POTTSTOWN AREA HEALTH & WELLNESS FOUNDATION

Community Benefit Report | Fall 2020

Howard Brown Promoted to Foundation Leadership

As the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation strives to bring community voices together, senior program officer Howard Brown's roots in the Pottstown community provide connections for building a brighter future.

"I want to use my platform to elevate those voices who feel like they are sometimes left out—the voices of friends, families, and the community that I grew up in and that I love," said Brown. "The Foundation has a great track record of collaboration, and by giving those voices and ideas opportunities to flourish, we can systemically see change and continue to build momentum for a greater society."

Brown was promoted to the role of senior program officer in July, and, in his new role, he'll lead program staff members who manage the day-to-day grant making, community collaboratives, and strategic partnerships.

Born and raised in Pottstown, Brown joined the Foundation staff as a program officer in April 2016. Brown gained fame early on—as a key member of Pottstown High's 1992-93 state champion basketball squad. Brown captained Villanova University's basketball team and went on to a successful career in professional basketball following graduation, playing in the U.S., Spain, Portugal, Israel, Venezuela, and Italy.

After retiring from professional basketball in 2012, Brown took on a role at Social Solutions, a global performance management software company for human service organizations and began his pursuit of a master's degree in international business from the University of London. Brown currently serves on multiple community boards, including the Tri-County Community Network, the Foundation for Pottstown Education, and Pottstown Hospital, Tower Health.

"At the end of the day, I'm a kid from Pottstown who never thought I would have the chance to

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A Message from Our President

We've all experienced the unprecedented events of recent months in our own ways. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted inadequacies and inequalities that have long existed in communities across the country, and the Pottstown area is no exception.

Last fall, I wrote in this column about equity—health equity, economic equity, education equity, transportation equity, and racial equity. Every single area of our focus has been magnified by the pandemic's impacts, and our work is more urgent than ever.

The Foundation is adapting to meet these challenges in new ways: starting a relief and recovery fund to provide rapid aid to nonprofits and micro businesses, forming new partnerships with philanthropic organizations, and utilizing staff to advocate for education with the goal of bringing new grant dollars into the region.

But more than this, our role as a convener of community voices is what is most vital at this time. For many years, the Foundation has served as a bridge for groups within our community and region, and working together we will rise to meet the extraordinary challenges of this time: our time.

I thank you for all you have done—and all that you will do—to bring our communities through this year stronger.

David W. Kraybill, President

do something like this," said Brown. "I've been blessed with a great opportunity, and I'm excited about it."

That opportunity comes at a time when the Foundation is seeking new avenues to measure and amplify its impact on the health and prosperity of Pottstown area residents.

"The Foundation is entering a new chapter in many ways. It's important that we have a leadership team that promotes building relationships within our community as well as enabling us to leverage resources from beyond the Tri-County area," said Dave Kraybill, president of the Foundation.

Brown's responsibilities will increase in the coming months as he works closely with each member of the Foundation's nine-member staff.

"Some of my leadership style was recently demonstrated in the pivot of Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute from a traditional professional development opportunity for local educators to a virtual conference with a focus on equity in schools as well as the launch of the Foundation's COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund for Social Service and Micro Business." said Brown. "Addressing the evolving needs of the community we serve is something I greatly look forward to, and I'm excited to continue to bring out the strength of our collective staff and institutional partners to build and sustain cohesion as we move towards a more prosperous and healthy community. I'm a leader who looks to advocate for and empower those around me. I truly believe that's the way that great things can happen."

Howard Brown kicks off the virtual Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute this summer.

Brown led the effort to create the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund, which provided community nonprofits and micro businesses with over $200,000. Brown instigated and managed efforts for the relief fund and worked alongside PAHWF staff to raise over $20,000 from individuals within the community toward the recovery fund, which remains open for contributions.

Brown will contribute to the Foundation's continued efforts to promote greater equity in the Pottstown community and will help direct a new initiative to bring outside funding into the community as the Foundation establishes a new grant writer position this fall.

"We're uniquely positioned to address our area's most pressing needs, particularly in the areas of education equity, health equity and economic equity," said Brown. "With the capabilities that a grant writer brings, we'll be able to tell our collective story to the greater world of philanthropy, to the world of corporate giving, and to government. This will allow us to leverage greater resources to provide even greater impact through the work that we do."

The Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation serves communities within a 10-mile radius of Pottstown, and works with non-profits, local government, and schools to ensure that every member of our community has the opportunity to embrace a healthy lifestyle.

Internships & Partnerships Provide Data for Park Improvements

As the world has changed due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, one silver lining has been an increase in our time spent outdoors. Pottstown area parks have seen a dramatic increase in use over the past several months, with visitors more than doubling over previous years in some locations.

Since 2019, the Foundation has been working in tandem with the Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee —or PARRC—to collect data that illustrates the importance of area parks.

"We recognized the value of getting a better understanding of the quality of the facilities and amenities," said Craig Colistra, program officer for recreation and health. "It's important to identify the needs and develop opportunities to meet those needs. This was an opportunity to go out and collect that information."

Dustin Schreiber

That's where Dustin Schreiber comes in. Schreiber began working with the Foundation this summer collecting data on park use and conducting surveys to better understand the needs of park users.

"I've been doing a lot of data collection, mainly visiting parks, counting people at parks, and collecting surveys," said Schreiber. "I've also been talking with townships about their recreation programs, doing research and compiling information on that as well."

Dustin's data collection work builds upon the effort conducted by last year's summer intern, Karleigh Cimorelli. In addition, Schreiber has been working with a volunteer doing use observations in East Coventry Township parks. She will be assisting PAARC with improving observation methods so that other volunteers can contribute to the data collection effort.

A 2017 graduate of Pottsgrove High School, Schreiber is currently earning his Masters of Public Administration and serving as a teaching assistant at the State University of New York, Albany. And since his university instruction has gone virtual this semester, Schreiber will be able continue his work for the Foundation into the fall.

Michael Lane, Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Coordinator, noted the importance of data—and the need for continued collaboration among all those working to improve recreation opportunities in the Pottstown area.

"What we were hoping to accomplish with this study was to let the PARRC members know what condition their parks were in, what users think about them and if they are allocating financial resources appropriately," said Lane. "For example, if a facility was in bad shape and wasn't being used, the study would reveal this. A municipality could then evaluate whether it should continue to maintain the facility or remove it."

This is just the beginning: future data collection will provide insight into how parks are used in fall, winter, and spring. Next steps include providing townships a framework that empowers them to perform evaluations, record observations, and partner with volunteers.

"Many municipalities have limited financial resources, and we are trying to arm them with information to allow them to make better informed decisions on how to direct those resources," said Lane. "We can also use the information to determine if there are redundant facilities, if the region needs other recreation amenities or new programs/events and to share our resources so that these needs are met and that all community members can benefit."

Among the findings so far were that the majority of park visitors are male (61%), the majority of parks visitors are adults (56%), and trails are used significantly more than other recreation spaces. The ongoing data collection effort will help identify and eliminate barriers to park use and contribute information toward the implementation of a strategic plan for area parks.

"It's important that all residents are being served," said Colistra. "If we recognize that a certain population is not being served, then we need to understand why and develop strategies to ensure that everyone has access."

Gathering in Smith Family Plaza, (from left) Foundation president Dave Kraybill, Craig Colistra, and Dustin Schreiber discuss Dustin and Craig's work to collect data at local parks over the summer and into the fall.

Board Members Reflect on Nine Years of Service

As of June 30, two long-serving members of the Board of Directors departed the Foundation's board. Each joined the board in 2011 and have helped shape the role the Foundation has played in the Pottstown area over the years.

Dr. Myra Forrest has been a force in the community for decades. A graduate of Owen J. Roberts High School, she served as the district's superintendent and later served as executive director of the Foundation for Pottstown Education. Forrest has served as the PAHWF board chair for the past three years.

Having seen the Foundation's role in the community evolve over her years of service, Forrest expects big things from the board and staff of PAHWF in the future.

"I think the Foundation's impact on the community is going to grow exponentially," said Forrest. "The board has been exceptional. The staff at the Foundation and the level of people on the board is top notch."

Forrest has vast experience working in education, and she holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration. That background helped the Foundation focus its efforts in partnering with area school districts.

"My career and education had a huge impact on what we did on the Foundation board. I have taught every level from nursery school to doctoral students. I understand students all the way through," said Forrest. "Capture them educationally when they're young—that's the time when you can really change their lives."

Myra Forrest, Todd Alderfer, and Evan Brandt of The Mercury talk over coffee at the Steel River Playhouse prior to a presentation by Urban Land Institute last fall.

Todd Alderfer, another 9-year member of the board, brought four decades of banking expertise to the Foundation and served on the Finance and Grants committee, chairing the Grants Committee for the past two years.

Throughout his time on the board, Alderfer saw the Foundation develop partnerships and collaboratives that make the Tri-County community stronger.

"So many of the nonprofits are working together now. It took some time, coaching, and encouragement," said Alderfer. "The part that we play in the community continues and gets even better."

Alderfer expressed his respect for his colleagues on the board—and all the hard work that goes into serving the community.

"This is a working board—there's a lot of material to be reviewed. When you read the material and get involved in the committee, then you know the people, you know the organizations, and you can have a voice for them," said Alderfer. "Over the years I got to meet a lot of great people. I've always felt you could voice your opinion, your thoughts, and they would listen to you."

The Foundation also welcomed a new board chair this summer, with B. Douglas Trainer, who has served on the board since 2013, taking on the leadership role. The Foundation welcomed a new member to the board, as Dr. Therese Rinaldi, a podiatrist at Foot and Ankle Health Group, affiliated with Pottstown Hospital-Tower Health, began her first term.

YWCA Series Offers Perspective on "Racism, Trauma, and What's Next"

This summer, the YWCA held a six-part series dedicated to hosting open "courageous conversations" about racism, racial justice, and social justice. The series includes webinars, book studies, and movie analyses held online. More information is available at ywcatricountyarea.org/racism-trauma-and-whats-next/, with resources available on the organization's YouTube channel. YWCA Tri-County Area is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

It's Not Too Late: 2020 Census Update

Census data collection is drawing to a close in the coming weeks, but it's not too late to make sure we're all counted. The response rate is strong in the Tri-County area, and rates in the Borough of Pottstown continue to climb. Thanks to all those who are continuing to advocate for the census and are making sure that no one goes uncounted. To learn more or complete the census, visit 2020census.gov.

"No Time to Be Tired" HBHMI Offers Lessons for the Road Ahead

This year's virtual Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute, held August 12, provided educators from around the region a chance to explore the pressing issues facing educators in the age of coronavirus—as well as an opportunity to reexamine our schools' role in creating a more just and equitable society.

To that end, Dr. Luvelle Brown, superintendent of the Ithaca, New York, School District, delivered a keynote address that drove home the need for change, especially as inequality in education continues to be magnified by the impacts of coronavirus.

"I've committed my life to being an educator—to right the wrongs that our industry has done to young people for centuries. It's hard work," said Luvelle Brown. "In the midst of this global pandemic, it's become so, so hard. The inequities that have plagued us have been highlighted."

With approximately 150 educators and school administrators in attendance, Brown provided insight on policies across the nation that cause harm to minority children and families. He offered a new approach based on love.

"This culture of love is not about feelings and emotions; it's about the habitual actions done unto someone or something," said Luvelle Brown. "There's no more space for neutrality. You're either racist or anti-racist... The anti-racists are going to have to engage in this process of self-reflection, conflict, and policy change. And policy-changing to be loving, not perpetuating the characteristics of supremacy that we've navigated so well throughout our careers."

As schools gear up for an unprecedented learning environment, new strategies and approaches will be necessary for effective teaching. Among the topics discussed throughout the day-long conference were social and emotional learning, applications of kinesthetic learning at home and at school, lifelong activities for fitness and well-being, health and safety precautions, and coping with trauma.

Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation president Dave Kraybill introduced the keynote and the conference at large, reminding the educators in attendance that they will lead the way as they step into leadership roles within their school districts.

"Many of you listening today may be stepping into Dr. Brown's shoes at some point," said Kraybill. "It can be done. It will be done. You too can shape and mold a different culture."

Senior program officer Howard Brown, who organized the virtual conference when it became apparent that an in-person gathering would be impossible, looked back on the day with an appreciation for the presenters and educators who helped make it all possible.

Dr. Luvelle Brown speaks to local educators over Zoom during the virtual 2020 Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute.

"The educators in our community are so resourceful and creative. Seeing the level of dedication that was demonstrated by our area.

District Wellness Coordinators is an inspiration." said Howard Brown. "The Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute has always been about creating a forum for sharing ideas and building relationships. Even though we couldn't get together in person, this year's conference provided a chance for real engagement, meaningful dialogue, and an incredible opportunity for professional development."

Professional development credit was obtained through our partnership with Fizika Group, LLC. Resources remain available for continuing education and professional development. More than 20 sessions remain available to view on the HBHMI google site.

As teachers walked away from the Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Institute with new insight and tools, Dr. Luvelle Brown passed along an imperative from his father to keep fighting on behalf of their students despite the challenges ahead.

"We're trying to meet the needs of our young people, but people are scared right now. I called my pops to check on him, and I said, 'Daddy I'm tired,'" recalled Luvelle Brown. "And he said to me, just like this, 'Boy, ain't no time to be tired with all that's happening and all that needs to happen.'"

Dr. Brown is the author of Culture of Love: Cultivating a Positive and Transformational Organizational Culture.

2020 Home Garden Contest

Daniel Price, Mosaic's community garden manager, presents a flagstone to Jennifer Shivak for placing first in the category of Pleasant Porch in the Borough of Pottstown.

With many of us spending more time at home this year, gardening has taken off all around the area. In addition to the health benefits of gardening, the activity also promotes a sense of community: beautifying our communities, feeding our families and neighbors, and bringing us all together around a shared love of all that grows!

Congratulations to the 2020 winners and participants!

Visit www.homegardencontest.com to see the awards video as a well as photos of the gardens of entries in Pottstown and Boyertown.

Master gardener and gardens contest committee member Gretchen Lea presents a flagstone to Karrie Miller for placing first in the category of Outdoor Oasis in the Borough of Boyertown.

BOYERTOWN

PLEASANT PORCH
1st Heidi Bauer
2nd Angela Motter
3rd Heather Raquet

GENERAL GARDEN
1st Mary Kae Coy
2nd Denise Trout

OUTDOOR OASIS
1st Karrie Miller
2nd Angie Brudke
3rd Arden Pengelly
HM Robert Day

VEGETABLE GARDEN
1st Nadine Hoffman
2nd Kim Dougherty

POTTSTOWN

YOUNG GARDENER
1st Henry & Vivienne McConnell
2nd Malcom Haigh
3rd Natalia Castillo
HM Elly Haigh
HM Brook Haigh

Certificate of Participation
Reghan Quinn

PLEASANT PORCH
1st Jennifer Shivak
2nd Joyce Allan
3rd Carol Welch
HM Larry Gribb
HM Eric Hunsberger

Certificate of Participation
Karen Carter
Megan McConnell
Linda Ruffin

GENERAL GARDEN
1st Susan Klinedinst
2nd Nichol Smith
3rd Theadoria Washington
HM Rose West
HM Heather Henry
HM Ruth Leyrer
HM Amy Bathurst Francis

Certificate of Participation
Caitlyn Botto
Stacy Cook
Madison Dutko
Sarah Finocchiaro
Diane Heverly
Sue Krause
Laura & Lily-Anne Wright

OUTDOOR OASIS
1st Kathy Buckner
2nd Suzanne Swartz
3rd Terri Stone
HM Kenneth & Julia Kummerer
HM Kristy Garcia

Certificate of Participation
Karli Bare
Ron Richael
Brenda Tharp
Betsy Sovia

VEGETABLE GARDEN
1st Barbara Rapchinski
2nd Becky Gardner
3rd Samuel Castillo
HM Joe Loftus
HM Joseph Lee

Certificate of Participation
Mary Croke
Kimberly Deppen
Marie Haigh

Foundation Initiatives & Partnerships

Grantee Perception Report

Earlier this year, the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation partnered with the Center for Effective Philanthropy and invited our grantees to provide feedback on our work in the community.

It is important to listen, and to learn from our grantees so that we can best serve the community. Grantees shared their perceptions of our impact on the community and their organizations, the quality of our interactions, and the effectiveness of our grantmaking process.

We look forward to reflecting on the feedback and sharing the results later this year.

Campaign to Save Lives

The Tri-County Health Council is working to save lives in Pottstown with a newly launched campaign that encourages Pottstown area residents to "safely get the care you need." The message comes in response to reports that individuals are neglecting to seek healthcare due to fear of contracting COVID-19.

Although the risk of acute conditions like heart attack and stroke is a focus of the campaign, it's important for residents to realize that area healthcare providers are here to help them maintain good health and manage chronic conditions as the pandemic's impacts stretch into the months ahead. Preventive health and dental visits can be life changing and are critical for detecting a chronic care disease before it begins.

Foundation COVID Fund Supports Community Needs

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation has awarded over $225,000 to support the needs of the Tri-County community. From issuing a matching grant for the Foundation for Pottstown Education's campaign for Chromebooks [link] to partnering with community nonprofits to fight food insecurity, the Foundation's board and staff continues to respond to changing needs as the pandemic's impacts evolve.

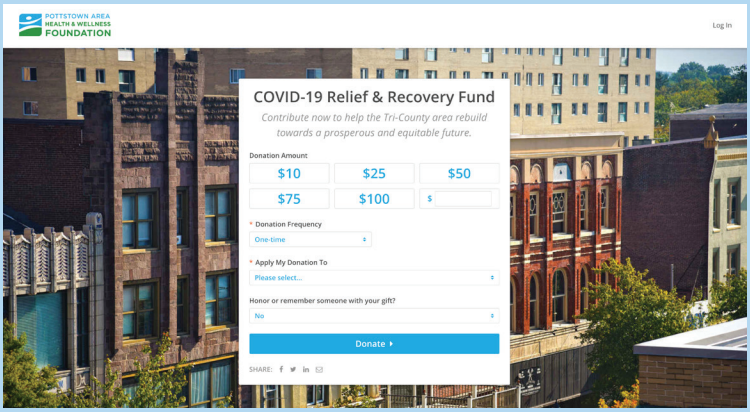
A key element of the response came in the form of the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund for Social Service and Micro Business at PAHWF. The fund combined $100,000 in Foundation dollars with community contributions totaling over $20,000, and in turn awarded small grants—up to $2,500—to micro businesses and nonprofits.

"There's an urgent need to address the impact of coronavirus in the Pottstown community head-on, especially for historically underserved populations in our service area," said Howard Brown, senior program officer.

That need to address the pandemic's impact is ongoing, and contributions to the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund are still being accepted online and by check at pottstownfoundation.networkforgood.com.

"We thank everyone who's gone out of their way so far to support their neighbors during this unprecedented time," said PAHWF philanthropy coordinator Sheri Waldman, who helped lead the fund raising effort. "Seeing the generosity of our community makes the work we do all the more rewarding."

To make use of those funds efficiently and effectively, community partnerships have been vital. Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Inc. was instrumental in implementing the micro business grants. A rapid grants advisory committee, chaired by Howard Brown, ensured that these resources made the greatest impact possible. Representatives on the committee from anchor institutions included Donald Smith of Montgomery County Community College, Casey Fenoglio and Robin McMonagle from Pottstown Hospital Tower Health, David Livengood and Jaime Parris of Pottstown School District, and Cathy Skitko and Twila Fisher of the Hill School.



The Foundation's Network for Good page allows donors in the community to contribute any amount towards the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund.

Spring 2020 Grant Round

Twice a year, the Foundation seeks grant proposals that are consistent with our identified mission of improving health outcomes in the Pottstown region. The Foundation has awarded $1,704,683 to 30 nonprofits, schools, and municipalities during the spring 2020 grant round. The grants were divided among five program areas: Healthy Behaviors-Schools, Healthy Behaviors-Parks, Healthy Behaviors-Networks, Physical and Emotional Health, and Strengthening Non-Profits.

Priority 1A: Healthy Behaviors—Schools

$1,027,610 was awarded to fund 10 projects intended to improve educational opportunities for students in public and private learning institutions.

Boyertown Area School District
Brain Body Connection

Brookeside Montessori
BWell Program

Daniel Boone Area School District
School District Wellness Programs

Owen J. Roberts School District
Fit for Life Strategic Wellness Program

Pottsgrove School District
Health & Wellness Grant Proposal

Pottstown School District
Healthy School Communities

Pottstown School District
PEAK Whole Child Wellness

Spring-Ford Area School District
Wellness Matters 2020-21

St. Aloysius Parish School
Health in Mind, Body, and Spirit

West-Mont Christian Academy
Social and Emotional Wellness

Priority 1B: Healthy Behaviors—Parks

$117,500 was awarded to fund five projects with the aim of improving parks, programming, and the built environment to increase access to physical activity.

Borough of Pottstown
Ice Skating for Everyone

Borough of Pottstown
Memorial Park Bridge and Streambank Stabilization Project

Key Grant Cycle Dates

Fall 2020
- Move Ahead Notifications: Week of Aug. 31, 2020
- Application Due: Oct. 2, 2020
- Final Approval & Declination Notifications: Week of Nov. 30, 2020
- Grant Term Start Date: Jan. 1, 2021
- Interim Report Due Date: July 15, 2021
- Final Report Due: Jan. 15, 2022

Spring 2021
- Letter of Intent Opens: Jan. 1, 2021
- Letter of Intent Due: Feb. 1, 2021

Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust
Colebrookdale Railroad Accessibility Improvements

East Coventry Township Parks and Recreation
DiBono Property Trails

North Coventry Township
Coventry Trail

Priority 1C-Healthy Behaviors—Networks

$370,948 was awarded to fund 13 projects. These projects are intended to create and promote social networks involving healthy living.

Accion Comunal Latinoamericana de Montgomery County
ACLAMO's Pottstown Community Health Connections Program

Boyertown Area Multi-Service, Inc.
Ricketts Center Programming

Expressive Therapy Concepts Inc.
Smashville Badminton: Kids and Adult Fitness Program

First Baptist Church
FBC 2020! A Strategic Future

Foundation for Boyertown Education
Organizational Sustainability and Growth

Frederick Mennonite Community
It's Never Too Late System for Dementia Care

Greater Pottstown Tennis and Learning Association
Game, Set, Advantage

Green Valleys Association
Outdoor Education Programs at Pottstown Elementary Schools

Meals on Wheels of Chester County Inc.
Feeding Homebound Residents of Spring City

Mitzvah Circle Foundation
Creating Healthy Families, Diaper Bank and Period Supplies

Project Purpose
Project Purpose: General Operating

Save Alliance Foundation (GreenAllies)
Youth Grow

United Way of Boyertown Area
Matching Grant with the United Way of Boyertown Area

Priority 2-Health Access

$43,425 was awarded for one project offering learning opportunities for physical and emotional health.

Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County
Healthy Start and Access to Benefits for Vulnerable Families in Pottstown

Priority 3-Strengthening Nonprofits

$145,200 awarded for one project offering learning opportunities & strategic planning to strengthen non-profits.

TriCounty Community Network Inc.
Community Collaborative

The Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation's community benefit report is published three times each year. All content is produced by Foundation staff unless otherwise noted. Please direct any inquiries, suggestions, or news items to John Robertson, communications assistant. Copyright©2020 Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation, 152 E. High St., Pottstown, PA 19464.