



HEALTH EQUITY ZONE (HEZ)

WEST WARWICK

THUNDERMIST HEALTH CENTER

This HEZ is building unprecedented bridges between residents and programs, and working to help the community address addiction and the stigma of mental health challenges.

Health
Equity
Zone
West Warwick

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: LISA PINTO



Lisa Pinto

Lisa Pinto, a Resident Ambassador, takes great pride in helping her community, especially since it hits so close to home. Since losing her brother to an overdose, she has made it her mission to help others in the community. Lisa believes a big challenge is getting information about programs out into the community. Overcoming the stigma of mental health disorders and addiction is another. She is a strong advocate of not judging people based on their illnesses or addictions. "Addiction can touch anybody at any given point, there are no guidelines, there's no age group, it's just there", says Lisa.

She believes that first hand experiences are most effective when trying to make change.

"Keep an open mind, be assertive, never give up, life is always a learning experience, and maybe some of the experiences you go through, you can help the next person."

- Lisa Pinto

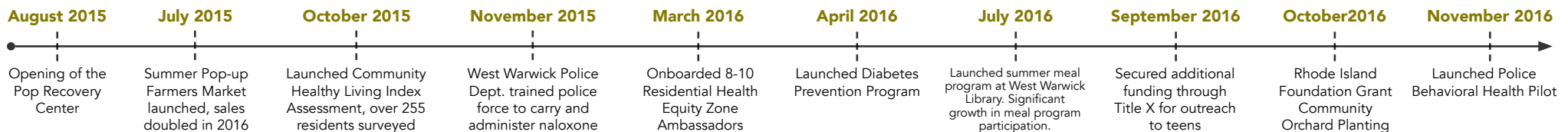
BACKGROUND INFO

The West Warwick HEZ collaborative engages more than 12 local cross sector organizations and ten citizen leaders, who as HEZ Ambassadors drive change at the neighborhood level.

Priority areas of focus include:

- Increasing access to healthy affordable fresh food by sponsoring Summer pop up and seasonal farmer's markets;
- Addressing high rates of substance use and overdose through rescue, treatment and recovery strategies that coordinate naloxone training, medication assisted treatment, peer recovery supports, and launching a free community Pop up recovery center at our Health Equity Zone Hub;
- Improving teen health by identifying strategies around increasing access to comprehensive healthcare and health education;
- Promoting physical activity through free wellness activities;
- Connecting residents to programs supporting healthier lifestyles; and partnering with healthcare practices to address chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Improving public transportation.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:



SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM



“Every year our clients worry over the hardship of feeding their children in the summer. They do not have the help of school breakfast and lunch nor do their WIC and SNAP benefits increase to offset the additional meals.”

- Cindy Singleton, Director of Elder and Family Services at Westbay Community Action

The **Summer Meal Program** provided food access for families with young children in a welcoming, comfortable, air conditioned, community setting. Families not only borrowed library materials, but participated in library activities. During the summer lunch program, which served almost 600 lunches, 112 library programs brought in 1,794 young people. Many of the activities were centered around the summer lunch program and the library’s involvement in the program was an essential ingredient to a successful summer.

WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

Since the HEZ Launch, residents have been connected to addiction services and multiple points of access for healthy foods. Victor Arias, HEZ Coordinator, says sustainability and expanding ambassadors and community’s role in project are important right now. Sustaining and evolving the cross-sector collaborations well be key to meeting our shared goals.

“Some community members think their voice does not reach anyone, so we need to create space where residents and decision makers are equals.”

- Victor Arias



Victor Arias

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Shared public health strategic priorities working with partners statewide.

3/28/2017

- 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.