



# HEALTH EQUITY ZONE (HEZ)

## NORTH PROVIDENCE

### NORTH PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT



The North Providence HEZ is a community-centered school model helping elementary and middle school students and their families live safer, healthier, positive lives.

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: CASEY LUMB

Watch out Ringling Brothers, there's a new circus in town! Casey Lumb, MSW has two passions: working with kids - and circus performing. When she received funding to start an after school program in North Providence, it was only natural that it became a youth circus project!

**“Circus in my life is such a healthy thing, and there’s a lot of research that says it’s healthy for others.”**  
-Casey Lumb

The wildly successful after school program includes hula hooping, flag spinning, juggling, parachute games, and more. There are even clown costumes for the kids. In addition to the fun, kids get a hot meal before they go home. The circus theme balances pressure on academic performance with a focus on physical activity and creative expression. “Kids grow cognitively, build social skills, learn emotional regulation, and gain self-esteem”, says Casey.



Casey Lumb

### BACKGROUND INFO

The North Providence School Department HEZ collaborates with many partner groups to improve the conditions in which residents work, play, and live. The HEZ focuses on the Marieville Elementary School and Birchwood Middle School neighborhoods and the health needs of students and their families.

Focus areas include:

- The environment;
- Safe routes to school;
- Recreational facilities;
- Greener school yards;
- Affordable fruits and vegetables;
- Asthma;
- Connecting residents to diabetes prevention and self-management programs;
- Obesity;
- Mental and behavioral health;
- Tobacco use and exposure;
- Substance abuse;
- Violence.



### TIMELINE OF EVENTS:



## SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: WALKING SCHOOL BUS

A challenging issue for Marieville Elementary School has been chronic student absenteeism and tardiness. **The Walking School Bus** is part of the solution. HEZ funding was used to train walking monitors and build the program. Students walk together to and from school, ensuring a safe and on time journey. Students also receive pedometers, and are given challenges and incentives for being active and arriving on time. To date, 14 students have participated successfully. Principal Bruce Butler notes that the Marieville Elementary School had historically lower performance in the district, but now has some of the highest test scores.



North Providence Mayor Charles Lombardi  
and Principal Bruce Butler

## WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

The North Providence HEZ has helped the school department address students' needs in the areas of physical activity, eating healthier, decreased absenteeism, and tardiness. Programs include the **Walking School Bus**, **Move and Dine** programs, **Food on the Move** mobile farmers market, summer meal program, community gardens, and meal prep classes for kids who are given a crock pot and ingredients to cook dinner for their family every week. There's also a new **Youth Center**, which is a safe place for teens to gather and enjoy activities together. The next step is sustainability, and how to continue beyond HEZ funding.

**"We have filled in so many gaps, and we want to grow as full service community schools."**  
-Elizabeth Vachon



Elizabeth Vachon, LICSW

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[NPHEZ.ORG](http://NPHEZ.ORG)

### North Providence School Department

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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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