

# Village of Boonville Prioritizes Health



## Oneida Herkimer Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services

Oneida Herkimer Madison Board of Cooperative Education Services (OHM BOCES) and its partner Oneida County Health Department are working with the community to increase demand for and access to opportunities to eat healthy and be physically active in the Village of Boonville.

Libraries and community centers anchor rural communities. They attract and influence a large portion of residents because they offer free services and activities. In Boonville, the Erwin Library & Institute and the Dodge-Pratt-Northam Community Center are dedicated to serving community members but, like their counterparts in many small towns, have limited budgets and lack other resources to fund health initiatives.

### Partnering to Promote Health

This year, the Oneida County Health Department Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) worked with both the library and the community center to adopt a healthy snacks policy to ensure that all foods and beverages served at youth events (e.g., after-school programs) are healthy and comply with the New York State Department of Health Healthy Heart Program standards. CHSC funding also supported the implementation of the policy by giving staff blenders to make healthy snacks like low-sugar Greek yogurt smoothies.

To round out the health initiatives, CHSC funding was used to stock the library and community center with nutrition education materials like books, board games, puzzles, and ChooseMyPlate placemats. Also this year, a nutrition workshop for seniors led by a dietician from Boonville was held at the community center. The workshop was well attended and received so the community center has committed to providing



JoAnn Ballard slices fresh tomatoes at the spring senior nutrition workshop at the Dodge-Pratt-Northam Community Center

*“Our initial organizational goal is to incorporate educational activities that focus on nutrition in our programs, and offer opportunities to practice healthier choices.” JoAnn Ballard, Dodge-Pratt-Northam Community Center director*

### Moving around Boonville

In addition to the library and community center, schools and retail stores should be easy to get to. However, many Boonville streets lack sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes, making it dangerous and sometimes impossible for residents to walk and bike to these important destinations. In 2017, the Village of Boonville passed a Complete Streets resolution to demonstrate its commitment to safe roads for all users—including pedestrians and bicyclists—of all ages and abilities.

Complete Streets help residents to be more physically active, reduce roadside crashes, create local jobs, and stimulate the economy. Despite these benefits, Complete Streets is a departure from the norm in small, rural communities in which people are accustomed to driving, so it can be difficult for residents to understand and support the concept.

The Oneida County Health Department, using CHSC funding, partnered with HealthConnections to bring Mark Fenton, a national public health planning and transportation expert to Boonville to conduct a walk audit that would illustrate the benefits of Complete Streets. Mr. Fenton led 20 people from 14 organizations along Boonville streets, highlighting facilitators and barriers to walking and biking. The walk facilitated connections between several organizations, each with resources that could be pooled to make improvements to encourage walking or rolling to popular destinations. Two in particular that were identified were Main Street and Erwin Park.

In recognition of the benefits of biking, community center staff secured a local grant to provide 112 youth with bicycle helmets and lights. The health department further encouraged bicycling and safety by using CHSC funds to purchase and install a bike rack in front of the community center.

As a result of the relationships that have been cultivated through CHSC, the Village of Boonville will continue to support the health and wellbeing of residents and will work to implement infrastructure changes to make the built environment conducive to healthy behaviors.



**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.*