

2018 Impact Report
Reshaping our Region
for a Hopeful Future

kchealthykids



Dear Friends,

When I came to KC Healthy Kids in the fall of 2018, I knew I was joining an organization that deeply cares about making a lasting impact for children.

At KC Healthy Kids, we believe that influencing the course of children's lives requires providing healthy opportunities. Strengthening community resources helps people realize their true potential. Engaging legislators and leaders to make sound decisions improves wellness for us all.

We know that constructing a healthy, hopeful future requires a strong imagination, solid strategic goals and bold action. It requires steadily building healthy communities where children eat nutritious meals, drink healthy beverages and engage in physical activities. It requires limiting screen time, promoting mental health and establishing healthy oral hygiene routines. It also requires cultivating activities that not only improve children's health but also prepare them to learn and grow.

Our organization's mission will always champion kids' health. Now, with careful planning, patience and courage, we are strategically maximizing our core passion to make an even greater impact. We are leveraging our focus areas—healthy eating, active living—to improve children's mental and oral health.

We are grateful to you—our donors, sponsors, partners and volunteers who recognize the value of this important work. It is through your generous resources, time and talents that we are motivated to be bold in our efforts to help children and their communities. Together, we are creating a future filled with hope by making tangible impact in the lives of our children today.

I'm happy to share with you just a few stories from our work last year, work that will benefit generations of kids far into the future.



Danielle Robbins-Gregory
President



New project, Healthy Kids Bright Futures, embraces the youngest among us



Research shows children who live in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods or otherwise stressful environments are more likely to suffer from obesity, cardiac disease, diabetes, poor oral health and mental illness into their adult lives.

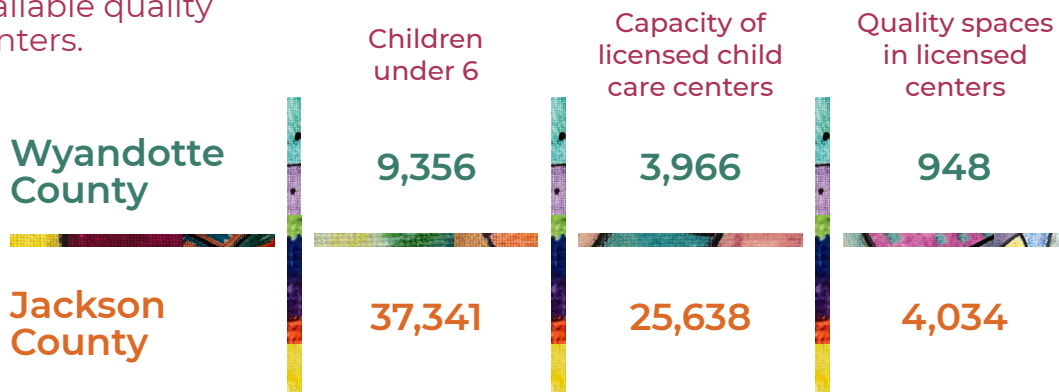
So in 2018, with a grant from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we launched Healthy Kids Bright Futures, a brand new project to address the needs of children ages birth to three years and their families.

This collaborative and comprehensive project works with early care and education centers in KCK and KCMO to improve the quality of their programs, connect families to services and resources, increase family engagement and establish a parent-led advisory committee. And while we're at it, we're conducting robust evaluations.

Like the little ones it serves, this project is growing fast. Project Director Rhonda Erpelding has recruited six community partners, two consultants, eight early care centers and three community navigators who work directly with parents.

Quality Care

In our region, there are more children who need care than there are available quality spaces in centers.



Source: The Greater Kansas City Early Care and Education Landscape Study



Students' \$1,000 Champions for Health award draws a big donation for their new playground

When a group of sixth graders at Academy for Integrated Arts entered our photo contest, they had no idea how big an impact they were about to have on their community.

Even though their school had recently purchased, renovated and moved to the King Louie Bowling Alley at 79th and Troost, one very important thing that was still missing: a playground. So, when they won first place in our Champions for Health photo contest, they put their prize money toward the school fundraiser for playground equipment.

But wait, there's more! When an anonymous donor heard about the students' donation, they were so impressed, they decided to make a generous contribution as well, to the tune of \$50,000!

Upon receiving the donation, school staff worked closely with students to pick out the playground equipment they wanted most.

Since 2013, generous donors and sponsors have helped us provide more than \$50,000 in cash prizes for student-led health and wellness projects in our region's urban, suburban and rural schools.

"It's powerful to see students take meaningful action to bring healthy changes to their communities," said Michelle Dake, youth initiatives director for KC Healthy Kids. "They get it, and we hope they will keep it up as they move on to middle school."

Champions for Health was founded as I AM HERE in 2013 with the goal of teaching faculty and students how their surroundings impact their health and how to advocate for change. Each year around a thousand students

enter the contest. Six winning classrooms receive \$1,000 and have a chance to take home a total of \$2,500. Twenty classrooms receive \$100 honorable mention awards.





Kids keep Splitlog Farm growing for their KCK community

Splitlog Farm and Orchard is the Brussels sprout of urban farming. It's green and cute, and it packs a lot of nutrition into a small space. Each year, on less than an acre, the farm produces more than 1,500 pounds of produce for neighbors, making it an innovative solution for helping kids and their families eat more fresh, local food.

Community Housing of Wyandotte County established the farm in 2014 to support their community building and engagement goals, and in 2018, formed a partnership with KC Healthy Kids to operate the farm.

It's a perfect fit with our Farm to School Academy, because M.E. Pearson Elementary is across the street, and kids in the pre-K program do most of the growing!

"It's an incredible opportunity for kids to dig in the dirt, to learn with their hands and to see how food is grown. Some of them were reluctant at first, but now they love

getting their hands dirty and tasting things they planted," said Autumn Winegar, our Farm to School Academy intern who taught Grow a Garden Classroom lessons to three classrooms over the school year.

The students also understand what it means to share food with their community. "A lot of them want to come out over the summer to help grow food for their neighbors," Autumn said.



Here are some ways they offered the food they grew to their school and community:

- Families received produce when they picked up their kids from school on early release days or when they came to the farm for lunch (it's one of 45 stops on Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools' free food truck route).
- Throughout summer, members of the community were invited to pick their own blackberries, raspberries, tomatoes and cucumbers from the U-pick surrounding the farm. Free farm shares were also distributed on designated days.
- M.E. Pearson's student council welcomed families to a free farm to table dinner with local food tasting and a dance party.

Splitlog Farm by the Numbers

300+

Hours KC Healthy Kids' interns spent training to be advocates for farm to school.



1000+

Hours worked at Splitlog by KC Healthy Kids staff.



1,500+

Pounds of fresh produce provided for school meals and for families to take home.



1,500+

Hours worked by community volunteers at the farm.



Policy work for a strong regional food system

As we look for ways to build healthier communities for kids, we don't just take a long view, we take a broad view too. All the spokes in our regional food system need to be strong for anyone to have access to healthy food.

And that's why we worked with community activists to advocate for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Bill in Missouri. It passed in the last hour of the last day of the 2018 regular session, with the benefits becoming available in select locations in summer 2019.

The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides low-income seniors with coupons they can use to buy fresh, healthy food at farmers markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs. The program not only helps them stretch their budgets to buy more fruits and vegetables, it generates new sales for local farmers, strengthening local economies.





Lifting up voices in support of a Farm Bill that feeds us all

In 2018, the Greater KC Food Policy Coalition turned their attention to the 2018 Farm Bill Reauthorization. The group rallied advocates to help shape a policy that would put healthy food on the plates of struggling Americans and support local farms and economies.

To focus their efforts, the coalition identified three priority areas: conservation, nutrition and research and extension. They collected 500 signatures on a letter urging Senator Pat Roberts (KS), chair of the Senate ag committee, and other decision makers to pass a strong Farm Bill that feeds us all. More than 100 people shared their stories of why Farm Bill programs matter to them and their communities, and we passed their stories on to their federal elected officials. Ultimately, the coalition's priorities fared well.

Whether they are speaking out for food assistance programs, local agriculture, or water access, advocates say the Greater KC Food Policy Coalition helps them make a difference:

- 99% said "I learned something new."
- 97% said "I now understand how I can advocate for policies and programming."
- 94% said "I plan to take action to advocate for improving food systems and healthy food access based on the information and tools I received."
- 28% more people than in 2016 said they plan to contact their elected officials.

2018 Survey

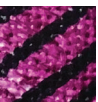


Stories We Heard

"SNAP matters to me because it helped me through an unplanned health issue that prevented me from taking care of my family."

"SNAP matters to me because it helped my parents feed me when they were struggling. I want all kids to have a shot at good health and school success like I did."

"I care about the Farm Bill because being able to use SNAP at the farmers market means my family and I have access to healthier food choices."





The design of this report is based on *Hopeful Future*, a modern mosaic created by kids from Kansas City's urban, suburban and rural communities at our 2018 Champions for Health Youth Summit. Students at Academy for Integrated Arts chose the name.

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KC Healthy Kids rallies the people in our communities to improve access to affordable fresh food and safe places to walk and play. When our neighborhoods support healthy habits, we are less likely to suffer from obesity, which is linked to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and poor mental health. To make a lasting impact, we shape policies that improve our food system and physical surroundings, and ultimately, the places where we live, work, learn and play.



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