

# Improving Health Through Whitehall Makeover

## Glens Falls Hospital



The Health Promotion Center of Glens Falls Hospital (GFH) has partnered with the community of Whitehall to increase access to healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active.

Whitehall, New York is located at the southernmost end of Lake Champlain in a very rural section of Washington County. Revitalizing the area has become a municipal priority. As part of the revitalization efforts to make the community more inviting and support healthy behaviors, GFH has partnered with the municipality, community-based organizations, and the school district to adopt policies and implement place-based strategies.

## Increasing Physical Activity One Street at a Time

Physical activity is critical for health. Walking and biking for transportation is not only great for daily physical activity, it is a cost-effective way to travel. Creating safe and meaningful opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily life can begin to reverse generational trends in poor health.

Unfortunately, many streets in Whitehall are unsafe for residents to walk or bike. Main streets such as Williams Street, where retail stores and recreation facilities are located, lack features like crosswalks and bike lanes that encourage walking and biking. Rather, their wide lanes and large intersections were built to accommodate cars, often at fast speeds.

GFH introduced Complete Streets—a movement to build proper crosswalks, traffic-calming devices, signage, and more—to municipal staff and community members. A Complete Streets Resolution was adopted in 2017 to demonstrate the Village and Town's

commitment to increasing safe, active transport. To help garner decision-makers' and the public's support to implement strategies aligned with the Complete Streets Resolution, GFH has planned a Complete Streets Demonstration.



Layout of Whitehall's Complete Streets Demonstration

In September 2018, Williams Street will have temporary speed bumps, signage, crosswalks, and a mock-rotary to show local decision-makers and community members how the area could promote active transportation to benefit the community.

## Schools—the Hub for Health and Academics

Youth spend most of their day at school, underlining the important role schools have in supporting health. A healthy school environment is shaped by a school wellness policy which can be an effective way to implement and sustain guidelines.

The momentum to create a healthier community, and support provided by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) and GFH, resulted in a recently revised policy at Whitehall Central School District (WCSD), including the establishment of a committee dedicated to wellness. Efforts to support the wellness

policy, and to ensure students have opportunities to engage in physical activity and healthy eating have also been implemented. With CHSC funding, large stencils were purchased to transform the playground. Now during recess, students can engage in active play on the newly painted games (e.g., hopscotch, Mirror Me, Four Square courts, and a fitness circuit resembling a treasure map). Staff can also use the updated space to teach math-based lessons that get students outside and moving during otherwise sedentary class time.



Students using the Mirror Me stencil



Students using the Treasure Map fitness circuit

The stenciled Math & Movement mats are a continuation of CHSC supported Math & Movement Family Night, which offered students and their families a fun, interactive opportunity to practice multiplication, sentence building, telling time and counting skills while being active.

*“The students really enjoy the stencils. It is something new and fun for them to do during recess time.” WCSD staff member*

## An Apple a Day...

Fruits and vegetables are the foundation to a healthy diet. After all, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Unfortunately, Whitehall lacks larger grocery stores, limiting access to fruits and vegetables. GFH has collaborated with both the community and the school to ensure Whitehall residents have easier access to healthy foods.

Beginning in 2016, through a multi-agency collaboration, a Free Mobile Food Pantry began making weekly visits to various locations within the community to provide fruits and vegetables at no cost to all community members. Since its inception, the Free Mobile Food Pantry has distributed 17,557 pounds of food to 2,429 households throughout Washington County, including Whitehall.

Finally, with the support of the WCSD Food Service Director and teachers, promotional activities were implemented to ensure students took advantage of the school breakfast program.

With CHSC, GFH has supported Whitehall’s efforts to revitalize the community in a way that promotes healthy lifestyles.



**to learn more...**

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**Creating Healthy Schools and Communities**

*The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.*