



HEALTH  
EDUCATION  
COUNCIL

Health happens together.



## HEC CONNECTS

### Breaking Silos to Improve Community Health

ISSUE NO. 3  
SUMMER 2023

#### Health Education Council's Walkability Project Gains National Recognition

HEC is one of seven projects from across the country featured as "real-world exemplars of community partnership and engagement."

The Walkability Project, an HEC community engagement initiative in the downtown core neighborhoods of Roseville, was recently showcased as a featured Impact Story by the National Academy of Medicine's Leadership Consortium in its newly released "Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement Impact Stories & Assessment Instruments" report.



In 2017 when HEC launched its work in Roseville, data suggested that the area was a food desert. But when residents were asked "What's nearest and dearest to you when you think about health?" residents voiced that having a safe and walkable neighborhood was a bigger need than food access and so we pivoted and redesigned our Roseville program.

By building authentic relationships with residents and community partners, a sustainable infrastructure for on-going community action was created that still operates today. Many of our partners, including the City of Roseville, Roseville Electric, neighborhood associations and Roseville Parks, Recreation and Libraries, played a pivotal role in ensuring that residents in Roseville's downtown core were able to safely walk and connect in their neighborhood.

## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Emily Vasquez, President

Ron Blanchette, Vice President

Heidi Stevens,

Secretary/Treasurer

John DiMichele, Member

Eldridge Glover, Member

Kevin Massie, Member

Carla Wolfe, Member

## MISSION STATEMENT

HEC leverages the power of collaboration to improve health outcomes in under-served communities.

For more than 30 years, HEC has made addressing the social drivers of health in under-served communities the foundation of our work.

We support this foundation by tapping into the power of collaboration. By partnering and connecting with residents, businesses, organizations, leaders, and influencers already living and working in priority neighborhoods, we have the best chance of improving health outcomes in those neighborhoods.

## ADDRESS

7617 Alma Vista Way, Suite C  
Sacramento, CA 95831

## CONTACT

(916) 556-3344

[www.healthedcouncil.org](http://www.healthedcouncil.org)



## HEC Named a California Nonprofit of the Year



For the second time in three years, Health Education Council was selected as one of the California Nonprofits of the Year. Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen who nominated HEC cited our approach and emphasis on community empowerment and engagement to improve health outcomes in under-served communities as helping us stand out amongst thousands of nonprofits across the state.

When reflecting on the recognition founder and Executive Director Debra Oto-Kent stated, "It is such an honor for the Health Education Council to be recognized among so many California nonprofits carrying out their important missions. I am grateful to work with an incredible Board of Directors, HEC staff team members, volunteers, and partners who are all so committed to thriving, healthy communities and health equity for all."



## Food Advocacy Brings More Options to Sacramento Students



Through the parent groups established to support Afghan families in Twin Rivers Unified (TRUSD) and San Juan Unified (SJUSD) School Districts, HEC developed a strong rapport with many families. Mothers shared with our staff that due to dietary restrictions, their children didn't have adequate food options at school. Program Director Roxana Garcia Ochoa points to our proactive role in hiring a community member to coordinate workshops for the Afghan community during COVID-19 as the start of the connection being fostered.

"We're working with TRUSD to explore ways they can further incorporate regular halal items into school menus, creating equitable nutritional access for Muslim students during school meal times, said Hibatallah Eltahir, MPH HEC Program Administrator.

In the spring, Amine, an HEC Parent Advocate, and her daughter Fatima, spoke at the California Department of Public Health's Cal Fresh Healthy Living Director meeting. HEC and its Afghan family partners were invited to speak because of the authentic partnership that had been built.



## Health and Hope Happen Together



HEC and Midtown Church have launched a new partnership to co-locate HEC services on the church's Sacramento campus. HEC employee, Colette Charles, will coordinate community health education, financial education and mental well-being services from the Midtown Hub.

To introduce the new services, HEC and Midtown Church brought together a host of community partners such as Lions Club Sacramento Maharlika, Sacramento County Department of Public Health, UC Davis Alzheimer's Research, and others.

Lions Club Sacramento Maharlika provided vision screenings and glasses as well as on the spot glucose testing. One Touch Training CPR provided live demonstrations of proper CPR and other life saving techniques. Other booths distributed materials for improving mental and physical health, as well as accessing free or low-cost programs to address overall wellness. The fair welcomed over 1,000 community members.



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

## Preparing Transitional Aged Youth for Careers



In partnership with North State Building Foundation and Sierra College, Health Education Council hosted a Construction Boot Camp at the Grove. The Grove located in North Sacramento, provides housing and training to prepare its 18-24 year old transitional youth to pursue their goals. The Grove is part of the First Step Communities, a non-profit which administers similar programs throughout the Sacramento region.

The boot camp included lessons focused on careers in the construction sector, as well as career exploration in other sectors. To enhance the holistic life preparation emphasized by the Grove, HEC staff also hosted discussions and interactive trainings to teach participants the importance of personal finances and preparing healthy meals on a budget.

Deputy Director of External Affairs, Partnerships, and Workforce Development Martin Ross said that this is the first of many programs that HEC will collaborate with The Grove to facilitate. "We're grateful to have this new partnership to promote overall wellness for transitional aged youth".

## STAFF HIGHLIGHT

TERESA HERNANDEZ  
WELLNESS EDUCATION TEAM  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Teresa is a Program Coordinator with the Schools team where she supports with nutrition education efforts. She also educates community members about CalHOPE, a series of programs and resources to promote mental wellness. She's from Sacramento and enjoys spending time with her family and closed friends. A little known fact about her is that she's obsessed with coffee!



Thank you to our Big Day of Giving Donors! We raised \$35,585 from 152 donors that will go towards programs to improve health outcomes in underserved neighborhoods.



## Youth Perspectives: Community Conversations on Violence and Safety

COMMUNITY SAFETY



Youth in many Sacramento neighborhoods are too familiar with the effects and trauma associated with community violence. The Community Safety team facilitated 8 Passport to Adulthood listening sessions in North and South Sacramento giving more than 50 youth a platform and space to discuss their thoughts on the issues their communities face.

HEC will use these insights of how youth process the challenges around them to strengthen our existing youth and violence prevention programs.

The listening sessions were rooted in valuing the experiences and solutions youth shared, creating a safe space where youth could speak candidly. While youth were at times frustrated and disheartened when discussing their experiences, they also were passionate about the solutions that they shared.

One participant noted that the cycles of violence, drug use, and chronic homelessness are cycles that seem to keep repeating. He suggested that more positive programs for community members would discourage people from contributing to the cycle.

## HEC in the Community



Program Administrator Michaela Crane and Program Director Roxana Garcia-Ochoa among the presenters at the California Immunization Coalition's Annual Summit



Community Health Leader Kim Herrera sharing Cal HOPE's mental health resources at the Golden 1 Center



SOCIAL CONNECTION

## Mujeres Primera (Ladies First)

For the first time since 2019, the annual Women's Leadership Conference that HEC co-hosts with the Mexican Consulate was held in person. Now in its 11th year, the event has a new name SOMOS which means "We Are" in Spanish. It was attended by more than 100 Latina leaders from throughout Northern California.



During interactive workshops, participants were empowered with information on mental health, substance use among youth, and gender violence. Program Director Lupita Rodriguez said, "Most importantly, women built social connections amongst each other, connections that will reach and benefit their communities."

**Thank you SMUD and Sutter Health for sponsoring this year's conference.**



The Ventanilla de Salud team giving a tour to our partners from Midtown Church and Iranian American Cultural and Educational Center

# Save the Date

## 2nd Annual Walk for Health Community Walk, Job, and Wellness Fair



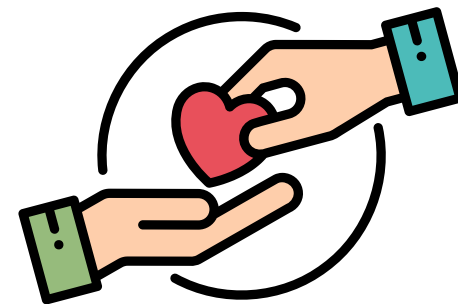
**Saturday, September 30**  
**Robla Park | 8am-12pm**

**Sponsored By**



# Support HEC's Work Today!

Donations from supporters like you fuel our work.



Your donation will directly serve community members with important health-supporting activities. For example:

- \$25 makes vision, diabetes, and blood pressure screenings possible
- \$50 provides fresh produce & supplies for healthy cooking classes for Afghan women
- \$75 covers the costs of financial coaching for low-income families
- \$100 funds mentoring for young women
- \$200 supports mental health navigator training for community residents

Scan to visit HEC's  
secure online  
donation page



The Health Education Council is a 501(c)3. Tax ID # 680249296

## HEC'S IMPACT IN 2022



Over **2,300 students and their families** were provided resources to prepare health snacks and meals on a monthly basis.



Provided **14,000 pounds of fresh produce and food** to people living in food insecure communities.



Over **12,000 Spanish speaking** community members received financial training and consultations.



Over **1,500 Spanish-speaking adults** received preventative health screenings, attended counseling appointments, and joined support groups.



Dedicated more than **1,600 hours** mentoring youth on topics such as effective communication and personal finance.