

October 14, 2021



## WYANDANCH Case Statement

Developed by the  
**CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
ADVISORY BOARD**

**A Project of the Long Island Chapter of the New York  
State Children's Environmental Health Centers**



New York State **Children's**  
**Environmental Health Centers**

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LONG ISLAND

**Wyandanch Case Statement**  
**Children's Environmental Health Day**  
**Wednesday, Oct 13, 2021**

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## **Environmental Health and Justice on Long Island**

Environmental health is an opportunity. We can choose to raise healthy children in healthy places. The ideas are simple, because we know what works and what doesn't. The implementation is hard, because it takes collective action over time.

The NYS Children's Environmental Health Centers (aka NYSCHECK, pronounced "nice check") are the only such statewide collaborative in the country. The mandate is broad: protect and promote the health of children confronting environmental challenges.

The environment is everything. What do we eat, drink and breathe? Where do we live, learn and work? Do we have money? Do we have social networks?

Community-based interventions have the power to address disparities where they arise. Why does one community have a higher rate of asthma than a neighboring community? Smoking rates, investment in housing, traffic patterns, industrial sitings, the legacy of racism, and the distribution of wealth and power all need to be addressed. In other words, it takes a team to change the environment.

Here on Long Island we are proud to have a team. We can do the most good for the most children together. You can learn more about our work in Wyandanch at:

<https://nyscheck.org/wyandanch/>

Cappy Collins, MD, MPH

Director of the Long Island Centers, NYSCHECK

## Introduction by Latesha S. Walker

Known for being economically stressed, Wyandanch is a hamlet spanning 4.5 square miles in the Town of Babylon in Suffolk, County New York. The hamlet is a Census Designated Place with a total population recorded at 11,368 in the year 2019. Of that number, Wyandanch Union Free School District is responsible for educating approximately 2,800 scholars. Data shows children in the Wyandanch community perform with the lowest test scores on Long Island. Wyandanch demographics show the town is 61.1 % African-American, followed by a growing Hispanic/Latino population at 31.4%, making it largely a community of color. Almost 8% of the people in the town live below the poverty line. Wyandanch continues to experience challenging health, fiscal, social, school edifice and housing disparities.

Air pollution is a health problem in Wyandanch due to an existing incinerator, crematoria, factories, and indoor air problems. Asthma rates are very high in Wyandanch. The town boasts the highest percentage of emergency room visits in our zip code and county, compared to that of neighboring communities. Indoor and outdoor air pollution can be asthma triggers. The lack of solid infrastructure in Wyandanch is a major contributor to consistent exposure to environmental carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, mercury and unhealthy foods like refined sugars, processed fats, and food additives. Today, there are no family style sit down restaurants or healthy food option supermarkets. Similarly, Wyandanch is a heat island, desperately in need of large parks, vegetation, gardens, public green space and conscious economic planning to correct environmental inequity and slow the contribution to the climate crisis.

For Wyandanch to be a competitor in the global market, a “**Total Wellness Mindset**” must be adopted to address the rapidly evolving health needs of the neighborhood. Environmental justice, school equity, cooperative economics, and infrastructure development are all rungs on the social stratification ladder, connected to trauma and stigma, mental and behavioral health, physical wellness and social justice. Attempting to confront the environmental health barriers experienced by the children of Wyandanch after years of community decline, poverty and neglect from a total wellness perspective is defined by allowing Wyandanch children and families to be active participants, engaged in defining their ethic of care for themselves, and assisting regional experts and healthcare practitioners across New York State with an up close and personal look at quality-of-life issues in Wyandanch in order to drive change improvement in environmental health care service provision and data analysis.

## Walkable Wyandanch by Scott Carlin

### ACTION ITEMS

- Host community walks
- Support school and town efforts to expand sidewalks
- Strengthen links between local parks and walking
  - Strengthen links between the arts and walking
  - Listen to youth, give them a seat at the table

Walking is one of the simplest and healthiest activities. Building walking habits when we are young can persist for a lifetime. Research, compiled by Jeff Speck (2018) and other experts, informs us that a walkable community begins with local infrastructure. The Wyandanch community, working with the Town of Babylon, must continue to improve the quality and safety of local walkways, its street designs, and land use planning. The goal is to create a set of pathways that connects residents to local shops, parks, the LIRR, and other key destinations. The Town of Babylon has a long-range plan to build new sidewalks and other infrastructure, but the community should press the town to accelerate progress on this work.

The 2009 report [Wyandanch Hamlet Plan: Wyandanch Rising](#) gives the community a strong framework for moving forward. Walkability emphasizes attractive sidewalks, crossing signals, and design elements that enhance comfort and beauty. These include tree and flower plantings, lighting, bulbouts (to reduce road widths), and an inviting sense of place and community that also derive from broader elements of land use, community design, and safety. A summary of the Hamlet Plan recommendations are provided below in Table 1.

Community walks offer one of many ways to spotlight the importance of this issue. It helps the community to understand the health benefits of walking, to learn about deficits in current infrastructure, and to strengthen a community vision for progress. Aided by a variety of external organizations. Wyandanch has made walkability one of its important community priorities. Vision Long Island, Creating Healthy Schools and Communities, and Northwell Health are just some of the regional partners in ongoing efforts. In September 2021, New York Coalition for Transportation Safety (NYCTS) and the Long Island Health Collaborative (LIHC) hosted a Wyandanch Walk with a Doc, Walk Safe Long Island event, featuring Dr. Keasha Guerrier of Long Island Jewish Valley Stream Hospital (see Figure 2).

The Town of Babylon's website (Fall 2021) promotes a recent [North Babylon Walk Audit](#). The Town website should strengthen its focus on Wyandanch and walking and invite community input on what to prioritize. Additional walk audits will help the community and the Town develop a consensus on needed infrastructure improvements.

Moving forward, local youth and young adults should be given a prominent seat at the table. Young people are expressing interest in alternative transit and their ideas need to have higher prominence in local planning. Walkable communities should be safe and should emphasize the needs of youth. The Hamlet Plan called for a focus on Arts in Wyandanch. That was reiterated in the Town's 2016 Wyandanch Rising: A Community Transformation report. The Town should

work with community stakeholders to strengthen the visibility of the Arts in the Wyandanch downtown. The arts should celebrate a youthful vision for the community and should include messages of environmental health.

Students and parents should work with the Wyandanch Union Free School District to improve sidewalks adjacent to local school buildings and on nearby streets. The parents of younger students can work together to form [Walking School Bus](#) routes. Students can work with teachers to create posters explaining all the benefits walking provides to the community. These should be shared with school and town officials.

The Rauch Foundation completed a new report on [Long Island downtowns](#) and the impact of COVID-19. The report reiterated the importance of “multifamily housing, especially in walkable communities and near transit, [which] will continue to attract demand from a wide range of households.”

Past successes include improvements along Straight Path. To facilitate higher density housing along Straight Path, the Town extended the local sewer district infrastructure into downtown Wyandanch. That work gave the Town an opportunity to “reconfigure Straight Path in a more pedestrian, downtown-friendly, ‘complete’ manner ... by eliminating one travel lane in each direction and introducing a wide central median” (Town of Babylon, 2016).

Walking should not only be functionally safe, it should also be planned and developed as a fun and healthy experience.



The [Move It Monday! Campaign](#) encourages spicing up a walk with “strength-building, mindfulness, and breathing techniques,”

The Wyandanch Rising project is both a local and regional success. It provides new mixed- use housing directly adjacent to a renovated Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) station. It took many years of patient effort by a broad coalition of actors to complete the first phases of this project. Additional building is still under construction at this site. The Town is beginning to formalize site planning for the second phase of this project, south of the LIRR.

Recently completed improvements to Geiger Park and Town interest in upgrades to Wyandanch Park are some important developments in 2021. A vision for community open space (see Figure 1) is another critical element in the community’s walkable assets.

Years ago, Jeff Speck worked with the Town of Babylon to design a walkable, transit-oriented development at the local train station. Jeff Speck is one of the nation’s experts on community walkability. Today, the community needs to regain that original momentum. We recommend that the Town revisit that initial plan and invite Jeff Speck back into the community.

As was true in 2009, the Wyandanch community wants the Town to invest in infrastructure that makes the community more walkable. This is true not only for the main downtown corridor, it is also true of many other residential parts of the hamlet where sidewalks were never installed.

**Figure 1: Planning for Green Spaces in Wyandanch**

Source: Town of Babylon, 2016.



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**Table 1: Wyandanch Hamlet Plan (2009) Summary**

| Action Items, from Wyandanch Hamlet Plan | Immediate Goals  | Intermediate (6 to 24 mo)   |
|--|--|---|
| Community Cleanup                        | Volunteer Trash Pickup and street celebration: public education; code compliance             |   |
| Funding                                  |  | Establish Local Development Corporation (LDC); seek public, private investment.   |
| Enforcement                              | Increase police patrol and foot officers; increase code enforcement.                         |   |
| Community Art                            | Create youth program for public art; conduct a community art contest                         | Public displays of community art.<br>Host a community arts and craft fair.  |
| Community Asset Building                 | Identify people, groups, institutions – how can they contribute to community revitalization? | Identify gaps in services; match resources to needs with a technical assistance program.  |
| Business Association                     | Establish a Business Association; develop new parking and signage guidelines.                | Adopt and implement parking and signing guidelines. Phase out security gates on shop windows. Improve window displays & lighting. |
| Traffic Engineering Study                | Complete Engineering study to enhance LI Ave & LIRR. Lower posted speed limits.              | Restripe Straight Path. Longer term: Reconstruct Straight Path; bury utility lines.   |
| Pedestrian Safety                        | Longer timed signals at crossings.<br>Add missing and repair damaged sidewalks.              | Add high visibility crosswalk markings, pedestrian signals, medians and bulbs.  |
| Streetscape Program                      | Add new trash cans and benches to participating shopkeepers and bus stops.                   | Install bus shelters, lighting, and planters. Improve streetscape with Straight Path reconstruction.                              |
| Gateways                                 | Gateway at Mount Avenue & Straight Path.   | Bulbouts at Mount Ave. & Straight Path.<br>Complete Improvements at LIRR & Straight Path.   |
| Code and Design Guidelines               | Develop codes and standards to support vision plan   | Overlay district; adopt codes and standards.  |
| Façade Improvements                      | Establish façade program and technical assistance to property owners and shopkeepers         | Complete façade improvements.   |
| Community Gardens                        | Establish a community flower garden.<br>Identify a sponsor for a greenhouse and equipment.   | Construct a greenhouse; distribute plants..<br>Seniors mentor children.   |
| Youth Civic Program                      | Community-building training program for youth  |   |
| Friendly Fences                          | Establish Friendly Fencing program; remove unnecessary fences                                |   |
| Worker Training                          | Identify existing opportunities and obstacles; improve access to existing resources          | Identify program and service gaps and methods to improve services.  |
| Parks                                    | Identify and build low maintenance pocket parks.   | Host a Volunteer Day to build, plant, and install park features; schoolyard improvements  |




**Figure 2**




# WALK SAFE WITH A DOC

Join the New York Coalition for Transportation Safety (NYCTS) and the Long Island Health Collaborative (LIHC) as we come together to combine *Walk Safe Long Island* and *Walk with a Doc* for a special event! Dr. Keasha Guerrier will briefly discuss the many health benefits of walking before we walk with the NYCTS team of pedestrian/bike safety experts through Wyandanch.

*Masks required and social distancing will be practiced. Event subject to cancellation based on current New York State guidelines.*


**WALK  
SAFE**  
LONG ISLAND

**walk** WITH a **DOC**  
educate. exercise. empower.

**Saturday, September 25, 2021, 10am**

Starting at Wyandanch Park | 81-99 Birch St

Ending at Delano Stewart Plaza | 40 Station Drive





**Stick around at the Plaza after the walk to celebrate Black Long Island's Ujamaa Fest!**


*Celebrating Pan-African History and Culture through Vendor Market, Children & Family Activities, Panel Discussions, Live Performances, & Special Guests*


**Keasha Guerrier, MD**  
Long Island Jewish Valley Stream Hospital


For more information, visit [walksafeli.org](https://walksafeli.org), call (631) 257-6964 or email [info@lihealthcollab.org](mailto:info@lihealthcollab.org).




**Health**  
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Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities



Source: <https://walkwithadoc.org/wp-content/uploads/SATURDAY-WYANDANCH-Walk-Safe-with-a-Doc-925.pdf>

## Asthma and Air Quality by Emily MacRae

### ACTION ITEMS

- Work with the Town and County to reduce outdoor air pollution sources including incinerators.
  - Reduce tobacco smoke in the home.
  - Improve public awareness of indoor air pollution
- Increase remediation of mold in homes, businesses, and schools.
  - Strengthen actions among regional health organizations
  - Fund and complete an air quality assessment

According to the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), asthma is the leading chronic illness amongst children and adolescents in the United States. Latesha Walker, President of the Wyandanch School Board of Education, has lived in Wyandanch her entire life. Her daughter developed asthma at age nine. In recent years, a variety of respiratory illnesses have increased including asthma and allergies. It has been reported just this year that Long Island has developed immense levels of air quality issues reaching an index of 105 due to elevated ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter.

EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, has developed studies specifically targeting human exposures to air pollutants. Studies have indicated that indoor levels of pollutants may be two to five times — occasionally more than 100 times — higher than outdoor air pollutant levels. This is a cause for concern in schools, and homes as many individuals are unaware of the effects of indoor air pollution on our health. EPA's [Indoor Air Quality](#) states guidelines for safe and effective prevention of mold, and other hazardous matter in schools and homes.

Smoking tobacco can trigger asthma attacks. Tobacco is also the “leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death” in New York State. Fortunately, smoking rates have continued to decline across Long Island. Factors associated with higher rates of smoking include lower levels of income, education, and mental health. It remains important to encourage smokers to reduce their usage of tobacco and to not expose asthma sufferers to tobacco smoke (NYS DOH, 2016).

Believe it or not, the scented fragrances that we love to have in our homes can potentially harm us. [NYS CHECK](#), the New York State Children's Environmental Health Centers, provides quality information on environmental health issues such as asthma. Indoor air quality plays a big role. Sources include tobacco smoke, air fresheners, candles, and cleaning products. It is important to inform the residents of Wyandanch of these air pollutants, as they are common pollutants and there are many ways to reduce exposure to these materials. Even scented candles and air fresheners can use harmful chemicals, such as benzene, formaldehyde, phthalates, and toluene.

NYSCHECK also provides quality information on mold in homes and schools. Mold develops when moisture or water damage is present, and is not effectively controlled. Mold is widely found outdoors, however, mold can grow in damp or water damaged areas indoors. The most common health effects of mold exposure are allergies (“hay fever”) and asthma attacks in those who are sensitive to mold. It is recommended that children with asthma or allergies be treated for those conditions by their pediatrician. The key to preventing mold is controlling indoor humidity levels and fixing water leaks, which are common problems in homes.

Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition’s ***Prevention is the Cure*** campaign prioritizes community health by sharing knowledge about environmental exposures and its effects on our health. HBCAC seeks to **increase** public awareness of environmental exposures that are connected to diseases, **gain** support for the “Precautionary Principle” as it applies to public policy, **urge** the public to demand more funding for environmental health research, and **encourage** a “better safe than sorry” attitude toward personal lifestyle.

HBCAC’s [Prevention is the Cure](#) website provides in-depth, quality, science-based information on several chemical exposures in our environment for community benefit. Specifically, through infographics and pamphlets, they examine the science behind the chemicals, state how they impact our health, and how we can prevent or even minimize the exposures. This is a great way for residents, community groups, and classrooms to gain science-based information and knowledge on different environmental exposures so that communities in turn can take action in prevention in their homes, work place, and schools.

To reduce asthma rates and attacks will require significant resources but public education is an excellent place to begin. We can begin this work with a low-cost campaign to promote spring cleaning in schools and homes of Wyandanch. We can create some creative community challenges, with the support of local businesses, to reduce indoor air pollutants and mold. For example, a campaign can focus on eliminating the use of harmful air fresheners and scented candles and using alternatives such as mineral based natural scents. A second campaign can focus on using green, environmentally safe cleaning products in homes and schools. Providing more educational outlets with information on air quality, asthma, and air pollutants, for the Wyandanch may be highly beneficial.

Outdoor air quality is also very important. Incinerators have been in the Wyandanch area for decades. The [Covanta Babylon](#) incinerator incinerates solid waste to reduce its volume. Emissions of concern include particulates and potentially toxic pollutants. Adjacent to the incinerator is an ashfill, the waste ash is removed from the incinerator. Residents worry that these local practices also contribute to local asthma. Other incinerators in the area process pet and human remains. Poor air quality can also play a role in other diseases including lung and heart disease.

Wyandanch currently needs better information on local indoor and outdoor air quality. [Purple Air](#) is an accurate source to find out the extent of the air quality in areas across Long Island, including Wyandanch. This is demonstrated by the US EPA PM2.5 AQI, which is the standard level of detecting air quality. A personal method that is used to test air quality is Flow. This can actually be purchased from online retailers and the convenient part of this technology is that it guides individuals towards least polluted areas. Flow is a Personal Air Quality Sensor



developed by Plume Labs; it offers mobile and bluetooth connection. Its sensors will measure PM2.5, PM10, NO2, and indoor/outdoor VOC levels.

We recommend that community groups work together with air quality experts and home engineers to do home inspections and develop air pollution remediation plans. Ideally these events could be filmed and shared with the community as a community education project. We would demonstrate the do's and don'ts of household maintenance and its impacts on indoor air pollution and how to improve air quality. Filming this Live on Facebook might help garner a larger audience.



Wyandanch Incinerator 2021



Covanta Babylon

Source: <https://www.covanta.com/where-we-are/our-facilities/babylon>

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## Videos

Why Are the Asthma Rates in Wyandanch So Much Higher Than in Surrounding Areas? <https://www.self.com/video/watch/why-are-the-asthma-rates-in-wyandanch-so-much-higher-than-in-surrounding-areas>

## Student Mental Health in Wyandanch by Erin Torres

### ACTION ITEMS

- Use ACEs Quizzes as a diagnostic and referral tool.
- Move upstream to reduce ACEs among students.
- Start school later in the morning to improve student sleep.
- Introduce all students to school counselors; expand counseling hours.
- Celebrate mental health with posters, events, and extracurricular activities.
- Have Wyandanch host regional mental health events.

Stress is a silently spreading epidemic for children, youth, and adults. A 2014 American Psychological Association [study](#) found that students rated their stress 5.8 out of 10, whereas adults rated their stress 5.1. A 2019 [study](#) found “mental health issues [has] increased significantly in young adults over [the] last decade.” Another 2019 [study reported](#) that “three-quarters of high school students and half of middle school students reported ‘often or always feeling stressed’ by their schoolwork.” [Guide2Research](#) provides additional statistics on stress.

In addition to the day-to-day pressures that students experience inside the academic setting, many stressors that children and adults suffer from are Adverse Childhood Experiences (also known as ACEs). These are ongoing [traumatic experiences](#) that produce elevated levels of cortisol. Examples of ACEs include physical and emotional abuse at home, divorce or death in the family, bullying, racism, and poverty.

The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) is a widespread example of an ACE, as students are forced to remain in potentially toxic households or experience isolation from friends. As stress and ACEs become more prevalent in children, they are at an [increase risk](#) of mental illnesses, poor academic performance, heart disease, diabetes, or risky behaviors that could lead to an early death, such as smoking. Even worse, even once the child leaves the environment in which the adverse childhood experience has passed, the person may still have heightened responses to their environment.

Households with lower income in Wyandanch are at an increased risk of encountering various forms of stress, including ACEs. Impoverished neighborhoods are [five times as likely](#) to experience more than four ACEs in their lifetime, and poverty will also exacerbate the impacts of ACEs.

Improving the mental health of students in Wyandanch can help improve the local quality of life for all Wyandanch residents. It is critical that students in Wyandanch receive the support they need for a variety of stressors and traumas. Most importantly, primary prevention should be the goal: we must take action to **prevent** future exposure to ACEs. It would be unrealistic to place

the pressure on local public schools to become the sole leaders in primary prevention against ACEs. However, schools can take on a role of increasing resilience against such exposures through grants and other funding sources. We propose that Wyandanch create a mental health challenge program that can become a regional model for other schools.

Longer term, prevention of ACEs requires a well funded, whole-community, total wellness model to strengthen community outcomes using policies that support affordable housing, food security, employment, an anti-racist approach to crime, and other social needs.

Wyandanch previously established programs to improve the overall academic achievement of students. The district's [Guidance Plan](#) (2015) aims to "close the achievement gap" in students by expanding the role of guidance counselors to support students' academic success. Additionally, Wyandanch staff have attended [several events](#) to improve the health and wellbeing of students. [Other programs](#) to increase wellness focused on physical health, such as eating right. We also know that there are strong connections between diet and stress.

The good news is that [ACES are preventable and treatable](#). The US Center for Disease Control (CDC) created a [6 point guideline](#) for communities to prevent ACEs from occurring. These points include identifying ACEs early through visitation programs (in which clinicians visit families to ensure their children are not being exposed to potential traumas, such as neglect) and strengthening the economic support for families. The school district can implement the strategies listed in the guideline, as well as educate students on ACEs so they understand their risks. [ACE quizzes](#) can also be used as informal diagnostic tools. Where student ACE survey answers indicate a need for healthcare intervention, the school district should work with students to make sure that proper followup occurs with appropriate parental and/or legal guardian involvement.

Mental health and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) can be a focal point for the school district through events, awards, celebrations, and digital dashboards. The district can create an environment that normalizes counseling and skill building for mental health. It is important that students are encouraged and confident to seek the help they need. For example, sports teams can receive training on sharpening their mental toughness as a way to normalize the work of mental health. The district can also strengthen student awareness on the mental health benefits from exercise (and participation in sports teams), drama club, and relaxation/meditation clubs. Ideally, each student would have an opportunity for mandatory individual or group counselling each quarter. Since most change amongst teens is influenced by their peers, peer support groups are excellent for building a culture of emotional intelligence in the Wyandanch schools.

There should be a community-wide goal to create (and transform) the school environment where EQ and mental health is prioritized. One common reason for stress in teens include [fear of academic failure](#). Studies find that extreme amounts of homework contribute to severe stress and become [counterproductive](#). This harms student health and academic performance.

Teachers need to find creative approaches to proactively address this issue. Faculty can:

- Reduce homework obligations or post assignments earlier so students have more time to work on them.
- Schedule days for tests by subject, so kids aren't overloading with multiple tests in a day
- Introduce mental health days/weeks, in which students don't do any work for the week

- Strengthen time management skills is also an excellent way to reduce the stress of workloads. Therapists can work with students to analyze how they work best and create schedules based off of that working style.

There is also [research](#) showing that teenagers have different circadian rhythms than adults, which make them fall asleep and wake up at later times. Students perform better when their school day starts later (Dunster, et al., 2018). Why not start the day an hour later? Or, why not schedule a four-day academic week? Research in [Iceland](#) reported that employers who worked a 4 day week were generally more productive and less burnt out.

Wyandanch school district has the potential to pioneer a new style of education, one that places a student's mental health before any grade.

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# **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC)**

**By Karyn Kirschbaum**

In 2015, **Wyandanch Union Free School District** partnered with **Western Suffolk BOCES** under its first **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC)** grant funded by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). This partnership began with school and community leaders to expand health efforts that would ensure that nutrition and physical activity would become essential components of the school-community landscape. Wyandanch is a small community that faces economic, social, and environmental challenges that make it difficult to engage in safe physical activity and access affordable, nourishing foods.

Throughout the duration of this CHSC grant, Western Suffolk BOCES continued to provide support, technical assistance and leverage resources for the Wyandanch schools and community to address these challenges and build on its many assets.

A variety of positive outcomes and partnerships resulted from the original CHSC grant. [This link](#) highlights many of its accomplishments, partnerships and successes in a powerpoint presentation from November 2020 (on the Wyandanch school district website)<sup>1</sup>.

In 2021, NYSDOH awarded Western Suffolk BOCES a new 5-year CHSC grant. CHSC is a comprehensive, community-based approach to implement policies, systems and environmental strategies, and evidence-based practices to increase demand for and access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for daily physical activity.

## **Wellness Committee**

The Wyandanch Wellness Committee (WWC) formed in 2015, created the foundation for many of the school building, district and community initiatives and partnerships. The Committee, co-chaired by District Administrators and the WSBOCES CHSC coordinator, met quarterly with additional subcommittee, project and planning meetings taking place throughout the years. The WWC met to assess, coordinate, and implement best practices to improve access to healthy, nourishing foods and increase opportunities for physical activity. The WWC, charged with advancing a culture of health, continued to remain steadfast in its commitment to strengthen, communicate and support implementation of the district wellness policy. Dedicated leaders, perseverance, and partnerships propelled the WWC into new actions and linkages. The Committee cultivated strong relationships with staff, administrators, students, families, community leaders, and providers and welcomed their support and collaboration.

## **Communication**

The WWC can only grow, engage more participation and penetrate the multiple community and school sectors with ongoing and robust communication strategies. A more concerted effort to ensure widespread and growing engagement and program participation using various means of communication has been underway, despite interruptions due to COVID. Wellness champions

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<https://www.wyandanch.k12.ny.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=3699&dataid=3079&FileName=Nov%2018%20BOE%20photo%20pp.pdf>

continue to be identified from the school and community to inspire participation and behavior changes.

The Wellness Newsletter has circulated for the last 4 years, growing in readership and access. Several success stories and a success video were created and distributed to heighten awareness of accomplishments, best practices and champions. CHSC presentations were provided to a wide range of audiences and at various meetings and settings over the years including: School Administrators and Staff at Superintendent's Conference Days; Board of Education, faculty, parents, students, and community stakeholders. CHSC has been developing a social media presence through Facebook ([www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES](https://www.facebook.com/HSNYWSBOCES)) and more recently through Instagram (@CHSC\_longisland). Plans to expand postings and share appropriate announcements, successes, resources and challenges through these platforms as well as electronic and texting modes of communication to inform, inspire and engage, are underway.

## **Partnerships**

A few of the many positive outcomes that have resulted from the CHSC partnerships are listed below:

- Community Eligibility Provision (Hunger Solutions, Island Harvest and WUFSD)
- School Walking Programs, community walks, walking audits and surveys (WUFSD, Wyandanch Leadership Council, Town of Babylon, Vision Long Island, Long Island Health Collaborative)
- Tower Gardens, Nutrition and Cooking Demos (WUFSD, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk, Kohl's Kids)
- School Gardens (WUFSD, Sustainable Wyandanch, Starflower, Suffolk County Agriculture in the Classroom Program)
- Yoga 4 Classrooms, Math & Movement (WUFSD, WSBOCES)
- Every Kid Health Week (WWC Collaboration with WUFSD and various community leaders)
- Youth led wellness programs and campaigns (EOC-Leaders of the Future)
- Breastfeeding Friendly Policies, Lactation Rooms, Baby Café (WUFSD, Northwell Health, Kohls Cares, Wyandanch Community Church of Nazarene)

## **Recognition and Celebration**

Some of the more significant recognitions for this work include:

- Bronze Award for the USDA's Healthier US School Challenge
- Suffolk County's School Health Achievement Awards Program (SHIP)
- CHSC – Recognition at WSBOCES's Healthier Long Island Challenge
- CHSC - Wyandanch Success Video and Success Stories

Western Suffolk BOCES will continue to urge school and community leaders to influence healthy behaviors. We will build greater awareness and understanding of wellness, engage partners, and maximize those partnerships through joint activities, resulting in sustained and impactful change in Wyandanch School District and Community. Please contact [kkirschb@wsboces.org](mailto:kkirschb@wsboces.org) for more information.

## Prioritizing Prevention by HBCAC

Throughout our lives we are exposed to a myriad of chemicals and life experiences that may contribute to the development of disease. In fact, only 5-10% of cancers are genetically linked, leaving the rest in connection to the environment. The study of environmental health shows us the way in which our bodies interact with the environment around us; exposures can come from the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the things we put on our skin. There are many things that we can control, such as eating healthier or choosing non-toxic products, but also many that we can't. Roadblocks such as affordability and accessibility can drastically alter our ability to 'choose' healthy alternatives. Communities that do not have access to clean air, water, housing, and products are set off on the wrong foot---and on top of that environmental health is far from being a household known issue.

The Wyandanch community is seeking to take a "total wellness mindset" and this can be done by providing additional resources for education and action for the residents, who are largely people of color. According to Safe Cosmetics, communities of color are at "a greater risk to be disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals in the workplace, their communities and from cosmetics." Through this compelling case statement on Wyandanch, we see key areas of need including clean air, green spaces, walkability, and tying it all together, youth and stress.

We are more vulnerable to these exposures during certain times of our lives known as the windows of susceptibility as well as those exposures of our parents and grandparents. Today's youth are one of those considered more susceptible, meaning that their body burden from their family history and the concoction of chemicals each day is only increasing during a critical time in their life. They say that we don't stop developing until the age of 25, meaning that it's not only small children who are at greater risk, but teens as well.

Today's youth live in confusing times; they live in a COVID world that affects their day to day life, adding to the preexisting stresses from school and adolescence. They are more vulnerable, *and* more likely to be exposed. For example, on average teen girls use the most amount of personal care products, exposing them to 168 chemicals each day. This issue is of more concern for young women of color, whose products are more often contaminated with some of the more troubling chemicals such as formaldehyde and phthalates.

Youth also actively seek out green spaces for play, sports, and safe places to spend their time--they need more of these spaces and ones that are not contributing to their body burden with issues such as pesticides or artificial turf. Many of these chemicals are considered endocrine disrupting chemicals that get into the body and mimic or alter hormones, contributing to the development of things such as cancer, diabetes, or heart disease.

Students need to be provided the knowledge, tools, and opportunities to live healthier lives. This generation shows a great desire to support a healthy environment and they deserve a chance to thrive in it. We know that the same things that harm the environment affect our health as well. Looking at the community perspective, we have an opportunity to improve the lives of youth, their families, and the environment around them.

A concrete vision for Wyandanch needs to be built with wellness in mind and it's imperative that these issues be addressed so that the residents may thrive. There are many recognized programs that want to assist this community to build back better and resources are assuredly needed. It is our collective vision that Wyandanch will serve as a model prioritizing prevention for other communities to follow.

Huntington Breast Cancer ACTION Coalition, Inc is a 30-year-old nonprofit dedicated to the eradication of breast cancer through education and awareness. Our mission started with breast cancer prevention through our nationally recognized Prevention Is The Cure campaign and quickly expanded to sharing risk reduction practices and environmental health literacy with community members and policy makers. The pursuit of wellness for all from the individual level to community and policy intervention stands paramount in our vision of the future of Long Island and beyond.



## Breastfeeding Resiliency, Engagement, and Empowerment (BFREE) Team, Cohen Children's Medical Center at Northwell Health

### Our Work in Wyandanch

By establishing lactation spaces, along with other steps, our team helped the Wyandanch Union Free School District become the only district on Long Island to achieve Breastfeeding Friendly recognition. Milton L. Olive Middle School and Wyandanch Memorial High School are the only two schools on Long Island to hold this important title. These spaces are designed for the school's [teachers and staff](#).

### Who We Are

The BFREE Team provides breastfeeding resources to families and community partners. Our team includes certified breastfeeding experts and Registered Dietitians led by a board-certified pediatrician. Our coalition partners include practices, work sites, child care, and Baby Cafés we have engaged with as well as community partners who support and assist us in our work.

### What We Do

The BFREE Team works with primary care practices, worksites, and child care providers in Wyandanch, Glen Cove, Islip, and Southampton which must meet certain criteria to become recognized/designated as Breastfeeding Friendly sites. We help sites complete a self-assessment to identify areas of improvement and provide assistance and technical support towards their objectives. [Practices](#) and [child care centers/day care homes](#) are designated by the New York State Department of Health, and work sites are recognized by our team. By increasing the breastfeeding knowledge of our partners, we hope more families can meet their goals of starting and continuing breastfeeding, without using formula.

We help initiate [Baby Cafés®](#) that provide mothers with support and a “go-to” community through trained staff and a comfortable atmosphere in a neighborhood location. We currently only hold [free virtual Baby Cafés](#) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A Spanish-speaking bilingual, bicultural breastfeeding expert leads the first hour of each session.

### Our Mission

Improve breastfeeding education and support from pregnancy to early childhood in four selected communities on Long Island in order to help families meet their breastfeeding goals and reduce racial, ethnic, and community differences in breastfeeding rates.

### Our Goals

- 1.) Increase breastfeeding support during the care process;
- 2.) Promote well-researched breastfeeding education among our community partners;
- 3.) Create a partnership in support of breastfeeding families on Long Island.

### First Food Friendly

In 2022 we are proposing a First Food Friendly project for Wyandanch, which is a community-generated intervention to improve infant and maternal health outcomes. We will recruit and train community residents who will act as breastfeeding ambassadors. They will perform a strengths-and-needs survey, decide best interventions, and execute the community intervention for their neighborhood.



## Breastfeeding Benefits

### Infants

- Infants who are breastfed are at [lower risk](#) for medical problems such as ear infections, respiratory tract infections, asthma, sudden infant death syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, and leukemia.
- Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of developing [conditions](#) such as obesity and diabetes later in adulthood.
- Breastfeeding can also have [neurodevelopmental benefits](#) for infants.

### Breastfeeding People

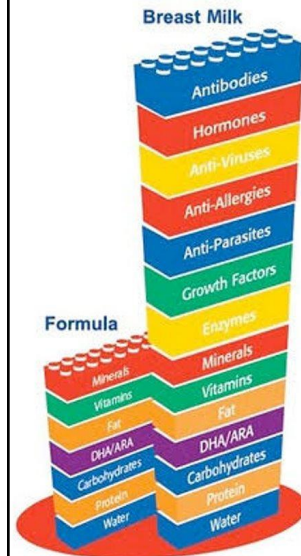
- People who breastfeed recover more quickly from childbirth.
- They are at lower risk for [conditions](#) including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast and ovarian cancer.

### Economic

- Breastfeeding also has significant economic benefits.
- By reducing the disease burden, the preventive effects of breastfeeding decrease the [economic burden](#) on the healthcare system.

### Environment

- Breastfeeding benefits our environment as it requires no advertising, packaging, or transport and results in no wastage or depletion of natural resources.
- In the USA, 550 million cans, 86,000 tons of metal, and 364,000 tons of paper, are annually used to package the infant formula, end up in [landfills](#).
- Breastmilk does not create [pollution](#) from the manufacturing and disposal of bottles, nipples and cans.



### Clinical Practices

- Sun River Health Martin Luther King Jr. Center
- Belinda Marquis, MD PC

### Worksites

- Wyandanch Memorial High School
- Wyandanch Milton L. Olive Middle School

### Baby Cafés

#### Virtual

- <http://bit.ly/bfreebabycafe>

#### Wyandanch

- Gerald J. Ryan Outreach Center (in progress)

### Subcontractors

- Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk

### The Breastfeeding Resiliency, Engagement and Empowerment (BFREE) Team

Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York  
General Pediatrics

### Day Care Homes/ Child Care Centers

- Nekaya Smith's Day Care Home
- Alternatives for Children

### Community Partners

- Suffolk County WIC
- Maternal and Infant Community Health Collaborative (MICH)
- Creating Healthy Schools and Communities
- Community Outreach Health Educator Coalition (COHEC)
- La Leche League of New York
- Long Island Dietetic Association
- Long Island Health Collaborative
- Shinnecock Nation Health Services
- Suffolk County Bureau of Public Health Nursing
- Suffolk County Department of Health
- Northwell OB/GYN Service Line
- Bronx Breastfeeding Coalition
- Wyandanch Leadership and Wellness Committee
- Wyandanch Children's Advisory Board
- Suffolk County Department of Health (DOH) Office of Minority Health
- Suffolk County DOH Dept. of Women's Services
- Northwell Latinx BERG
- Gerald J. Ryan Outreach Center
- Wyandanch Memorial Public Library
- Wyandanch Community Resource Center
- Community Nazarene Church

Check out our [website](#) for our quarterly newsletters, our virtual Baby Cafe days/times, breastfeeding resources, and more!

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## Concluding Remarks by Aldustus Jordan

***“Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members.” (CDC, 2011)***

Citizens are ‘engaged’ when they play a meaningful role in the deliberations, discussions, decision-making and/or implementation of projects, programs, or research activity affecting them. Engaging community members in problem-solving solutions to issues that affect them is one of the fundamental principles of public health.

The places where people live, learn, work, and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. *Healthy People 2030* organizes the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) around five key domains: **(1) Economic Stability, (2) Education Access and Quality, (3) Health Care Access and Quality, (4) Neighborhood and Built Environment, and (5) Social and Community Context.** *Healthy People 2030* highlights the importance of addressing SDOH by including “social, physical, and economic environments that promote attaining the full potential for health and well-being for all.” By applying what we know about SDOH, coupled with a community engagement strategy, we can not only improve individual and population health but also advance health equity.

The Long Island Chapter of the New York State Children’s Environmental Health Centers (NYSHECK) has worked with many partners to foster the creation of the Wyandanch Children’s Advisory Board (CAB). In coming years, we hope other communities on Long Island will see value in this work and form new CABs that develop into a regional network. In Wyandanch, our plan is to work together to engage and involve community members in **all** activities—from identifying the relevant issues and making decisions about how to address them, to evaluating and sharing the results with the community. Working **with** the community, rather than working **on** the community, through collaborative engagement is critical to building trust and forging long term sustainable relationships.

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## **Appendix 1: Summary of the 2009 Hamlet Plan.**

The Vision Plan contains concepts for a proposed reconstruction of Straight Path, Wyandanch's downtown corridor. A better designed Straight Path will reduce the number of lanes, reduce traffic speed, and change the character of the street. An engineering study will be required to verify the initial findings, but it appears that traffic could be adequately handled if the features recommended are implemented. These features include bulb outs, pedestrian scale lighting, streetscaping, façade and roadway improvements. The entire corridor should be redeveloped in the long run, but the initial emphasis should be directed at key locations. These include gateway areas at both ends of Straight Path, the intersection at Mount Avenue, and the intersection at Long Island Avenue.

Buildings should follow principles that create secure, comfortable, walkable environments, including mixed uses, limited setbacks, large windows oriented to the street, and well-lit connections to off-street parking behind buildings, where achievable. Community members' expressed a need to create spaces for youth activities, cultural events, and other shared activities.

### **Street Design**

Straight Path is a dominant factor in determining how people experience Wyandanch. Preliminary research indicates that current traffic levels of approximately 23,700 cars per day could easily be accommodated on a well-designed, two lane street. The excess space formerly dedicated to travel lanes can be allocated to wider sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. Each element of the street envisioned is described in the full report.

### **Sitting Places**

Participants described undesirable "loitering" on the street, and wanted ordinances to prohibit people from standing on the street. But there is also a need to welcome people to the community and the street, make them comfortable, and invite them to stay. The sense of place that people envisioned for Wyandanch is not created only by physical attributes; it is also created by the people who are present in the public space.

### **Transit Shelters**

Shelters offering the safety, comfort, convenience, and welcome so essential to the success of Wyandanch should be strategically located at bus stops on the far side of intersections near pedestrian destinations. Shelters should be enclosed on three sides with transparent material and complete with benches and trash receptacles. Graphics should be limited to route maps and sponsor name.

### **On-Street Parking and Buffer Zones**

On-street parking is crucial to the success of retail businesses in a village-style development. Parking spaces six feet wide encourage drivers to park close to the curb. Buffer zones or bicycle lanes provide clearance between moving and parked cars on the redesigned Straight Path. This space is marked with a stripe located six feet from the curb face to designate the width of the parking bay. A second stripe is

placed seven feet from the edge of this line. The distance between the stripes, called the buffer zone (or bicycle lane), is 7 feet. Special colorized paving material can be used to accentuate the area.

### **Intersections**

The Long Island Avenue intersection presents many interesting dilemmas and opportunities. Because of the complexity the railroad crossing presents, the Long Island Avenue intersection requires a detailed traffic engineering analysis to correct safety conditions both pedestrian and vehicular at this location.

### **Crosswalks, Markings and Signal Heads**

Walkers are more inclined to use designated crossing points when they are “rewarded” for their effort by an enhanced and convenient crossing. At signalized intersections, all four approaches should be marked and all should have pedestrian signal heads. Crossings at existing intersections are only marked on some approaches. Signal timing should automatically provide a walk interval.

### **Curb extensions/Bulb outs**

Curb extensions or “bulb outs” are extensions of curbing that reduce the curb-to-curb width across the street. Bulb outs can be used at every intersection on Straight Path and at sites where mid-block crosswalks are provided

### **Landscaping**

Wyandanch is blessed with many mature trees, and many relatively new plantings. Existing trees should be pruned and cared for and new trees added to create a full canopy and provide a visual separation between the street and sidewalk. A continuous system of street trees will have the greatest impact on the enhancement of the street and sidewalk environment.

### **Lighting**

Streets that remain attractive at night have three common lighting elements. The first combines pedestrian-scale with taller vehicle-scale luminaries. The lower, pedestrian- scale lamps provide warm radiant light, creating continuously lit corridors. The higher light poles provide more diffuse, general area lighting.

The second element is theme lighting. Theme lighting often includes lights focused on building edges, crowns, signage, entryways or other locations celebrating buildings and public space. Trees, landscaping and medians can also be lit. Whatever features selected to be lit should be universal.

The third lighting element is the warm, radiant glow of interior lighting from ground level establishments that help to illuminate the street.

### **Buildings**

Visioning participants were eager for a face-lift for the community that would include new facades for the buildings along Straight Path and either a new building or a new use for the old Kentucky Fried Chicken building on Straight Path. There are several vacant lots along Straight Path that can be developed. Consistency of design is a common trait among successful commercial areas. When

consistent building types are used the street is perceived as highly ordered and cohesive in spite of significant stylistic variations.

### **Single-Use Buildings**

Straight Path has the spine of a well-defined downtown. The presence of several existing two-story buildings as well single-use commercial buildings and churches points to immediate opportunities for infill development and business expansion for existing businesses. Many people said they would like convenient access to specialty shops, a pharmacy, and restaurants.

### **Mixed-use Buildings**

Rather than limiting use to retail or offices, mixed-use buildings include a residential component. For example, an office or training complex could have ground-floor retail that can cater to the needs of other building inhabitants as well as nearby residents.

### **Gateway Entrance**

A gateway is a feature in or near the street that greets people as they enter the community. It may be as simple as a green space with a sign, or as impressive as a roundabout with a statue in its center. We suggest using the redevelopment sites available in the vicinity to complement the gateway feature. Mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail and second and third story offices or housing is recommended.

## OUR TOWNS

A17

COPIAGUE

# THE PRINCE of recycling

Fourth-grader  
does  
his part  
to save  
the planet  
with a  
trio of  
programs

BY DENISE M. BONILLA  
denise.bonilla@newsday.com

He may only be 9 years old, but Payton Lewis has a lofty goal: to get people to care about the Earth.

Payton has been working on this objective since he was 6 and hopes to inspire other children to do the same through his Payton's Planet recycling initiative, which includes Payton's Pails, Payton's Pick Up Service and Payton's Pals.

"It's not just my planet, it's everybody's planet, and we should take care of it," said the fourth-grader, who attends John F. Kennedy Intermediate School in Deer Park.

It all began during an Earth Day celebration in his Copiague kindergarten class, followed by a trip to Costco, where Payton took an interest in people using the recycling machines, his parents said. Soon he came up with Payton's Pick Up Service and began going to the homes of relatives and friends to collect their cans and bottles. Payton put some of the money into his savings and the rest was donated, said his father, Bradley, 41.

His mother, Shakira, 41, applauds her son's selflessness.

"Nowadays people can be about themselves, and I think it's important for kids to understand to not just care about yourself but to be compassionate and care about other people," she said.

After seeing cans thrown in the garbage, Payton came up with another idea: Payton's Pails for recycling. His father helped him come up with a logo and soon he had green 30-gallon pails.

Michael Ferretti, director of strategic planning and safety for the Copiague School District, met with the then-7-year-old, who came dressed to the



Payton Lewis, 9, attends the Ujamaa Fest in Wyandanch on Sept. 25 to promote his recycling program.

nines carrying business cards to pitch his idea for placing the pails in schools.

"He was like a 32-year-old in a 7-year-old's suit," Ferretti recalled. "He was so wise beyond his years."

The district now has three of Payton's Pails. Even after Payton and his family moved to Deer Park, he returned to Copiague this past summer, using the money from the bins to buy \$100 worth of food for the district's food pantry.

Payton sets up a booth at events, such as the recent Ujamaa Fest in Wyandanch, and asks people to take an environmental pledge and make a donation, which goes back into buying more pails, such as one he donated to Holy Trinity Baptist Church in Amityville.

"The whole goal is for people to take ownership of the pails

## REASONS TO RECYCLE

- The average person has the opportunity to recycle **more than 25,000 cans** in a lifetime.
- Recycling a single aluminum can saves enough energy to **power a TV for 3 hours**.
- Americans throw away **2.5 million plastic bottles every hour**.
- Recycling **1 ton of plastic bottles** saves the equivalent energy usage of a two-person household for one year.

SOURCE: WWW.RECYCLEACROSSAMERICA.ORG

and use the money for something that helps the planet in some way," his mother said.

Payton's family is now working to establish Payton's Planet as a nonprofit and has also launched Payton's Pals, to get

other children to start recycling programs in their own communities.

Payton, who loves to play basketball and football, has environmental ambitions beyond recycling. When he was 6, he became one of the junior ambassadors for the town's beautification program — the youngest ever — to help the town with community cleanups.

"He's still a little boy but he's very clear on what he wants to do," said director Viscel Moore. "I can only imagine what he's going to be in 10 years, 20 years from now. He's going to be a civic leader for sure and he's going to round up the rest of the troops to get out there and take care of their community."

For now, Payton said, "I'm going to keep recycling and recycling and try to make a difference in the world."

newsday.com

NEWSDAY MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021



WYANDANCH

# SPOTLIGHT ON BLACK CULTURE

Ujamaa Fest returns to plaza with art, food, music and fashion

BY DENISE M. BONILLA  
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Wyandanch's plaza will soon be buzzing with fashion, art, cuisine and music — and all of it will be the product of Black-owned businesses.

Later this month the plaza, which sits near the Wyandanch Long Island Rail Road station, will be the site of the fourth annual Ujamaa Fest, an event that brings together dozens of Black-owned businesses from around the tristate area. This year it is being held in conjunction with the nonprofit Wyandanch Plaza Association's annual fundraising gala, which supports free programming at the plaza, such as yoga classes.

Falisha Moss, of Brentwood, started the festival in 2017 with her husband, Billy. The couple are also the founders of Black Long Island, a Facebook social meeting space and online Black-owned business directory.

The Mosses had been to events spotlighting Black-owned businesses, but they were all in New York City, said Falisha Moss, 43.

"I realized we were missing that part, having festivals in a Black community, for Black people," she said. "Not everybody can travel into the city, so we thought it would be a great idea to do something similar out here on Long Island."

The Swahili word Ujamaa means cooperative economics, and it's one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Ujamaa Fest has grown over time, with more than 100 vendors and 500 attendees at the last one in 2019, Moss said. It was canceled last year due to the pandemic, but she said about 50 vendors have already signed up for this year's event.

The goods and services provided range from clothing and



Falisha Moss, at Wyandanch station plaza in August, is the organizer of Ujamaa Fest.

jewelry to art and tutoring services. Plans for this year include demonstrations, such as candle making and cooking, a fashion show and live music.

"It really is about circulating our dollars amongst each other and helping small businesses to thrive," Moss said.

An opportunity to showcase businesses is especially important since the pandemic led to such a high number of closures for Black owners, said Phil Andrews, president of the Long Island African American Chamber of Commerce.

"There is a lot of wealth in the Black community when you look at us as a whole, but you've got to create venues like that so that those dollars can support the African American community," he said.

Damascus Lee, 49, and his

## BUSINESS HURDLES

■ Black people represent **12.7%** of the U.S. population but only **4.3%** of the nation's 22.2 million business owners.

■ Black business owners start with about **one-third less capital** than their white peers and have a harder time getting private investments from mainstream investment sources.

■ **41%** of Black-owned businesses closed in the past year, the highest among all groups and more than twice the rate of white-owned businesses.

SOURCES: BROOKINGS INSTITUTION; NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH

wife, Sharon Solomon-Lee, 47, said they are excited to be first-time Ujamaa Fest vendors, bringing products from their

Mind, Body and Soul candle company based in Baldwin.

"There's a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment and giving back," Lee said. "But also it's a way that we're paying forward all of the things that those who came before us paved the road for us to do."

Illustrator and comic book artist Hudson Chanoine, 36, of Brentwood, has been to Ujamaa Fest twice.

"A lot of times you never know that there's people out there like you, hustling, working hard to get their business up," he said. "And then you find out they're right around the corner from you. It's just a great experience being around all of that."

Ujamaa Fest will take place on Sept. 25 from noon to 6 p.m. at 40 Station Dr., Wyandanch.

newsday.com

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WYANDANCH

# PRIVATE SPACES

Teachers, staff at two schools get breastfeeding lounges thanks to state grant

BY DENISE M. BONILLA  
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**T**eachers and staff at two Wyandanch schools have access to private areas to breastfeed thanks to an initiative aimed at increasing breastfeeding rates in communities.

The creation of the breastfeeding lounges, which began two years ago in Wyandanch Memorial High School and Milton L. Olive Middle School, have resulted in the school district being the only district on Long Island to be given the distinction of being "Breastfeeding Friendly" by the team running the grant initiative.

The lounges were created through a five-year, \$1.2 million grant from the state Department of Health given to Northwell Health. The grant is aimed at helping communities that have been identified as having low breastfeeding rates to get those rates up through education, support, reducing disparities and the creation of work-site lactation spaces. There were 13 spaces created in total through the grant, which involved four communities on Long Island: Wyandanch, Glen Cove, Islip and Southampton.

"We definitely have met a lot of our goals," said Pamela Reichert-Anderson, co-coordinator of the grant program for Northwell Health, now in its final year.

Those goals include educating mothers and the community on the benefits of breastfeeding and providing support through "Baby Cafes," meeting groups that allow women to share experiences and receive information from professionals.

"We respect every mother's right to make their decision but we just want to make sure moms are making an educated decision, and then once a mom does decide to breastfeed, we want to make sure she has the support that she needs," Reichert-Anderson said.



Wyandanch High School Principal Paul Sibbles, left, with Pamela Reichert-Anderson of Northwell Health, Wyandanch High teacher Paulina Araya and Anastasia Schepers of Northwell Health.

One of the biggest hindrances to getting moms to breastfeed is that when women return to work after maternity leave, they often don't have a comfortable, private space in which to breastfeed or pump, said Gloria Zhao, an associate coordinator on the project. Some have to do it in their cars or even the bathroom, she said.

"A lot of moms are afraid to speak up and say this is my right because they are afraid that they're going to lose their jobs," Reichert-Anderson said.

Ideal spaces for mothers have privacy, a comfortable chair, a table and a separate refrigerated space for storing breastmilk, said program co-coordinator Anastasia Schepers.

Montgomery Granger, director of facilities for the Wyandanch school district, said Schepers and Reichert-Anderson were "preaching to the

## Facts on breastfeeding BENEFITS

■ For mothers, breastfeeding can reduce the risk of ovarian cancer, breast cancer, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

■ For babies, breastfeeding can help prevent infections such as respiratory infections, diarrhea and ear infections.

## DISPARITIES

■ Asian babies have the highest percentage of breastfeeding at 90%, followed by non-Hispanic white infants at 86.7%, Hispanic infants at 84.1% and non-Hispanic Black infants at 73.7%

SOURCE: U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

choir" when they approached about the sites. Granger said his wife breastfed their five chil-

dren and after returning to work, had to pump in her car.

Granger said he found in the high school a secluded section of the teacher's lounge and in the middle school a small office that could be used.

"It should be relaxed so you're not worrying that someone is going to pop in on you," he said.

High school Principal Paul Sibbles said the lounge has been working out well.

"These are the things that we need to do more for women to ensure that they receive the necessary services," he said.

Spanish and ESL teacher Paulina Araya breastfed her first son in the lounge and now uses it to pump for her second son.

"I felt super safe and secure," Araya, 33, said. "That room is so beneficial, I can pump and eat my lunch at the same time. It's a huge relief."

REECE T. WILLIAMS

newsday.com

NEWSDAY, MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2021



## Appendix 3: CAB 2021 Newsletter



### WYANDANCH CHILDREN'S ADVISORY BOARD

*Our mission is to improve local public health, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of at risk youths, working with NYSCHECK's state-wide resources.*

In 2021, the Long Island Chapter of the New York State Children's Environmental Health Centers (NYSCHECK) created the Wyandanch Community Advisory Board (CAB) to identify and address the community health needs of regional children and youth.

NYSCHECK was established to prevent, diagnose, and treat environmentally-related health effects during pregnancy and throughout childhood.

In coming months, the CAB will provide guidance to:

1. Identify local environmental hazards and community health resources;
2. Review strategies to reduce exposures to hazards and expand access to health resources.
3. Work with public health officials to reduce or eliminate sources of known pollution.

For additional resources, see the [NYSCHECK.org](https://www.nyscheck.org) website.

#### Key Concepts

**Environmental health** concerns the physical, chemical, biological, and social factors external to each person that impacts their health. "It encompasses the assessment and control of those environmental factors that can potentially affect health. It is targeted towards preventing disease and creating health-supportive environments." (World Health Organization Definition)

#### What Comprises the Environment?

According to the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences the environment is comprised of:

- **The Natural Environment** – includes clean (or polluted) air, water, food, soil. It includes biological and chemical materials.
- **The Built Environment** – includes buildings, roads, and parks where people live, travel and play. Wyandanch is now a regional leader in creating walkable downtown districts that can reduce pollution and increase opportunities for recreation and commerce.
- **The Social Environment** – encompasses lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise, social environmental systems and other societal influences that may affect health.

#### Why Wyandanch?

The success of Wyandanch Rising illustrates local leadership for transit oriented development. We can build upon past successes to improve environmental health and environmental justice for youth.

Initial community conversations in 2021 identified Wyandanch for its high rates of asthma and the need to monitor local air quality to better understand the causes of local respiratory illnesses.

Those conversations also demonstrated a strong community commitment to tackle local issues using a holistic "total wellness" health model. This offers an opportunity for a deeper rethinking of health in coming years that aligns community health, regional economics, and environmental quality.

"Build back better" is a science-based framework for community and environmental resilience. The impacts of COVID19 revealed many gaps and deficiencies in the national and regional public health system. Solutions should include small incremental reforms as well as more visionary efforts to rethink the future of community well being and quality of life. We hope that this CAB can contribute to both.



## Social Determinants of Health

The graphic below offers examples of social and environmental factors that impact the quality of our health.

For example, it is well understood that access to health insurance impacts the frequency and quality of health care available to individuals and families. Too often, a lack of access to health insurance forces families to defer health care appointments until minor problems become major health threats. This harms the health of family members and raises the costs of health care for the entire community.

Education is also a critical factor. Communities with higher rates of high school and college graduation typically have higher incomes and a greater capacity to make better health care choices.

## Health is Human Right

A basic principle of public health is that each of us has a right to live a healthy life. Yet health disparities are an unfortunate reality on Long Island.

For example, we see clear and measurable differences in rates of infection with COVID-19 in lower income and minority communities compared with regional averages.

Communities with higher levels of health burdens may also face reduced access to health care services. There may be fewer services (clinics or hospitals) or less access to health insurance.

Another concern is higher exposures to pollution. This often correlates with variations in race, ethnicity, and income.

## The 2021 Goals of the Wyandanch CAB

In 2021, the Wyandanch CAB will host a series of online events to understand:

- \* Local Health Resources
- \* Local Health Needs
- \* Short term Goals

Too often information hides in silos. Some people in a community have access to critical information denied to others. The challenge is to expand communication networks (locally and regionally) and increase access to needed resources. This is also a time to reassess and redefine the role that local resources play in our lives. These include schools, libraries, and parks.



Source: National Academy of Sciences, 2017. "Conceptual Model" in Communities in Action. <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24624/>

## **Appendix 4**

### **Wyandanch Children's Advisory Board (CAB)**



Scott Carlin, Associate Professor of Geography, LIU Post and Wyandanch CAB Coordinator.



Heather Butts, Director, Honors College, LIU Post; Executive Director, H.E.A.L.T.H for Youths, Inc.



Cappy Collins, MD, MPH; Director, Long Island Centers, NYSCHECK



John Culhane, tactic-ux



Laurie Farber, President, Starflower Experiences, Inc.



Sophia Jan, MD, Chief of Pediatrics, Cohen Children's Medical Center of Northwell Health



Aldustus Jordan, Ed.D, Stonybrook University



Melanie Gabrell, Associate Executive Director of Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition



Karyn Kirschbaum, Ph D, School and Community Wellness Coordinator, CHSC, Western Suffolk BOCES



Emily MacRae, Health Sciences and Healthcare Administration Student at Long Island University-Post



Karen Joy Miller, Founder and President of Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Inc. and the Prevention Is The Cure Campaign



Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, Chair, Suffolk County Human Rights Commission and Co Chair of Suffolk County Interfaith Anti Bias Task Forces



Erin Torres, HBCAC student ambassador and Senior at Walt Whitman High School



Latesha Walker, President, Concerned Citizens of Wyandanch Civic Association, Inc.; President, Wyandanch Union Free School District



**B**FREE Team at Cohen's Children's Medical Center of Northwell Health