

Health Equity Zones are geographical areas designed to achieve health equity by eliminating health disparities using place-based (where you live) strategies to promote healthy communities. Healthy communities are places where people live, work, play, and learn. These are neighborhoods consisting of social and physical environments that support healthy choices and safe living.

### STORY SPOTLIGHT: COURTNEY POISSANT



Courtney Poissant

The Common Pub and Grille was a once-proud Bristol landmark that had passed its prime. Then Courtney Poissant stepped in to make it great, family friendly, and safe again. In just one short year, the Common Pub and Grille has become a favorite meeting place for Bristol residents of all ages. Courtney knew she had hit one goal the day she had to order booster seats for the restaurant. Now, her initiative is helping to restore neighborhood pride and hopefully spark more economic re-development.

**“I would like to have kids someday and I would want them to grow up in a safe community.”**  
- Courtney Poissant

Courtney and the restaurant now give back through the HEZ, providing meeting space, food and many volunteer hours. Courtney offers monthly cooking demonstrations to teach the community how to adapt recipes to be more healthy, and also offers tastings at the **Food On the Move** to encourage residents to try new produce. “The HEZ is great for Bristol and it is giving us the tools we need to actually make the changes that Bristol needs”, says Courtney.

### BACKGROUND INFO

The Bristol HEZ fosters collaboration to identify the health risks and needs of the town and moves forward common objectives around health-promoting programs, services, and community design. While Bristol is fortunate to have the resources of many social services and community-based organizations, most worked independently before HEZ. The Bristol HEZ Collaborative has created an umbrella where they can now work interdependently on public education, social services, recreation, mobility, and nutrition. Initiatives are helping residents with mobility challenges to:

- Eliminate barriers;
- Build bridges to seniors;
- Expand access to resources that help people lead a better quality of life.



### TIMELINE OF EVENTS:



## SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: WALK AND BIKE AUDITS



Jack Ringland, a disabled veteran who uses a wheelchair, participated in the Walk/Bike Audit and works with the HEZ.

Getting across town isn't always easy if you use a wheelchair or have other mobility challenges. The Bristol HEZ's **Walk and Bike Audits** and Public Workshop invited community engagement and yielded recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The Workshop was held in partnership with Grow Smart RI, with help from Roger Williams University students and Rhode Island Department of Transportation.

**"I was leaving Church, I'm wheeling along...the light was bad, the sidewalk was cracked...suddenly I'm on my face...I am working to change this."**

- Jack Ringland

## WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

The HEZ grant has helped expand the work that the **Bristol Thrive by Five and Beyond** has started by bringing together like-minded individuals to work together cooperatively to improve the health and well-being of our community. This expansion has materialized through both funded and unfunded leveraged resources, an acknowledgement of the impacts of the HEZ initiative in Bristol. Emily Spence and Craig Pereira, HEZ Coordinators, truly believe in the HEZ work:

**The work is important because the disparity amongst individuals in Bristol is at a critical threshold. The work of the HEZ initiative, intended to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, these disparities, takes into consideration a more comprehensive approach to improving the lives of Bristol residents.**



Emily Spence and volunteer Anabela

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### BACKBONE AGENCY

Town of Bristol

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**Shared public health strategic priorities working with partners statewide.**

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- Addressing the social and environmental determinants of health
- Eliminating the disparities of health and promote health equity
- Ensuring access to quality health services including vulnerable populations.

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