the Town of Brutus had placed stone and gravel, in addition to completing some drainage work to make the trail safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. CHP funded enhancements included: 4 Caution Highway Ahead signs for the Erie Canalway Trail intersections with town roads; 4 Pedestrian/Bicyclist Crossing Ahead signs; posts and concrete bases for the signs; mile markers and posts for the West Shore Trail; a bicycle rack for Aqueduct Park, two park benches and a large sign for the West Shore Trail entrance.

The Town of Mentz received a mini-grant to enhance a walking trail which is part of the **Erie Canalway Park** Improvement Project in the town which encompasses the Village of Port Byron. The improvement project includes building safe access for trail users, a boat launch for canoes and kayaks where the abutments of a former Erie Canal Aqueduct carried waters over the outlet. A large kiosk for informational signage was built by volunteers and four benches were placed along the trail to the Outlet.



The **Village of Cayuga Recreation Trail** remained an active partner of CHP after the previous Eat Well Play Hard Grant in 2005 to 2010. In 2009, the Cayuga Village Recreation Trail was awarded an EWPH mini-grant to purchase the materials to build 10 rustic benches along the 2.5 mile trail which includes: the Cayuga Lake front, Harris Park, a kayak launch, woodlands, a historic cemetery, village sidewalks, the edge of the school grounds and McIntosh Park which is the little league field. In 2012, the Village of Cayuga accepted a CHP mini-grant to install outdoor exercise stations along a wooded spur between McIntosh Park and the grounds of the Cayuga Elementary School. Six stations were installed in addition to the installation of a large trail map and sign at the beginning of the exercise spur.

The Town of Montezuma received a mini-grant for the enhancement of **Montezuma Heritage Park Trails** in the Hamlet of Montezuma. The Heritage Park design committee, comprised of the town board and historical society has been working diligently for the past 5 years to create a passive use park on 165 acres to preserve the history of the town. The Park Committees' vision is *"to educate and inspire the Community to share our history and the importance of its Eric Canal Heritage."* The park borders the Seneca River over which the remains of the Richmond Aqueduct are still largely in place.



This aqueduct was the second largest aqueduct carrying the Erie Canal waters **over** the Seneca River, had 31 arches and was 894 feet long. The engineering and stonework were very innovative for the times and the structure is the major showpiece of the park.

In 2011, the Town of Montezuma received a mini-grant for enhancements of the park trails which consisted of: 2 large kiosks with interpretive signs and maps at each entrance, Chapman Road and High Street; materials for benches; trail signs and trail education materials. This park committee is very active and partners with the Montezuma Historical Society. Every year the park committee hosts a Canal Clean Sweep; participates in hosting an annual Canal Splash Historic Walking Tour; and has an annual Montezuma Aqueduct 5k Run and Walk on Columbus Day weekend. The race is in its third year and serves as the major fundraiser for Montezuma Heritage Park.

The Cato-Meridian Recreation Center applied for a mini-grant in 2014 to create the **Cato-Meridian Recreation Trail**. The trail merges the existing nature trail and cross-country trail on the school district property. In the northern part of the county, the school is one of the only social hubs or gathering places for the community which makes this a good location to increase access to physical activity. A committee performed a needs assessment, reviewed vendors and then applied for a mini-grant. The award included: 5 fitness stations of multiple exercises at each; signage for instructions on how to perform the exercises; a bicycle rack; two benches and 24 pairs of snowshoes available for free to be used by the community and students. Many community volunteers helped with the project including the Weedsport Boy Scouts Troop 59, the Cato-Meridian Participation in Government Class, the technology classes, the Cato-Meridian School Maintenance Department and community volunteers. Financial support for ground cover was donated by: the Cato-Meridian Rotary, the Sports Boosters, and the Cato-Meridian Parent Teacher Organization. Since the project has been completed, the Cato-Meridian Parent Teacher Organization has donated the money to buy more child-sized snowshoes for the younger community members and students. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Tuesday, September 15, 2015 to celebrate and officially open the trail.



In 2014, the Cayuga Community College Foundation applied for a mini-grant for enhancements to the **Cayuga Community College Trail** which consists of a nature trail and a fitness trail behind the college. The trail is used by the college students for nature interpretation and science education. The college was awarded a Dorr Foundation Grant in 2013. The Dorr Grant was used to take out 'weedy vegetation' blocking views of the ponds and native trees were planted. The Soil and Water Conservation District assisted with the work. Drainage of the ponds was also an issue that needed to be resolved to restore water flow. The nature trail is used by students, the pre-school campus, staff and the community. The mini-grant from CHP was used to purchase interpretive signage for the nature trail; way-finding signage for the fitness trail, two benches, a waste receptacle and a bicycle rack. An assessment of trail use was conducted by a student from noon to 2:00 on a spring day in 2013. It was found that over 40 people were walking their dogs, running during lunch or walking for leisure. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Saturday, September 12, 2015 to celebrate and promote the new trail enhancements.

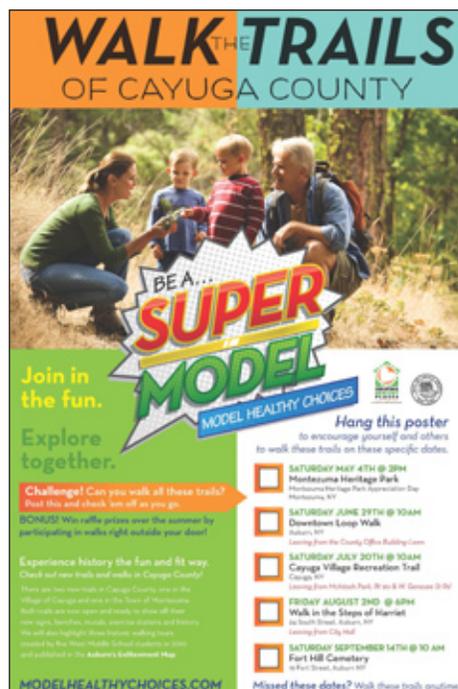
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## Promotion of the Trails

In the summer of 2013 a promotional campaign was launched to increase awareness and celebrate the 5 completed trails: South Street Trail, the Downtown Loop, Fort Hill Cemetery, the Cayuga Village Recreation Trail and Montezuma Heritage Park. The promotion, *Walk the Trails of Cayuga County* was held on one Friday or Saturday per month from May to September. A family bicycle ride and rodeo called *Roll Along the Canal* was conducted May 17, 2013 from Schasel Park in Port Byron to Aqueduct Park in Weedsport to promote the enhancements to Aqueduct Park. Ribbon cuttings were conducted at the trails after enhancements were made.

The most memorable walk occurred on an evening in August of 2013. The Creating Healthy Places Grant partnered with the City of Auburn, the Harriet Tubman Boosters and the Downtown Business Improvement District in celebration of Harriet Tubman's life and enduring spirit during the annual Auburn Founders Day Weekend. A walk in her honor called *Walk in the Steps of Harriet* was held on a Friday evening to kick-off Founders Day weekend. Over 50 people, including ancestors of Harriet (Ross) Tubman locally and from as far away as Georgia walked the one mile to the Tubman Home located at the end of South Street. Following the walk, Route 34 (South Street and North Street) was officially dedicated as the Harriet Tubman Memorial Highway by Senator John DeFrancisco and Assemblyman Gary Finch. Memorial markers were placed at the gateways to Auburn along Route 34. A 100-mile stretch from Hannibal in Oswego County to Waverly in Tioga County was named the Harriet Tubman Memorial Highway. In December of 2014, Congress established the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn as a National Park. Sidewalk extensions from the city limits to the new Harriet Tubman National Park are now being planned to increase access to the park by foot in 2016.



Printed rack cards of eight trails (the West Shore Trail, Aqueduct Park and the Erie Canalway Park were not made into maps) were created and used as promotional and informational brochures which were distributed at public organizations, businesses, schools, educational and public events and are available at village offices and libraries where the trails are located. Unique apple-shaped maps held together on a carabiner of the same eight trails were created as a portable collection of maps. Both the rack cards and the carabiner maps are also available for printing on the CHP website [www.modelhealthychoices.com](http://www.modelhealthychoices.com).

## COMPLETE STREETS – CREATION OF SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE STREETS TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

### What are complete streets?

Streets are public infrastructures paid for by the public and therefore should serve all modes of transportation, not only motor vehicles. Complete streets are designed and operated for the safety and convenient access of all roadway users regardless of transportation choice. Complete streets make it easier to cross the street, walk and bicycle to destinations, or use public transportation. Complete streets create livable communities for people to live, work, play and shop. Complete streets also improve the environment

when less people use polluting motor vehicles. Complete streets will look very different in rural towns versus metropolitan cities or suburbs due to the different needs of users and street design.



**Why does the public health department promote complete streets?** Moving more makes us a fitter, healthier population. Making our environment easier and more pleasant to use active transportation will result in us becoming more fit. Two-thirds of our population carries extra weight which is a contributing factor to preventable chronic diseases such as: stroke, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma and some forms of cancer.

**Why pass a policy?** Adopting complete streets policies means that city planners and engineers are directed to design and operate the entire right-of-way to ensure safe access for all users regardless of age, mobility or mode of transportation. With a policy in place, each new and retro-fitted street project should result in streets which are designed to be safer for drivers, transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists. Passing a resolution also keeps the vision in place through future changes in councils and boards.

Four complete streets policies were passed in Cayuga County: the Town of Brutus (2014), the Village of Weedsport (2014), the Town of Montezuma (2014) and the City of Auburn (2015).



In May 2014, a Complete Streets Workshop was held and made available to all county municipalities. The workshop was a practical hands-on training. The morning consisted of an introduction to the principles and reasons for complete streets and examples of how to 'complete a street'. The group then walked from the Weedsport High School to downtown Weedsport and performed a walking audit which is an assessment tool used to measure the external environment for safe and accessible use by pedestrians. Municipalities that participated in the training were eligible to receive a complete streets mini-grant to implement a complete streets change. Two municipalities, the Village of Weedsport and the Town of Montezuma took advantage of a complete streets mini-grant after completing the workshop.

## Streetscape Enhancements

Montezuma received a complete streets mini-grant to provide way-finding signage between Montezuma Heritage Park and Giardinia Park which is being incorporated into the trail system of Montezuma Heritage Park. A bench, flowering trees and a large sign to guide visitors between the two Parks was installed in the spring and summer of 2015. The Town of Montezuma approved a Complete Streets Resolution in 2014.

The Village of Weedsport with the help of CHP and Cayuga County Planning and Economic Development collaborated with the NYS Department of Transportation which was resurfacing and painting State Route 31 through the village at the time. The collaboration led to the painting of dedicated bicycle lanes on the shoulders of State Route 31 through the village. The dedicated striping marks the boundaries between motor vehicles and those using the bike lane. Making this stretch of Route 31 safer is especially important not only locally, but for tourists as well. Every year in July, over 500 cyclists on the week-long Erie Canalway Bike Tour from Buffalo to Albany must leave the canal trail at the northern end of Cayuga County and use local roads due to the gap in the trail between Savannah and Weedsport. The Village of Weedsport approved a Complete Streets Resolution on September 10, 2014.

## Environmental Changes

Initially, the first complete street projects were bicycle rack installations in downtown Auburn with the help of the City of Auburn, Auburn BID and the Cardiac Rehab Center at the Auburn Memorial Hospital. Two bicycle racks were added to each end of Exchange Street; one near the bus stop and one near Mesa Grande Taquiera. Two bicycle racks were added near the entrance to the Auburn Memorial Hospital Cardiac Rehab and three racks were added at the County Office Building. A repurposed rack was moved to the entrance of the City Court House. Many bicycle riders will not use a bicycle for transportation if a safe place to lock their bike is not available. Providing a safe permanent bike rack to lock bicycles increases the use of bicycles for transportation. Bicycle racks were also incorporated into most of the trail enhancements.

## Pilot Crosswalk Study – Motorist Behavior Evaluation Report

In 2011, a pilot crosswalk project was initiated by CHP with the City of Auburn. What factor would prompt drivers to slow for pedestrians at a busy crosswalk? An evaluation project of driver behavior was initiated at the mid-block crosswalk at 95 Genesee Street. Various traffic calming strategies were selected to determine which ones had the largest impact on driver behavior when approaching the crosswalk used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Initially, the crosswalk was a plain white ladder style consisting of two white parallel lines with a pedestrian crosswalk sign in the middle of the street. The conditions were changed one-by-one to ascertain which condition would affect driver behavior:

- White crosswalk with pedestrian sign (baseline) (2012);
- Marked police car parked next to the crosswalk (2012);
- Crosswalk painted with alternating red and white lines (2013);
- Promotional campaign targeting drivers (2014).





The number of drivers that stopped for pedestrians in the red and white crosswalk with the pedestrian sign was almost one to one or 96%. Another important observation was the number of vehicles increased from 477 to 624 in an hour over two years making safety even more important.

The above Evaluation Report was presented to the Auburn City Council in July 2015 and a Complete Streets Resolution was passed in August 2015. As of September 25, 2015 fifteen crosswalks have been painted red and white in the city limits of Auburn including three elementary schools and the middle school which are within the city limits.

**Promotion: Motorist/Pedestrian Safety Campaign**

In 2015, a renewed promotional campaign targeting motorists and pedestrians was launched



for two months in Auburn. This included bill boards, ads on the sides of city buses, a targeted Facebook campaign and safety videos from the 2014 campaign during movie prescreening at the Auburn Public Theater and the Auburn Movie Plex.

**COMMUNITY GARDENS – INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

To increase access to healthy eating, especially more produce, six community gardens were established. Two gardens were implemented by the Auburn Housing Authority (AHA) in Melone Village, one in a public park called St. Francis Park, one on the grounds of Case Mansion on South Street, one on the grounds of the Union Springs Academy, and one in Auburn at the Booker T. Washington Community Center.



Two gardens have been established in Melone Village for residents of the complex. Use has been steady for four years and the AHA has plans to establish another community garden adjacent to two other complexes as an amenity to residents of both complexes. Families and singles used the plots either working cooperatively to share food produced in multiple plots or gardened independently. In 2014, the number of residents benefiting from the gardens reached 39 individuals. One gardener reported she “lost weight from working in her garden and was eating healthier as a result of having her own garden”. The gardens also promoted social change by gardeners interacting and getting to know one another.

These gardens were successful because they are easily within reach and sight of each resident’s home.

Permission was granted from both the City of Auburn and NYS Department of Parks and Historic Preservation to establish a garden in St. Francis Park on the west end of Auburn off Columbus Street. The garden held six to eight plots over two years. In the second year, vandalism continued and lack of

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maintenance by most of the gardeners, some of whom had to take a bus to the location dwindled to the point of neglect. The garden was closed due to neighborhood complaints of unkempt plots and children picking and destroying the produce.

The garden established at the Booker T. Washington Community Center has been sustained for four years. Students plant seeds indoors in the winter and transplant the seedlings outside in the spring. Students in the summer school program have a curriculum around the garden and eventually eat the produce grown in the garden. Some is used in lunches for the summer program by the children and some produce is taken

home. This garden increased access of produce and gardening for up to 95 students each year.

A garden was established for the Village of Union Springs community on the grounds of the Union Springs Academy. The local food pantry and the Union Springs Academy Seventh Day Adventist School encouraged the community to use the garden. This project took place simultaneously with another project of the school which converted a barn foundation into a hydroponic garden in addition to a high tunnel project which extended the growing season. At this time, the community garden has three plots and has been used for the past three years by community members. One plot was planted by Union Springs Academy Elementary students. The school continues to make this garden available for free to the community and its use is also encouraged by the Union Springs Food Pantry.

The Case Mansion garden has six plots and continues to have five to six gardeners' plant and use the property. The number of people accessing the garden and using the produce has ranged from 4 to 12 people each year. These gardeners are community members, each grows for their own use and each commutes to the garden.

A networking community garden group called Cayuga Grows! was established as a subcommittee of the CHP grant for garden coordinators and interested gardeners to share ideas and educate each other on gardening techniques. In late 2014, the group transitioned from solely a networking group, to include a forum for educational presentations on various topics of interest with speakers. After the CHP grant ended, Cayuga Grows! transitioned to a school garden networking group under the direction of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County. Another offshoot of Cayuga Grows! was the creation of a group interested in permaculture practices that is now creating the Auburn Permaculture Park to plan and plant an edible landscape or food forest in Lepak Park, a public park on the west side of Auburn.



## Promotion and Education

To further promote and educate new and seasoned gardeners, sessions of hands-on gardening with knowledgeable consultants, volunteers and volunteer Master Gardeners was conducted at each garden. Cooking sessions and recipes using the produce were also incorporated at least three times each season for two years. Additionally, community gardeners attended at no cost freezing and canning classes on-site at Melone Village and at Cornell Cooperative Extension. All cooking and nutrition education sessions were taught by a Nutrition Educator from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County. Season-extension expertise was provided by Quench & Nourish, Inc.



In collaboration with the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES New Media students; two educational videos were produced for the CHP grant; *Freezing Produce and Hot-Water Bath Canning*. Both were available for all gardeners, are free to the public and can be viewed on the web site [www.modelhealthychoices.com](http://www.modelhealthychoices.com).

Two Events called Seed to Table were held at the Auburn Public Theater in March of 2013 and 2014. March is the time of year gardeners get spring fever but the weather does not cooperate. The first event *Seed to Table: Grow Your Own* focused on showcasing the community gardens created and other community-type gardens in Cayuga County. The second event *Seed to Table: Local Healthy Choices* focused on the availability local foods. Each event featured various speakers, farmers, season-extension techniques, nutrition information, garden catalog swap and a children's area. Both events finished with a documentary film about community gardening.

## HEALTHY RESTAURANTS – INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTHIER FOODS

Currently, Americans eat at least one-third of their meals away from home. Typically, meals eaten away from home are larger and consequently have more calories. Most restaurants know many customers want large portions and feel large portions offer a better value, so they offer large portions to compete. Eating out more frequently increases the likelihood that you will consume excess calories which could result in weight gain.

Many people are trying to eat healthier, have diet restrictions due to heart disease or diabetes or have made lifestyle choices around the kinds of food they eat. Some patrons want smaller portions, and others are looking to avoid certain things such as fat, sodium, animal products or gluten. Still others prefer to eat organic or pesticide-free foods. To make it easier for residents to make healthy choices when dining out, a pilot program called *Dine Out with Healthy Choices* was created to increase awareness of how restaurants can highlight their already healthy foods and provide choices for patrons.



Restaurants in Cayuga County were invited by mail to participate in a voluntary program to highlight the healthy choices on their menus. Seventeen of 86 restaurants responded to the invitation. Each restaurant was asked to make three changes for three months: offer low-fat milk (1%), have at least



## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

### Trails Enhanced and/or Created

**ELEVEN**

- Downtown Loop, Auburn
- Historic South Street, Auburn
- Fort Hill Cemetery, Auburn
- Farm Market Tour, Cayuga County
- Montezuma Heritage Park, Montezuma
- Cayuga Village Recreation Trail, Cayuga
- Cato-Meridian Recreation Center Trail, Cato
- Cayuga Community College Nature Trail, Auburn
- Erie Canalway Park, Port Byron
- Aqueduct Park, Weedsport
- West Shore Trail, Weedsport

### Complete Street Policies

**FOUR**

- The City of Auburn
- Town of Brutus
- Town of Montezuma
- Village of Weedsport

### Complete Streets Enhancements

**EIGHTEEN**

#### Pedestrian Safety

Red and white crosswalks in the City of Auburn (15)

New crosswalk in the Hamlet of Montezuma (1)

Repositioned crosswalk at the intersection of Route 90 and Genesee Street in the Village of Cayuga (1)

#### Streetscape Enhancement

Hamlet of Montezuma (1)

### Encourage Bicycle Use and Improve Safety Measures

**SIX**

Bicycle rack installations in the City of Auburn (5)

Designated bike lanes on State Route 31 in Weedsport (1)

### Community Gardens

**FIVE**

Melone Village (2)

Ministro Ministries (1)

Booker T. Washington (1)

Union Springs Academy (1)

### Dine Out with Healthy Choices Participating Restaurants

**FOURTEEN**

- Ann's Family Restaurant
- Aurora Inn Dining Room
- Be Happy Cafe
- Brenda's Diner
- Cato Family Diner
- Connie's Tex Mex
- Dutch Hollow Country Club
- The Gathering
- The Hollywood
- Hunters Diner
- JB's Wall Street Grille
- Mesa Grande Taqueria
- Parkers Grille and Tap House
- The Restaurant at Elderberry Pond



## CONCLUSION

Obesity is a disease that cannot be solved by education, dieting or physical activity exclusive of each other because so many factors contribute to the disease. We must create equitable environments that support healthy lifestyles; socially, mentally, physically and politically. Our environment must be such that a healthy lifestyle is easily attainable for all. Ten years ago the Cayuga County Health Department was awarded the Eat Well Play Hard grant to initiate environmental changes to increase physical activity and increase access to healthier foods. Positive changes were made and are still in place today.

To effect even more change, the next round of obesity prevention grants *Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work & Play Grant* not only focused on the physical environment, but focused more heavily on policy and environmental changes that would affect more people at a time. The *Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work & Play Grant* initiatives were based on best practices of designing and planning to create healthy communities that contribute to our health and well-being, not subtract from it. The County Health Department will continue to sustain initiatives in place and welcomes continued collaboration with the community to sustain the vision of creating a healthier Cayuga County.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Cayuga County Health Department would like to extend a sincere 'Thank You' to the following partners, organizations, businesses, municipalities and volunteers for without your commitment, collaboration and shared vision; creating a healthier community to live, work and play could not have been accomplished:

AJ Smith Elementary School	Carl & Zach Cuipylo
Auburn Downtown Business Improvement District	Peter Cramer
City of Auburn	Fort Hill Cemetery Association
City Council	Freeman Photography
City Manager	Friends of Montezuma Heritage Park
Engineering Department	Dr. Gioia
Department of Public Works	Governors Traffic Safety Committee
Police Department – Traffic Safety	Harris Studios, Inc.
Auburn Area Vegans	Rick Hoey
Auburn Housing Authority	The Jacobs Press, Inc.
Calvary Food Pantry, Inc.	Kelly's Choice, LLC
Cardiac Rehabilitation Services	John-Paul Koenig
Auburn Memorial Hospital	Grace LaDeuce
Riley Catafalono	Ministro Ministries
Samantha Catafalono	Ken and Audrey Mochel
Cato–Meridian Recreation Center	Glenda Neff
Cato-Meridian School District	Quench and Nourish, Inc.
Wellness Committee	Seymour Library
Cayuga Community College Foundation	The Sign Guys
Cayuga Community Health Network –	St. Alphonsus Food Pantry
Amy Dickman/Suzanne Hai	Linda Tersegno – Owasco Velo Club
Cayuga County Health Department –	The Phoenix Properties – Andrew Simkin
Deanna Hoey, Deb Green, Megan Bell,	Town of Brutus
Patsy Gebczyk	Town of Mentz
Cayuga County Planning and Economic	Town of Montezuma
Development Office	Village of Cayuga
Cayuga Onondaga BOCES Graphic Design	Village of Weedsport
and New Media	Gene Ward
Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency	West Middle School LOFTY Leadership
Head Start and Early Head Start	Program – Susan Muldoon
The Chatterbox – Chuck Medoro	Rob White
Coburn Design	Johnathan Wilkes
Marla Connelly	Chris Zippel
Pauline Copes-Johnson	
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga	
County – Becky Crawford	

## APPENDIX



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Cayuga County



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The Cayuga County Department  
of Health and Human Services

## Cayuga County Project Highlights 2006-2010

The long-term goal of the Cayuga County EWPH project is a reduction in childhood obesity by the facilitation of changes in practices and policies which will promote healthier lifestyle choices in our elementary schools, preschools, food pantries, organizations and businesses serving our community.

### Sustainable Coalition

The EWPH Coalition has become a large sustainable coalition with over 40 active members. Most cite the networking and the common goal of creating healthy lifestyle changes within Cayuga County as the reason for their continued involvement. One result of the coalition has been the leveraging of resources between not-for-profits and the private sector. Not only have groups come together for the common goal to incorporate changes into the fabric of our public venues, but many have also made personal healthy changes in their own lives.

The existing EWPH Coalition (2005-2010) combined with the Cayuga County Capacity Building Grant (2009-2010) Coalition. Both these coalitions combined to form the basis of the new Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play.

### Increased Fruit and Vegetable Access at Food Pantries

Four local food pantries received additional commercial refrigeration units enabling clients to receive more fresh fruits and vegetables from local gardens and the Food Bank of CNY. The creation of the Calvary Food Pantry/BOCES Partnership garden in 2010 grew over \$6,000 worth of produce which was distributed to area pantries. Through these efforts and the awareness of community gardens, many private gardeners donated produce in 2010. Local farmers continue to donate.

### County Trail Improvements

All trails at Sterling Nature Center in northern Cayuga County were marked with a mini-grant from EWPH. The new signage will make the trails safer and more user-friendly.

Another mini-grant provided 10 rustic benches for the new Cayuga Recreation Trail in the Village of Cayuga. Volunteers are working to upgrade a previously rudimentary trail into a fully mapped, multimodal, accessible trail. The trail is 2.5 miles long, with a great degree of variety which include Cayuga Lakefront, woods, a cemetery, village sidewalks, the school grounds and two local parks.

A large trail sign showing the complete trail system was provided to Everest Park in the township of Owasco. The park has many trails for walking, running and dog walking. The camp is utilized by trail users, students using the fields for cross country and soccer camps, cross country runners, fun runs and summer recreation activities.

## **Healthy School Fundraisers**

One successful practice change facilitated by the EWPH Coalition has been the practice of changing to healthy fundraisers in elementary schools. The concept of a healthy fundraiser is based on performing a healthy activity, in these cases walking versus selling candy or another unhealthful commodity. This practice change enforces the messages of the school health curriculum and changes the “typical fund-raising” program to have a positive impact on our children’s health. Seven Cayuga County elementary schools have conducted a total of 15 school walkathons and raised a total of \$65,000. Healthy fundraisers support the School Wellness Policies mandated in 2006 by the Federal government. EWPH has also partnered with the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee Grant to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety into the school walkathons and other events.

## **School Mini-Grants**

All thirteen county elementary schools and two parochial schools received school packs of a new sport called cup-stacking or sport stacking. This is an activity where children stack cups into pre-determined patterns and race against a clock or each other. Sport stacking became so popular for the fourth year running an annual tournament has become established. One school also competed in an International Sport Stacking Day One of the unique properties of sport stacking is that any child can participate regardless of physical ability.

## **Increased The Use of Low-fat Milk**

Partnering with other organizations through the coalition, EWPH was able to encourage the practice change of offering low-fat milk through the Senior Nutrition Program, Meals on Wheels and the Summer Feeding Program. All thirteen county food pantries also changed to providing low-fat milk to families through partnering with EWPH.

## **Partnership with Auburn Doubledays Baseball Team**

Eat Well Play Hard collaborated with the Auburn Doubledays, a community owned Class A (Toronto Blue Jays) baseball team to create a new program which incorporates physical activity and healthy eating. The program includes a week-long elementary school program, an annual family event at the ballpark, a children’s play area at the park, and an Eat Well Play Hard promotional night at the ballpark. This year all 13 elementary schools will have participated in the healthy eating and activity school program which is in its third year.

## **Indoor Play Area at Head Start**

A large motor development room was developed by a mini-grant to Head Start in Auburn in the fall of 2008. The large play room serves as an indoor physical activity area for 330 children. The play area is wall-to-wall mats and contains age-appropriate gymnastics equipment. EWPH has trained the staff in an age-appropriate curriculum and in the use of various equipment. The walls were also painted in bright child-friendly alphabet themes and depict healthy activities. One of the coalition partners donated the large floor mat worth \$2000.

## **Indoor Play Area in Food Pantry**

The Calvary Food Pantry in Auburn partnered with EWPH to create an indoor play area for children. This play area is composed of mats and gymnastics equipment in addition to games. A bright Eat Well Play Hard mural and healthy activity theme was painted on the wall for the play area. This food pantry currently serves 300-350 families per month. This physical activity play area is also used by children of community groups and after school programs using the building. A minimum of 50 children per month use this play area. The mini-grant was awarded in November 2008.







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