



# 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: DALE FELDON



Participation of Resident Ambassador has more than doubled in size from 4 to 9 participants between 2018 and 2019. This group of West Warwick resident ambassadors has led important community conversations, a community orchard project, recovery cookouts at the community garden, recovery karaoke as well as other recovery support efforts. One of the longest running projects that was created and is led by Resident Ambassadors is the West Warwick Rocks Project. This Resident Ambassador led hide-and-seek activity was launched to spread kindness and connect West Warwick kids, families, business owners and all residents to the many assets and beautiful locations found around town.

Dale Feldon tells us that it “makes me happy because I hope that it makes someone smile when they find a rock and it also helps parents get outside with their children”

**“...connecting with residents and giving people in the community a voice to be able to say what is important to them.”**

*-Michelle Mitchell, Resident Ambassador*

**“... opportunities to collaborate around social justice issues.”**

*-Paul Council, Resident Ambassador*



**“... connect with residents to learn about their concerns, while providing healthy foods.”**

*-Wendy Boudreau, Resident Ambassador*

### 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, while continuing to build recovery community capital focusing on families, individuals and grandparents raising grandchildren that have been impacted by substance use and mental health disorders;
- Improving teen health by a creating trauma-informed school district;
- 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;
- Advocating for accessible public transportation.

## SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM: WEST WARWICK “CHOOSE LOVE”

**“I feel like the whole vibe has changed. We will be sitting in class and somebody will say something, and another person will say, ‘choose love.’”**

- West Warwick High School Senior

The **“Choose Love” Movement** at West Warwick High School was introduced in Fall 2019 by students and consists of introducing four-character values of the program during each of the quarters throughout the school year. Each Friday a new ‘Choose Love’ curriculum is delivered to teachers and then on Monday, students are invited to participate in various passion-based clubs and projects – for example, knitting circles or mindfulness lessons. This effort is moving into the middle schools and broadens the scope of becoming trauma-informed school district. Trauma-informed trainings have successfully trained 80% of West Warwick High School staff with advanced training to special staff, including social workers. Trauma-informed trainings and “Choose Love” have expanded into the middle school and elementary schools.



Visit us on  
[FACEBOOK.COM/  
HEALTHYEQZONEWESTWARWICK](https://www.facebook.com/HEALTHYEQZONEWESTWARWICK)



**BACKBONE AGENCY**  
Thundermist Health Center

**HEZ COORDINATORS**  
Susan Jacobsen, MA, LMHC, CCM  
401-767-4100 ext. 4304  
[susanj@thundermisthealth.org](mailto:susanj@thundermisthealth.org)

Cathy Schultz, BA, CPRS  
401-615-2800 ext. 4963  
[cathys@thundermisthealth.org](mailto:cathys@thundermisthealth.org)

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH (RIDOH) PROJECT OFFICER**  
Deb Golding  
401-222-5954  
[deb.golding@health.ri.gov](mailto:deb.golding@health.ri.gov)

**EVALUATOR**  
Katie St. Amand  
401-222-5371  
[katelyn.stamand.ctr@health.ri.gov](mailto:katelyn.stamand.ctr@health.ri.gov)

## WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

The West Warwick Health Equity Zone collaborative continues to work closely with the Town and first responders to understand and respond to the opioid overdose epidemic and mental health disorders. In 2018, a community panel discussion was live streamed by Town Councilman, Jason Messier on Facebook resulting in over 2000 views. This question and answer panel consisted of a member of police and fire departments, behavioral health clinician, a family affected by SUD, a person in recovery and a physician. The WWFD ‘leave behind’ Narcan kit process following an overdose and drop-in Narcan distribution at all 4 Fire Stations was developed and approved by the HEZs Overdose, Prevention and Recovery Workgroup.



**“My favorite part of working with HEZ is our collective effort to promote a sense of security and well-being in the Town of West Warwick”**

-Colonel Mark Knott, Chief of Police

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

- 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.

1/27/2020