Reflections from a 10-Year Journey

SPECIAL REPORT: HELPING TO IMPROVE HEART HEALTH
Over a decade ago, we had a vision to see what we could do to help address a disease that is a leading cause of death in this nation. Through the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation’s Connections for Cardiovascular HealthSM (CCH) program our mission was to help improve cardiovascular health in the United States. We have worked to accomplish this by funding innovative, community-based programs that would support diverse populations, many in underserved areas, by connecting people to care, education and resources.

It’s been so rewarding to see what these organizations have accomplished through programs that confront unmet needs with activities and information that are sensitive to the culture of the people in their communities, providing resources that otherwise may not be accessible. We’ve also recognized the importance of the gaps these programs bridge and realized that while providing access to resources was critical, it also was vital to ensure that we could empower those programs to exist beyond our funding with sustainability, capacity building and mentorship training.

Our vision and mission are just as important today, if not more so. When CCH first launched in 2010, cardiovascular disease affected an estimated 80.1 million people in the United States1. The most recent data shows that now those numbers have grown substantially. An estimated 121.5 million people2 have the disease, highlighting that the need is greater than ever and there’s even more to be done. That’s why we launched the Connections for Cardiovascular HealthSM Next Generation program this year. The program builds on 10 years of lessons learned and aims to expand to areas of the country with the greatest need and where our funding has not previously reached.

The pages of this report highlight the stories of our program – where we have been, the impact, the perspectives of our Grant Awardees and our Trustees, all who have worked together to make a difference in helping improve heart health. A difference that was only possible because we worked better together. We hope that these stories and the difference they made inspire others, from other nonprofit organizations to funders, to support community efforts to improve heart health. By working together, we just might be able to do that.


Since we first launched the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation’s Connections for Cardiovascular HealthSM program over a decade ago, our goal was to fund organizations at the community-level with innovative, culturally-centered approaches to help address a leading cause of death in the nation. We knew these organizations deeply understood the people they served and that many were located in areas of the United States with some of the highest cardiovascular disease mortality rates, reaching vulnerable and underserved community members. What was lacking were the resources to innovate, evaluate and communicate in support of these programs – and break down barriers to care. The ultimate goal was to have the programs live on beyond this initial funding given the scope of this disease.

Once we got started with giving grants, we discovered new ways to help strengthen the programs and organizations through learning opportunities like forums, webinars and peer-to-peer networking, which grew into a formal mentoring program. Program results were tracked, analyzed by university evaluation partners and the organizations and their programs were given the flexibility to grow and change along the way. Most importantly, program participants learned that small lifestyle adjustments like eating healthier and moving more can help reduce cardiovascular risk factors. Many of these participants passed their newfound knowledge to family and friends to help them care for their hearts.

Each organization’s tireless outreach, ongoing education, individual support and coaching and resources like access to care for their communities is a labor of love. Along the way, some of these organizations evolved and expanded their programs including new locations or even new clinics. More recently, our Grant Awardees went on to share their lessons learned at regional and national conferences like the American Public Health Association’s Annual Meeting and Expo in Philadelphia last year.

We are incredibly proud of the work our Grant Awardees have done to help improve heart health in their communities and for passing their learnings on to the Next Generation of Connections for Cardiovascular HealthSM Grant Awardees.

“Looking back over the years, we’ve realized connecting is at the heart of what we do – and we all need a little help along the way. To all of the good-hearted people across the nation who worked or volunteered in support of this program – thank you.”

— Joyce Jacobson, Executive Director, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
Mission: to help improve heart health via grantmaking and capacity building

$23.7M 52 NPOs 25 States + DC 1.7M+ Reached and 65K+ Tracked

Organization Type (52 Organizations)
- Academic Institution: 29%
- Civic (General): 17%
- Civic (Health-Related): 17%
- Hospital/Healthcare System: 6%
- Research Institute: 4%
- Clinic: 2%

Program Disease Focus (58 Programs)
- General CVD: 53%
- Heart Failure: 19%
- Hypertension: 14%
- Obesity: 9%
- Diabetes: 3%
- Multiple Disease Foci: 19%

Primary Population Served (58 Programs)
- African American: 57%
- Asian: 8%
- Mixed Minority: 9%
- Hispanic/Latino: 5%
- Native American: 2%
- General Population: 19%
- General CVD: 2%

General population may include a mix of populations, such as African American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino and Native American.
Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
Realizing that community health programs often face challenges, the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation and its university evaluation partners developed the *Effective Program Practices Guide* to help organizations overcome common hurdles and launch sustainable programs in their communities. This Special Report highlights the six innovative approaches in the Guide commonly used by CCH Grant Awardees through stories of their programs.

- Ensure Comprehensive Care for All
- Hit the Road
- Support Youth Heart Health Ambassadors
- Empower Healthy Eating
- Deploy Health Coaches
- Know Your Community
AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
Connections for Cardiovascular Health™
CCH Journey 2010 - 2020

AstraZeneca Gives $25M to AZHCF for CCH

Grants Provided

Program Reporting/Evaluation

Participant Outcomes

Increased Physical Activity
Increased Knowledge of Cardiovascular Health
Lowered Blood Sugar
Improved Nutrition/Knowledge
Lowered Blood Pressure/Cholesterol
Decreased Weight/Body Mass Index

Participant Outcomes

• Decreased Weight/Body Mass Index
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• Increased Knowledge of Cardiovascular Health
• Increased Physical Activity
Empowering Youth to be Heart Health Ambassadors

With national attention on childhood obesity and limited opportunities for physical activity in schools, Chesapeake Charities Inc. (formerly Foundation for Community Partnerships) and Partnering for Youth developed its CCH program, Partnering for Youth Cardio-Fit Project, to empower youth in rural Maryland with lifelong skills to be heart healthy through participating in afterschool activities.

“The Cardio-Fit Project teaches children the science behind diet and exercise. We often tell them what to do but not why they should do it,” said Kim Umberger, program director for Partnering for Youth. “The program focuses on cardiovascular fitness, providing children with science-based information to inspire a life-long commitment to their heart health.”

Students participating in the afterschool program become “Heart Health Ambassadors,” who share information and strategies at home, advocating for improving the entire family’s cardiovascular health.

Linda Kohler, executive director of Chesapeake Charities, explains, “Cardio-Fit provides a fun way for children to develop healthy eating and living habits that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.”

Kohler remembers a letter she received from the mother of 11-year-old twins who participated in the program. The children liked sports but did not excel at them, so they were not chosen for competitive sports teams. Instead, both kids joined the Cardio-Fit running club. When the season ended, they signed up for a 5K race and asked their mother to tag along for safety reasons. She was amazed how much endurance and speed her children had developed through the year and soon both parents were running with the kids on the weekend. Over time, the father lost 50 pounds, their mother lost 20 pounds and the whole family registered for the Bay Bridge 10K.

“The mother said this was an experience the family will never forget. Her children have a sport they love and will do for the rest of their lives,” Kohler said. “The Cardio-Fit Project changed the dynamic of the whole family. We receive lots of stories like that.”

“It’s really paramount to start at a young age and enforce, or reinforce, healthy behaviors towards a healthy lifestyle, and that’s the beauty of the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation.”

— Michael Miller, MD, FACC, FAHA, Trustee, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
Based in Picayune, Mississippi, a state that has one of the nation’s highest rates of cardiovascular disease and in an area with a very high poverty rate, Manna Ministries Inc. wanted to develop a free, “no charge” wellness program that would address the risk factors that lead to the disease including hypertension, diabetes, elevated cholesterol and obesity.

“One of the things that was unique and innovative about our Heart 2 Heart Initiative was how comprehensive it was, and our participants could get everything they saw as a barrier addressed with a designated provider that was an advocate,” said Dixie Renault, project director, Manna Ministries. “We didn’t just look at one element – we looked at their typical meals and grocery lists, taught them how to read labels and took them shopping. It was tailored to the issues that people in the community were having and educated on everything that can’t happen in an office visit when there is not enough time, which was a key to it being successful.”

Working with the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation, Manna Ministries learned how to gather data and track patients to see the outcomes they achieved and impact they had on blood pressure, cholesterol and weight.

“What we got from participating in the CCH program was so much more than we ever expected and we will forever be grateful for what we learned. It has been absolutely invaluable and pushed us to see what we could accomplish, giving us a foundation to improve our overall programs that we still have in place today,” said Jameye Martin, RN, executive director, Manna Ministries. “It was far more than funding. As the Foundation helped us empower our patients, it helped empower us to be better providers.”
The youth in the lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans not only faced a lack of access to healthy fresh food but the marketing and promotion of those foods. The Sankofa Community Development Corporation (CDC) launched the Sankofa HEAL Project* that would reach the children in their community through gardening and access to a market to educate them about hypertension and obesity tied to nutrition so they could understand how what they eat contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

While starting out as a new program within a growing organization, Sankofa CDC has been able to touch many lives through its hearth health education workshops that have expanded over the years linking mobile markets and food pantries with participants who receive vegetable prescription vouchers to use for fresh fruits and vegetables. One 6th grade student credited the program and learning to teaching her to make healthy smoothies and meals and being a positive influence to help her receive straight A's.

The funding from the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation allowed Sankofa CDC to develop capacity by building a team that helped them look at the result of their work and what they needed to do to further build goals that focused on impact and best practices.

“We do believe it’s making a difference, but we also want to do more. We want to put a dent in the problem that’s causing the need for this program,” said Rashida Ferdinand, executive director, Sankofa CDC. “It’s not just about great outcomes. It’s about operating a program that not only provides educational resources and information, but reaches policymakers and other decision makers to address the system that normalizes foods that cause unhealthy diets and chronic diseases.”

*Program has since evolved to a community health ambassador model and is currently known as the Healthy HeartBeats program.
Health Coaches Motivate and Instill Confidence and Skills

Recognizing that many patients leave a doctor’s office not fully understanding what they just heard and may face additional challenges with language, socioeconomic or cultural barriers, City Health Works (CHW) in New York City was founded based on the premise that local community health coaches could play a major role in improving health outcomes and avoiding expensive medical costs by preventing complications.

“Our community health coaches partner with clients and are highly trained in cardiovascular disease self-management skills, but the real beauty is how they are able to dissolve barriers and address complexities in a relationship that can be built in the comfort of a patient’s home,” said Manmeet Kaur, founder and CEO. “The relationship enables the coach to troubleshoot, determine what is really going on and help the patient build their own confidence and problem-solving skills, which is our ultimate goal.”

The CCH funding came for CHW’s program, Extending care for hypertension beyond the confines of the healthcare system via neighborhood-based coaching integrated with primary care, at a critical time during the early stages of the organization, providing credibility as the nonprofit looked to secure funding from other resources.

“One of the benefits of working with the CCH program and the Foundation is the focus on data collection, and the rigor that was required really strengthened us,” Kaur said. “We have a deep gratitude for the Foundation’s conviction in our concept before we had much behind it and for the multiyear funding opportunities that helped us achieve the results needed to help ensure our sustainability.”

*Program was later known as Extending care for hypertension, congestive heart failure and diabetes beyond the confines of the healthcare system via neighborhood-based coaching integrated with primary care.*

“These are really good people doing really tough work at the community grassroots level, and the fact that they are able to celebrate some successes, and have learned some lessons from this program and from us, it really is giving them the kind of confidence to sustain themselves.”

—Timothy J. Gardner, MD, Trustee, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
Meeting Those in Need Where They Are At

The Central Appalachian region has some of the highest rates in the nation for cardiovascular death and St. Mary’s Health Wagon turned to the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation for outside resources to help make inroads with this vulnerable population and address some of its healthcare disparities through The Health Wagon* program and the Heart Health 1, 2, 3. Comprehensive Cardiovascular Disease Initiative for Diabetes Mellitus, Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity** program.

“We’ve always been good at outreach and finding people where they are at and serving as a medical home, but the funding helped provide for community resources we never had before, along with sustainable initiatives,” said Dr. Teresa Tyson, president and CEO, St. Mary’s Health Wagon. “This not only helps you continue the program and help make a difference, but you can see the fruits of your labor and can have an impact on those disparities that cannot be changed overnight.”

Participation in the CCH program also gave St. Mary’s an opportunity to network and learn.

“Networking at the Foundation’s CCH events is energetic and helps us learn so much from others,” said Rachel Helton, grant administrator, St. Mary’s Health Wagon. “We’ve made lifelong friends, and new Grant Awardees should galvanize and leverage all that they can from the program because it’s phenomenal and it afforded us to take care of our vulnerable population and helped us make a difference that we could not have done without the Foundation.”

*Program later known as Appalachian Healthy Heart Initiative.

**Program later known as Expansion of Heart Health 1, 2, 3. Comprehensive Cardiovascular Disease Initiative for Diabetes Mellitus, Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity.
Partnership and Inclusivity

When the Flagstaff Medical Center wanted to bring cardiovascular disease and diabetes screenings to rural communities in Northern Arizona, the medical center learned the importance of partnerships and adapting to the cultural sensitivities of its community to provide care in an inclusive way.

Initially, their CCH program, *Northern Arizona Diabetes - Heart Connection* was intended to only offer screenings for Native Americans but after receiving feedback from screening participants that recruiting someone by race may not be respected, the medical center talked to the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation about revising its approach to focus on reaching socially disadvantaged populations by looking at their socioeconomic and insurance status.

“By having important conversations with our constituents and the Foundation, we took the emphasis off of race and made it much more of a collective experience that allowed us to reach even more people and more Native Americans than if we recruited Native Americans directly,” said Cristine Currie, Population Health Management director, Flagstaff Medical Center. “It helped us learn as an organization and without our partnership with the Foundation, that wouldn’t have been possible.”

“If you’re going to change some of these risk factors and reduce some of the horrendous data...you have to be culturally sensitive, and that does not just mean race or gender or age, it means having an integrated program that addresses all of those things.”

—Gayle Porter, PsyD, Trustee, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
Understanding Cultural Sensitivities to Improve Heart Health

Looking to reach low-income and underserved Latino communities in Ventura County, California with heart healthy services that support the whole person, Westminster Free Clinic developed its CCH program, Corazones Sanos, to arm people with the knowledge they needed to take care of themselves.

“We knew we needed to be sensitive and address barriers from language to living arrangements and transportation,” said Belen Quezada, program coordinator, Westminster Free Clinic. “We created a one-stop shop that provided access to resources where we could help improve both physical and emotional health – training not just for themselves but for their own families.”

The program uses a multigenerational approach involving teens who inspire themselves, their parents and their community to be heart healthy by planning, implementing, evaluating and running the program; children who participate in a “Healthy Hearts Kids Club” where they learn healthy eating and active living; and parents who participate in experiential learning on their own and with their kids. Socioemotional support also was important to the program’s planning and success.

“It made the participants feel safe, part of a family and that we were are all in this together,” said Lisa Safaeinii, executive director, Westminster Free Clinic. “They deal with a lot of stressors in their lives, and we found through our evaluations that that the clinic was a place people looked forward to coming to, to feel good about themselves and empowered to deal with grief and loss, health and economic challenges.”

The Foundation’s support of Westminster Free Clinic’s dissemination efforts – from creating a toolkit to speaking at conferences and creating a video – helped increase their credibility in the community at large and also helped them expand their reach to be able develop a similar program in another city and region where they could reach other vulnerable populations.

“Because of the professional way we were able to present ourselves and share our data and successes, we were able to secure additional funding,” said Safaeinii. “Without the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation funding, we really couldn’t do those efforts. You helped us demonstrate why we were a good investment.”
SUSTAINABILITY

Breaking the Generational Cycles of Health Disparities

A family history of cardiovascular disease does not have to be a death sentence, even if you have lived your life losing the people you love to the disease. No one knows that more than Frederica M. Williams, president and CEO, Whittier Street Health Center, whose parents both died due to complications related to their cardiovascular health. Educating others about wellness and prevention has been a lifelong driving force for Williams and is embedded in the community outreach for Whittier’s CCH program, The Whittier Connections for Cardiovascular Care, in Boston.

“You really need to focus on the social determinants of health, looking at the social issues – whether it’s transportation, whether it’s housing, whether it’s meeting people where they are, those barriers that are impeding growth,” Williams said. “In Boston, being a mecca of healthcare, there are so many big hospitals but they do not know the community, they are not deeply connected to the grassroots issues. We are on the front line, we see patients, we have been in this community for 85 years so people come to us, they see us as their patient-centered medical home.”

The AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation and CCH program helped Whittier to move away from just being in a building to becoming embedded in the community and developing partnerships with community organizations, leaders and residents to increase access and the number of people they were serving. It also allowed them to train community leaders and patients to provide peer support and become health ambassadors that were the faces and voices who implemented the program.

“We still have this today and have replicated this approach to all chronic diseases. It’s one thing to fund an organization, but the learning to build sustainability so that you can develop best practices and share with others is essential,” Williams said. “Whatever you learn, then you spread it. Health disparities take a long time to tackle. You learn, develop great tools and replicate, but when you do, it needs to be sustainable. You cannot break generational cycles of health disparities without it.”
Making an Impact through Building Trust

Looking to serve a low-income population in a food desert in Buffalo, New York, Mercy Hospital Foundation Inc. wanted to develop a welcoming and engaging program that would help those at risk for cardiovascular disease in their community.

“We applied to the CCH program because we were hoping we could make a difference and could start something that would align with Catholic Health’s mission and values,” said Jeanne L. O’Hara, Heart Smart for Life program manager, Mercy Comprehensive Care Center. “But we didn’t just want it to be a class, program or a one-time shot. The funding allowed us to reach out and create a program that was not only sustainable but that actually did make that difference.”

Heart Smart for Life made that difference by not only supporting the community and creating a program that taught participants how to read food labels to make healthier choices, cook healthy meals and take part in chair yoga and other activities, but also by giving participants dignity and ownership of their own health.

“Heart Smart built such camaraderie among the people that there were no barriers. It was a complete safe zone and they were able to ask questions and were not scared to admit struggles,” said Deanna Messinger, executive director, Mercy Hospital Foundation. “It was so reassuring to see the population in this area say, ‘help me,’ and it was so rewarding to see the team build and sustain that trust.”

“The CCH program has been wildly successful...so hundreds to thousands of pounds of weight have been lost across all of the programs, blood pressure has been improved, diabetes control has been improved, and this has been in individuals, it’s been in families...trying to change the culture that’s going to lead to improved cardiovascular outcomes.”

—L. Kristin Newby, MD, MHS, Trustee, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
MENTORSHIP

“We’re excited to be a mentor to others and teach them lessons that we’ve learned through our program over the years – positives, negatives and everything in between. And hopefully, we can help them avoid some of the pitfalls that we’ve had and help them also have successful programs.”

Angie Settle, DNP, CEO
West Virginia Health Right, Inc.

“AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation has recently implemented a mentorship program. In this, established and experienced grantees are paired with newly funded organizations. This year, as we are doing this, we’re able to work with organizations who have just been funded to help them learn how to be effective right away. Mentoring new organizations, we’re able to help them bypass some of those mistakes that we have made so that hopefully they can be more successful earlier and have better sustainability.”

Karen Kaashoek, RN, MBA, Executive Director
Catherine’s Health Center
More Faces from the Journey
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the current and previous AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation trustees, officers, contract staff, partners and volunteers for their contributions to the overall success of the Connections for Cardiovascular Health℠ program.

Most importantly, thank you to all the Connections for Cardiovascular Health℠ Grant Awardees who have worked to help improve heart health in communities across the nation over the last decade.
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ARIZONA
Flagstaff Medical Center (Flagstaff, AZ)

CALIFORNIA
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center (San Bernardino, CA)
Mid-Valley Family YMCA (Van Nuys, CA)
Visión y Compromiso (El Cerrito, CA)
Westminster Free Clinic (Thousand Oaks, CA)

COLORADO
Poudre Valley Health System Foundation (Fort Collins, CO)

DELWARE
Christiana Care Health System (Wilmington, DE)

FLORIDA
Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center (Sebring, FL)
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine (Miami, FL)

GEORGIA
Center for Black Women’s Wellness, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)
North Georgia HealthCare Center Inc. (Ringgold, GA)

ILLINOIS
Asian Health Coalition (Chicago, IL)
Family Focus (Chicago, IL)
HSHS St. John’s Hospital (Springfield, IL)
Presence Hospitals PRV dba: Presence Covenant Medical Center (Urbana, IL)
UnityPoint Health: Trinity Medical Center (Moline, IL)

KENTUCKY
Ashland-Boyd County Health Department (Ashland, KY)

LOUISIANA
Sankofa Community Development Corporation
(New Orleans, LA)

MAINE
Cary Medical Center (Caribou, ME)

MARYLAND
Chesapeake Charities Inc. (formerly Foundation for Community Partnerships) (Stevensville, MD)
Saint Agnes Foundation (also known as Saint Agnes Hospital Foundation, Inc.) (Baltimore, MD)

MASSACHUSETTS
Boston Medical Center (Boston, MA)
Whittier Street Health Center (Boston, MA)

MICHIGAN
Allegiance Health Foundation (Jackson, MI)
Catherine’s Health Center (Grand Rapids, MI)
The Regents of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI)

MISSISSIPPI
Dr. Arenia C. Mallory Community Health Center, Inc. (Lexington, MS)
Gulf Coast Health Educators (Pass Christian, MS)
Manna Ministries Inc. (Pascagoula, MS)
University of Mississippi (Jackson, MS)

MISSOURI
OASIS Institute (St. Louis, MO)

NEBRASKA
Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department (Wisner, NE)

NEW YORK
Children’s Hospital at Montefiore (Bronx, NY)
City Health Works (New York, NY)
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TENNESSEE
Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center (Nashville, TN)

TEXAS
Cornerstone Assistance Network (Fort Worth, TX)
El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission (Austin, TX)
Scott & White Memorial Hospital (Temple, TX)
Sustainable Food Center (Austin, TX)

VIRGINIA
St. Mary’s Health Wagon (Wise, VA)

WASHINGTON, DC
The Gaston & Porter Health Improvement Center Inc.
(Washington, DC / Potomac, MD)
MedStar Washington Hospital Center Foundation (Washington, DC)

WEST VIRGINIA
West Virginia Health Right Inc. (Charleston, WV)

WYOMING
Sundance Research Institute, Inc. (Wind River Indian Reservation,
WY / Bethesda, MD)

CONTRIBUTORS
This report was developed in collaboration
with the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation
team members and partners:

Joyce Jacobson
Executive Director

Alexandria Jackson
Operations and Communications Manager

Colleen O’Brien, MPA
Program Manager

Leigh Madden
Senior Vice President
and the Public Communications Inc. team

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Jeffery L. Osgood, Jr., PhD, MPA
R. Lorraine Bernotsky, DPhil, MPhil, MA
Gopal Sankaran, MD, DrPH, MNAMS, CHES
## AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation

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**2020**

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**Previous Trustees**

(Since the CCH Program’s Inception)

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