

# Washington County

## Washington County Residents Step Up as Health Ambassadors

Ambassadors and Community Members Improved Their Skills and Created Community-Based Solutions.

### Challenge

The 2021 Washington County Community Health Assessment shows one in five residents report “fair” or “poor” health status, a rate higher compared to individuals across the state or nation. Washington County is the fifth-largest county in Ohio by land area, boasting 640 square miles. The fair/poor health status and expansive area make it imperative to have community partners who reside and understand the needs of their neighbors. According to the publication Using Research for Effective Health Promotion interventions and actions to promote health have been historically driven by agencies with little or no input from the targeted populations.

### Approach

Washington County CHC enrolled three Community Health Ambassadors, paying a small stipend for their service. Ambassadors had unlimited open communications with the program staff as well as partners. To support ongoing community-led change, Washington County CHC connected ambassadors and local community members with workshop sessions to advance communication, leadership, and advocacy skills. Pamela Lankford, Director of Building Bridges to Career Epicenter, and Dr. Alane Sanders of Maven Lane Co. facilitated these sessions. One committed participant noted how valuable the opportunity was to practice these skills with other passionate citizens working toward the same goals.

### Results

Community members and ambassadors are now the decision-makers for projects, from planning and design through implementation. Six healthy eating and active living projects have been enhanced by the ambassadors and driven by the neighborhood. The West Side Community Ambassador is motivated by seeing his neighborhood leaders working to speak in a unified voice as they advocate for themselves to local and state government officials to advance their community goals. Most recently, they worked with officials to install sidewalks and safe crosswalks in the West Side Community. The Fort Frye Ambassador worked side by side with community members to develop Beverly & Waterford Farmers’ Market and has been able to attain verbal commitments from all vendors for the 2023 market. Ambassadors also improved local parks and playgrounds throughout the county.



### At A Glance

Washington County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) is committed to long-term relationships rather than a project-based approach. Ambassadors who live, work, and play in their neighborhood bring to life the CHC principle of community-led solutions. Enrolling Community Health Ambassadors and investing in workshop sessions to develop community members’ communication, leadership, and advocacy skills continue to lead to healthier communities in Washington County. Ambassadors helped make safer crosswalks, sidewalks, farmers’ markets, parks, and playgrounds a reality in 2022.



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