



American  
Heart  
Association.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

2020-2021

At the American Heart Association Puget Sound, we work to achieve health equity by removing barriers to optimal heart health. Through collaboration with community partners, our programs, initiatives and policies impact sustainable change by addressing the social determinants of health including structural racism and access to nutrition and quality health care.

**PUGET  
SOUND**

# NUTRITION SECURITY

Food insecurity has increased across the Puget Sound amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, one in three Washington households struggles to access healthy food and 60 percent of those households have children. Communities of color and other historically marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by food insecurity due to social and environmental factors such as unequal access to healthy, culturally relevant options.

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO HEALTHY FOOD

The American Heart Association partnered with community organizations to develop screening and referral systems to identify individuals facing food insecurity and provide connections to local food resources to increase nutrition access.

Key contributions:

- Training for volunteers to conduct screenings, materials that listed local food resources and provided guidance on SNAP and Market Match enrollment.
- Screening and resource materials translated to seven languages.
- Produce vouchers to select food insecure participants.
- Increased access to healthy foods with the potential to reach 27,000 community members each year.

Thank you to community partners South Sound Boys & Girls Club, SHAG Community Life Foundation and Auburn Farmers Market.



## INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTHY, CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOODS



Having access to culturally inclusive and nutrient dense food helps all community members reach their health potential. Our team collaborated with local food access organizations to increase health equity in our communities by ensuring healthy food is accessible to all, regardless of cultural preferences or income gaps.

Key contributions:

- Developed nutrition policies with food access organizations Community Lunch on Capitol Hill and FamilyWorks that prioritize a commitment to providing nutritious food, including fresh vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, reflective of the community's cultural diversity.
- These projects complement our history of legislative advocacy for nutrition security including the Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Program and SNAP Market Match.
- Successfully advocated for King County's \$5 million health equity community investment to increase the distribution of culturally relevant foods.

*"We're grateful to the AHA for helping us to develop a policy guided by our participants." Tobey Solomon-Auguer, Food Bank Manager, FamilyWorks.*

*"Providing food that is both healthy and relevant to our guests' needs and culture provides them a level of dignity they may not receive the remainder of the day." Jeff Wolcott, Executive Director, Community Lunch on Capitol Hill.*

## INCREASING YOUTH NUTRITION ACCESS

Good nutrition, especially in the early years, can have a powerful impact on positive health outcomes later in life. Our "Three Meals a Day" project helps to expand youth access to healthy meals and encourages the adoption of At-Risk After School Meals programs.

Key contributions:

- Launched pilot projects to innovate solutions, such as a new heart health education toolkit to address the barriers schools face.
- Partnered with youth-serving organizations to host six meal distribution events, providing 600+ to-go style meals and health education resources.

We are excited to continue and expand this outreach with funding from the Safeway Albertsons Nourishing Neighbors Federal Meals Grant.



*"The families were all smiles. Many thanks for this program which brought a moment of light for these recipients." Pat Bailey, City of Auburn.*



# BLOOD PRESSURE CONTROL

High blood pressure puts many Puget Sound adults at an increased risk for heart disease and stroke. Studies show that roughly 35% of adults are unaware they have high blood pressure. That would be an estimated 577,500 adults living in the Puget Sound unaware that they are living with a dangerous condition.

## IMPROVING QUALITY OF PRIMARY CARE

Target: BP™ supports doctors and care teams in helping patients keep hypertension under control. We provide patient and provider education and quality improvement recommendations that improve care. More than 80 clinical sites in the Puget Sound are participating, covering more than one million patients.



## MONITORING BLOOD PRESSURE AT HOME



High blood pressure has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic particularly for people unable to monitor their levels at home because they do not have access to or cannot afford a home blood pressure monitor. The American Heart Association team worked with cardiac rehabilitation clinics and community health clinics throughout Pierce County to help solve this. Clinics were able to integrate self-monitoring into patient care and provide over 500 patient care kits which included educational materials on [how to manage blood pressure at home](#).

*"I had no idea how badly uncontrolled my blood pressure was. I felt symptoms but I choose to ignore them. I was very discouraged since I do not have insurance and don't qualify. I wouldn't have been able to afford one of these machines on my own. My wife and I are eating healthy, walking slowly and I never get any of the symptoms I used to get. Let the AHA know that this patient is grateful for helping save my life."*  
Self Monitored Blood Pressure Program Participant at Sea Mar Community Health.

## REACHING DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Language can be one of the barriers in health education, including helping the community understand how to manage blood pressure on a daily basis. The American Heart Association developed health education materials, including instructional videos about how to check blood pressure at home, in four languages widely spoken around the Puget Sound region. Our team also worked with local ethnic media to encourage community members to adopt heart healthy lifestyles by providing medical experts fluent in Spanish and Filipino. This year we are proud to have expanded our women's health initiative, Go Red for Women, to reach diverse audiences through a collaboration with Univision Seattle and discussions about cardiovascular health in our podcasts and video webisodes.



# SAVING & IMPROVING LIVES

## CPR EDUCATION

Seventy percent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home, which means the person most likely to need CPR is a loved one. During the COVID-19 pandemic we spent a lot of time at home, which made it more important than ever to learn CPR. With the support of local CPR sponsor, MultiCare Pulse Heart Institute, our community engaged in Hands-Only CPR education during the year through webinars and virtual events, as well as content in local media outlets and social media.

We also supported hospitals during the pandemic by keeping staff credentialed in resuscitation by providing a digital learning platform and simulation station.



## CHD GUIDEBOOK TO SUPPORT WA FAMILIES



Learning that a child has congenital heart disease (CHD) can be an emotional and difficult time for parents and families. The American Heart Association is dedicated to contributing to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of congenital heart defects by investing in CHD specific research, advancing public policies and sharing resources to support patients and their families. To help navigate the complex factors involved in caring for a child with CHD, we published a book for families and caregivers, Heart to Heart: A Family Guidebook About Congenital Heart Defects. Healthcare providers at Seattle Children's and Mary Bridge Children's provide free copies of the book to patients and Washington families receiving care elsewhere can request the book from the AHA. This resource was made possible by Pete and Brandy Nordstrom, whose son was born with a heart defect and needed heart surgery as an infant.

## INVESTING IN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUITY

The American Heart Association's Bernard J. Tyson Impact Fund honors the legacy of the late Bernard J. Tyson's work to remove barriers to optimal health by investing in sustainable, community-led solutions addressing health inequalities in under-resourced communities. To address housing equity and food insecurity in the Puget Sound area, we invested \$480,000 in four Puget Sound-based organizations: Tacoma Farmer's Market, Living Well Kent, Chief Seattle Club and Weld. Learn more about their work here.

Representatives from two organizations, Living Well Kent and Weld, joined the Heart of Puget Sound Digital Event in June to share the value and impact of the funding. Watch the panel discussion at 41:52.

*"We are honored to be part of this partnership. It has provided not only funding but active engagement in our work which makes us more effective in working with our community. We are on track to increase the amount of individuals served by 42%."*  
Patrick Arney, Executive Director, Weld.





# SAVING & IMPROVING LIVES

## SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH FOR PUGET SOUND TEACHERS

Mental health is strongly connected to heart health. Managing stress and adding moments of mindfulness can change our outlook on life, lower blood pressure and improve immune function. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school teachers and staff were local heroes who kept the world spinning for families in our community while navigating feelings of anxiety and burnout. With the support of local Healthy for Good sponsor Regence BlueShield, we equipped Puget Sound school staff with the tools to prioritize their mental wellbeing in the name of heart health through tips and exercises to build resilience, express gratitude, sleep better, eat healthy and carve out more time for movement. This campaign was expanded to include parents with school-age children and who were serving as teachers at home. Helpful tips were also shared through social media to encourage the community to prioritize mental wellbeing.



## TACKLING YOUTH TOBACCO AND VAPING



In Washington state, over 21% of youth report using tobacco or e-cigarette (vaping) products. Tobacco use contributes to one in five deaths in King County alone. Youth from communities of color are disproportionately affected by the harmful effects of tobacco and vaping due in part to targeted efforts from the tobacco industry. The American Heart Association is working to empower teens to advocate for the health of their communities by signing up to be part of the [Tobacco Endgame](#) and our Tobacco Free Schools initiative builds partnerships with schools to develop equity focused policies to reduce tobacco use among students. Our team provided assistance to the Center for Multicultural Health to reduce tobacco use among African American and African Immigrant youth, using webisodes, podcasts and forums that resonate with young people.

# TOGETHER, WE ARE A RELENTLESS FORCE FOR A WORLD OF LONGER, HEALTHIER LIVES.



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