



## 2015 Field Update Neighborhood Organizing for Health

The Community Alliance for Research & Engagement (CARE) at Yale School of Public Health was established in 2007 to identify solutions to health challenges through community action research.

Communities most at-risk for diabetes and other chronic diseases also experience structural barriers within the built environment that prevent people from engaging in healthy behaviors – unsafe streets for walking/biking; lack of access to affordable, healthy foods; limited recreational resources, etc. CARE's team of community organizers works with the six lowest-income neighborhoods in New Haven to strengthen local capacity, ownership, and sustainability around a culture of health. Most importantly, CARE is guided by community organizing principles to train and mobilize residents around health-related issues important to their neighborhoods.

Organizers guide groups to identify health priorities, access resources, implement activities and track results. Established neighborhood groups now meet monthly with up to 60 residents engaged per neighborhood. Catalyzing projects focus directly on the built environment and include:

- Supporting the start-up of eight community and school gardens
  - Field of Greens, Amistad, and Casa Otoñal gardens in the Hill
  - Clinton Avenue School and Community Garden in Fair Haven
  - Little Red Hen Garden in West River
  - Westville Manor Garden, Brookside Garden, and Brennan-Rogers School Garden in West Rock
  - Constance Baker Motley Garden in Dixwell
- Increasing access to Farmers' Markets by facilitating the implementation of mobile markets in West River and West Rock; supporting the expansion of full markets in Fair Haven and the Hill.
- Developing marked walking trails in Fair Haven.
- Redeveloping two key intersections to implement traffic calming measures in West River to improve access to neighborhood parks through a collaborating between residents and the New Haven Transportation Department.
- Contributing to the Newhallville Community Resilience Team, working to address community violence and increase social cohesion.
- Catalyzing the creation of a new monthly stop for the CT Food Bank's mobile pantry program in West Rock.
- Improving access to parks and recreation facilities.

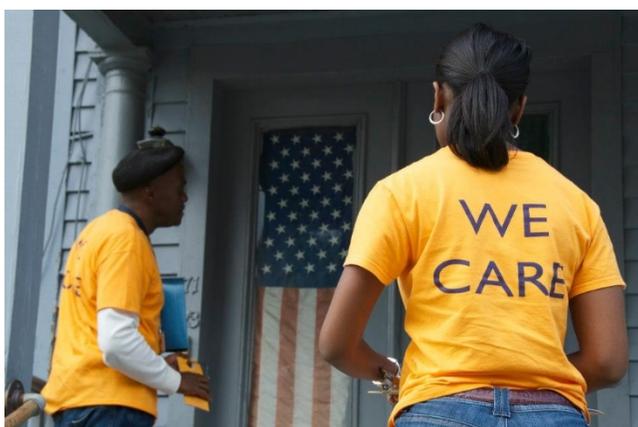
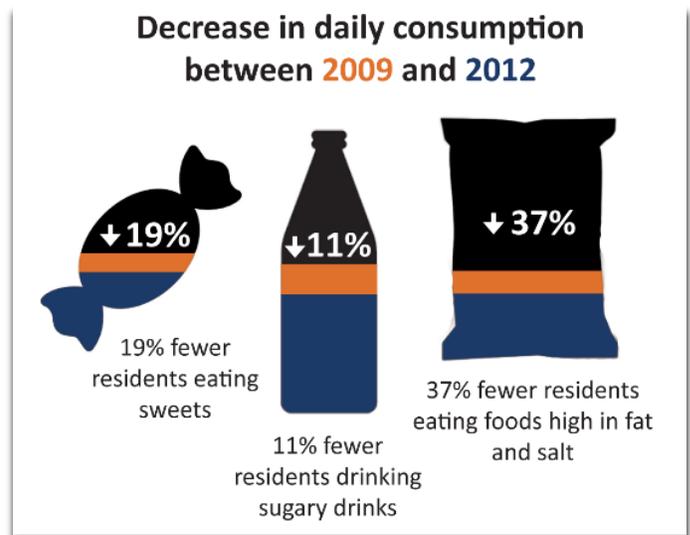


Together with residents, CARE has also supported traditional public health projects targeting individual behavioral change, including:

- Cooking classes
- YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program in the Hill
- Basketball and other sports leagues in West Hills and the Hill

- 5+ exercise classes including Zumba, Boot Camp, Yoga (year-long; in English and Spanish), and a faith-based exercise program series in multiple neighborhoods
- Walking groups in multiple neighborhoods
- Several community-wide family days in West Rock (Spring 2014 & 2015) featuring exercise activities and healthy food demonstrations reaching over 40 of residents
- Fitness club in the Hill
- Health and wellness program targeting vulnerable adolescent girls in the Hill
- Community hikes in West Rock
- Health education activities at numerous neighborhood festivals, reaching hundreds of residents

To further measure the impact of these efforts, CARE conducts triennial health surveys in the six neighborhoods. Our most recent survey was conducted with 1,298 residents in 2012. Results show that 43% of respondents were obese, with 26% overweight; and diabetes was 1.5 times higher than the national average. However, when comparing results from 2009 to 2012, there are statistically- and clinically-meaningful improvements in health-related outcomes: reductions in sedentary behavior and consumption of sugar sweetened beverages and high-fat foods. And while residents' health is generally poorer compared to CT and the nation as a whole, 39% feel their overall health is better compared to one year ago; 40% of residents report that there are people encouraging a healthy lifestyle in their neighborhoods, and 42% report that it has become easier to lead a healthy lifestyle over the past three years.



Working with residents and stakeholders across New Haven, CARE has made significant progress building lasting partnerships and community capacity, and establishing the infrastructure and interventions that are necessary to strengthen and sustain our work. We invite you to partner with us in New Haven to identify, engage, and support local leadership; encourage civic participation; fund ambitious neighborhood plans; facilitate connections between donors, the city, not-for-profits, and businesses with a common vision: creating a better city in which we live, work, and play.

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