



annual report

2022-2023



our history

In 1997, Graham Children's Health Services was formed to implement initiatives to improve the health of children and families in Mitchell and Yancey counties.

In 2017, the organization changed its name to Partners Aligned Toward Health to better describe PATH's mission of helping develop vibrant communities of active, healthy children and families.

Over the past 25 years, PATH has prioritized collaborating with community partners to identify and address the health and wellness needs of our communities. With the support of grants, generous sponsors, and the community we hope to continue meeting the needs of our community for the next 25 years.

Summer Food



BFF 5K



A message from the PATH team,

As we look back over 25 years of this organization, we are humbled by the accomplishments, the staff, board, volunteer, partner, and community members who have been involved, and the power of collaboration to bring positive change to a community. What started as a vision of a healthier and more accessible community and all-volunteer “staff” has grown into a thriving organization with eight paid staff, two coalitions, eight ongoing programs, and several additional initiatives. 25 years is long enough that some things have come and gone, some things have evolved, and many of our efforts are still recognizable in the community. A few notable highlights over the past 25 years that PATH either led or had a significant partnership in include:

- Formation of the Toe River Children’s Dental Clinic
- Healthy Yancey coalition
- Kid Mountain playground
- Served as the 501(c)(3) to help establish Centro de Enlace
- Skate Park construction
- Tobacco-free schools
- Multiple walking paths
- Partnered with Yancey County to secure initial funding for the Comprehensive Recreational Grounds that became Cane River Recreational Park
- Advocacy for the inclusion of the bike lane and sidewalks on the Transportation Improvement Plan that guided the four-lane expansion through Yancey County
- Several renovations of Ray Cort Park
- Burnsville Gym Renovation project
- Burnsville Fit Families 5K
- Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force
- Multiple Drug Take-Back events





- Partnered with local law enforcement to install four permanent drug drop boxes in Mitchell and Yancey counties
- Sizzlin' Summer Series
- MY Community Cares Summit and Recovery Celebration with trauma-informed-care expert Tonier Cain-Muldrow
- Established Community Ambassador Real Equality initiative
- CATCH My Breath – an evidence-based nicotine vaping prevention program

Many of these achievements, including numerous others, would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, commitment, and tireless efforts of the individuals who collaborated in the past and continue to unite in pursuit of a thriving community filled with engaged, healthy children, families, and individuals. We express our heartfelt gratitude to our community!



celebrating **25** years of community wellness



470

Summer Food
and Student
Choice Market
Participants

500+

people attended
the CARE Team
Fiesta Mexicana
Celebration



320

medication
lockboxes
distributed by
MYSATF



205

hours of
afterschool youth
programs

3,231

people attended the
Sizzlin' Summer
Series



167+

people attended
Home Remedies
events & classes

10,000+

individuals served by PATH programs

CARE Team

Community Ambassador Real Equality

The Community Ambassador Real Equality (CARE) team is a group of bilingual, bicultural ambassadors working to build bridges and connections in the community. The CARE team plays a crucial role in supporting their community with information and resources focused on mental health, substance use, college access, and legal assistance.

CARE Team ambassadors work to enhance representation, equity, and access to resources for those they serve. This year they co-hosted a two-day interpreter training with Cenzontle and the WNC Health Network. Training participants will provide interpretation support for community “sensemaking” sessions as part of the opioid settlement/substance use learning process. CARE Team also hosted a youth mental health night to share information about mental health and wellness with Spanish-speaking families.

Fiesta Mexicana Celebration

The CARE Team held the inaugural Fiesta Mexicana in September to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month, with over 500 attendees.

The occasion promoted learning and appreciation of Hispanic/Latino culture and its impact in Yancey County and beyond. The event, which was sponsored by local organizations, featured traditional games, music, dances, and free food for all attendees. Through this celebration of heritage, Fiesta Mexicana served as a means to unite the community and overcome barriers.



*What a wonderful event!
We are so grateful for the
representation in our
community & the food was
outstanding so delicious!*

**—Fiesta Mexicana
Participant**



building bridges

MYSATF

Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force

MYSATF is a group of community stakeholders and members who join forces to address a wide variety of issues related to substance use in Mitchell and Yancey counties. The work of MYSATF supports the spectrum of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery — seeking to raise awareness, educate, advocate, and support efforts related to substance use.

MYSATF priorities this year include training teachers in vaping and substance use prevention materials, hosting a town hall with Celebrate Recovery at an Overdose Awareness event, taking a leadership role in the community learning process around opioid and substance use to provide insight for the Opioid Settlement funds, and collecting substance use and behavioral health data from local schools through the Modified Youth Risk Behavior Survey.



suicide prevention and mental health work group

After the tragic loss of a young member of our community, this workgroup, facilitated by PATH, was formed to explore ways we can prevent suicide and support mental health in the community.

This coalition of local organizations, law enforcement, and concerned community members meets monthly. The work group hosted the Friday Night Unwind which provided four free, fun connection-building events for local youth, as connectedness is one of the most important protective factors against suicide.

healthy yancey

The Healthy Yancey coalition is a partnership of concerned citizens working together to improve the quality of health for all Yancey County citizens. During monthly meetings, organizations and community members share information about local resources and discuss topics concerning public health and community wellness.

Meeting topics this year included:

- Pisgah Legal Services agency presentation
- Opioid substance use data for Mitchell and Yancey counties
- Local resources for dementia and aging support
- Collaborative food resources in Yancey County
- Yancey County Health Department agency presentation
- Community Health Improvement Plan data collection



sizzlin' summer series

Sixteen agencies partnered to host twelve free community events on the Burnsville Town Square each Saturday during the summer. It was a chance for individuals of all ages and abilities to explore new experiences, connect with neighbors, and embrace an active lifestyle while having fun! Over 3,000 people attended, making it the most well-attended Sizzlin' Summer Series to date.



burnsville fit families 5k

The much beloved Burnsville Fit Families 5K returned for the 12th year. The BFF 5K had a record 185 participants this year, 80 of whom were youth who ran for free thanks to generous donations. We also introduced the 5K Your Way Prep Program which provided 10 weeks of workouts to prepare participants for the 5K while encouraging healthy habits in a fun and inclusive way.



We would not have had fresh veggies or fruits if it had not been for your summer program... I think you all did a great job at helping families who needed the extra food.

—Summer Food Participant

summer food

With the help of dedicated community partners, the Summer Food Program provided six deliveries of fresh produce and dry goods to 96 families this summer. We also held Student Choice Markets at local schools where students could self-select produce to take home to their families.

toe river racqueteers

tennis camp

Toe River Racqueteers Tennis and Pickleball Camps offer students instruction tailored to their age and ability, supervised by USPTA Master Professional, Michael Baldwin, Sr. The camps are offered at no cost to participants! Equipment is provided and each student receives a t-shirt. Participants of the tennis camp also receive a free tennis racquet to continue honing their skills. This year, nearly 80 youth participated in tennis camp.



pickleball camp

This year was the first-ever four-day Pickleball Camp, which had an impressive turnout of 36 participants. Youth learned the fast-growing sport of pickleball, which combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis.

Thanks to growing interest in pickleball, new pickleball lines were painted on the MHHS tennis courts in partnership with the High Country Picklers, Yancey County Schools, and Yancey County Parks and Recreation, who also provided community-use pickleball nets and paddles.



get outside challenge


This year PATH participated in Resourceful Communities' Get Outside Challenge which encourages North Carolina residents to spend time exploring the outdoors and learning about their natural environment. During the first event at Cane River Park, participants aged 7-12 explored the park to find a rainbow of natural materials, then crafted bracelets out of the plants, rocks, and flowers they found. The second event, at the Toe River at Patience Park, hosted middle and high schoolers from Youth to Youth and Cougar Fit Club who explored the river, swam together, and painted rocks.



cougar fit club

Cougar Fit Club is an afterschool program that strives to foster healthy habits in Mountain Heritage High School students through physical activities and peer-to-peer focused discussion. Bringing together educators, counselors, and fitness experts, students are supported in their physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being. The focus is on helping students make healthy choices around stress, relationships, school, peer pressure, substance use, and fitness.

A total of 19 Mountain Heritage High School students participated in Cougar Fit throughout the school year. Students went on hikes led by Snakeroot Ecotours, blended healthy smoothies on the 4-H Blender Bike, worked out at Blue Ridge Fitness & Rehab Center, and led lessons on mental health for Appalachian Youth to Youth students at Cane River and East Yancey middle schools.



The teachers are non-judgemental and listen. They try to include everyone's choice and what they wanna do. They have supported all of us.

—Cougar Fit Club Participant



appalachian youth to youth

Appalachian Youth to Youth is an empowerment and leadership program that focuses on the voices of youth, and provides a space for participants to take action on the issues most important to them. This year Youth to Youth was held at four Mitchell and Yancey County middle schools.

Students led projects including performing substance use prevention skits for elementary schools in Mitchell and Yancey counties, designing Mental Health Awareness Month posters, and an animal adoption project at the Mitchell County Animal Rescue. Six Youth to Youth students also attended the Empower: Teen Leadership Summit, a youth-led leadership conference hosted by Teen Health Connection in Charlotte, NC.



supporting youth

home remedies program

Home Remedies: Community Options Addressing Pain and Stress focuses on providing proven, effective, and safe options to help individuals reduce pain and improve quality of life, with a goal of preventing and/or reducing the use of pain medications.

The Home Remedies Program offers free community clinics and online courses with strategies for pain management and stress reduction. Proven alternative approaches offered include meditation, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, yoga, physical therapy, mindful movement, resiliency skills, and more.



*Thank you so much.
Made my day and
reminded me to follow
through with health care
needs & get more support*

**—Community Clinic
Participant**



community clinics

This year Home Remedies held four in-person community clinics to offer free services and classes to the community. They were held at First Baptist Church, during the Burnsville Fit Families 5K, during the Sizzlin' Summer Series, and at TRACTOR Food & Farms' new location in Spruce Pine.

The community clinics were extremely popular and served over 120 individuals, introducing participants to new modalities and practitioners that can help them address chronic pain and stress without medication.



red ribbon week speaker

PATH and MYSATF welcomed inspirational speaker, Jared Scott, who spoke during Red Ribbon Week at six Mitchell and Yancey County middle and high schools. The Red Ribbon Week Campaign is the nation's largest and longest running drug-use prevention campaign. In addition to the speaker, various schools hosted activities including student-led announcements and a spirit week.



CATCH MY Breath is amazing, and they need to keep doing it. We had several students who vaped, and now we barely have any.

-Principal Byland

substance use prevention

Last school year, PATH trained Mitchell and Yancey County teachers in CATCH My Breath, an evidence-based nicotine vaping prevention program. This school year, PATH trained all Yancey County Schools Health and PE teachers in vaping and substance use prevention materials.



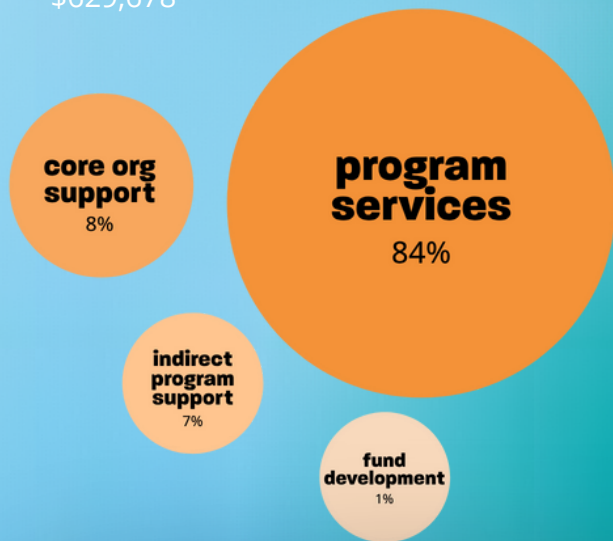
responsible alcohol sellers training

MYSATF coordinated a Responsible Alcohol Sellers Training provided by Special Agent M. E. Bradshaw of the ALE Division for the staff of the Moondust Lounge in Spruce Pine.

The training provided strategies to avoid sales of alcohol to both underage individuals as well as intoxicated individuals. With the support of the staff of Moondust Lounge and Special Agent Bradshaw, our community members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address substance use and employ harm reduction strategies.

expenses

\$629,678



income

\$538,104



partners aligned toward health

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We thank you for your continued support in our programs.

If you would like to donate or volunteer,
please reach out via email at info@pathwnc.org

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