

# St. Johnsbury and Newport Health Districts Community Projects

February 14, 2023

**Backbone Organization:** Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC)

**Website:**

<https://nekprosper.org/resources-tools/nek-community-health-equity/community-grants/>

**St. Johnsbury's Data-Driven Problem/Opportunity Statement:**

Due to stigma, marginalization and systemic inequalities, not everyone in Caledonia and Southern Essex Counties has fair and just opportunity to prosper (be financially secure, mentally healthy, physically healthy, well-housed and well-nourished), nor safe, accessible and inclusive opportunities to participate in planning and decision-making about the health and well-being of themselves, their families and their communities. This is true particularly for those experiencing stigma, marginalization and avoidable systemic inequalities including those associated with socioeconomic status; race, ethnicity and culture; sexual orientation and gender identity; visible and invisible disabilities; trauma, mental health and substance misuse disorders, and justice-involvement.

**St. Johnsbury's Community Aspiration:**

We aspire to build our collective and community capacity to dismantle systemic inequality and marginalization, foster community leadership and community-driven solutions and ensure fair and just opportunity to health and prosperity.

**Newport's Data-Driven Problem/Opportunity Statement:**

We are not providing the right mental health/substance misuse care, at the right place at the right time, every time and too many in our community are getting stuck at the wrong level of care/ wrong care location. This is frustrating, costly, and ineffective.

**Newport's Community Aspiration:**

We envision a vibrant, thriving, safe and inclusive Orleans and Northern Essex community. We work collaboratively toward our shared vision: building on the strengths of our community; honoring voice and choice; and fostering health and wellness, dignity and respect. We work to ensure that everyone living in Orleans/No. Essex has easy access to person-centered and coordinated mental health and substance misuse services that are timely, close to home, at the appropriate level and with the appropriate transition supports for continued success in a person's home community.

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## **St. Johnsbury VDH Health District**

### **Stacy Thrall Coaching**

Building capacity within our community to support health-equity coaches and advocates who are sharing their lived experiences to bring about positive change. We'll do so by 1) providing six community leaders with coaching certification training from Living Proof Advocacy and 2) providing six community health-equity advocates training on how to share stories from their lived experiences to bring about positive change.

### **The Center for an Agricultural Economy and the Civic Standard**

The Center for an Agricultural Economy and The Civic Standard will provide materials and staff time necessary for a range of food-based community programs and offerings in the town of Hardwick and at Hazen Union high school. The programs would be implemented by the Center for an Agricultural Economy in partnership with a new cultural organization, the Civic Standard. Programs would take place through an elective class at the highschool, at the Civic's community hub on Main Street in Hardwick, and at events and public venues around town.

### **St. Johnsbury Community Hub**

We will directly impact mental, physical and emotional health throughout Caledonia and Southern Essex counties by improving our community's overall sense of wellbeing and health through activities, relationship building, and nourishing the mind and body. The St. Johnsbury Community Hub will use activity-based opportunities to intentionally build positive self-esteem, life skills, address financial stability and use various forms of movement through the use of local spaces, places and resources.

### **Project Phoenix**

Supporting work as an Equity Ambassador (to provide more adequate compensation and appropriate work environment to be part of community efforts and coalitions while facing systemic adversity). It will also fund a Cooperative Economic Consultant and Community Organizer to organize and discuss, design, and implement cooperative solutions and pathways to address systemic barriers to thriving communities. This project aims to organize and work with existing institutions and local efforts, improve and transition existing systems, and research and establish the missing pieces.

## **Newport VDH Health District**

### **Journey to Recovery Community Center (JTRCC)**

JTRCC is working to reduce the frequency of fatal and non-fatal overdoses in the Orleans/Northern Essex region. Behavioral health patients are discharged from North Country Hospital's emergency department when they no longer meet medical criteria to stay, whether or not the patient has a safety plan or is at risk for a fatal overdose. The social detox bed at JTRCC will give patients the opportunity to create a solid safety plan and/or a safe place to rest while awaiting admission to residential care.

### **NEK Collaborative and Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO)**

The NEK Collaborative and Northeast Kingdom Organizing (NEKO) are working to steward a variety of initiatives to complement the existing work of the Working Communities Challenge, which is based on reducing generational poverty through increases in social capital, community engagement, and access to health and other resources. Our project is driven by relationships and our goal is to build leadership in these communities that will then build a movement of other engaged community members working towards equitable, community-driven solutions.

### **Market Decisions Research**

Helping Vibrant ONE to accurately document the experience of individuals as they journey through the NEK behavioral health system of care as well as the critical decision points or system constraints that providers face as they try to help navigate an individual's treatment through the current system of care. Additionally, MDR will help document all the services and assets within our current system.

## St. Johnsbury and Newport VDH Health Districts

### Powered Magazine

COVID-revealed disparities in healthcare in BIPOC communities are no longer possible to ignore. Powered Magazine was founded in October of 2020 to be part of a solution to promote the health of BIPOC, and launched our pilot program to provide opportunities for BIPOC to actively engage in the outdoors as Vermont was entering its first winter of shelter in place (isolation) due to the pandemic. Because BIPOC continues to be under-represented, under-resourced, and under-acknowledged in the outdoors due to a long history of racism, exclusion, and oppression in the white-dominated outdoors, Powered is partnering with established organizations and businesses to remove barriers to education, economic, and social structure for BIPOC so that BIPOC can actively engage in outdoor activities, learn and feel the health benefits and the joy in reconnecting with the outdoors.

### Umbrella, Inc

Creating and providing a prevention-oriented, confidential warm line service specifically designed to be as accessible as possible to any member of the NEK impacted by domestic violence (DV), no matter their physical location (rurality), criminal location (where they are at in a criminal proceeding), or social location (marginalization or stigmatization). Typically, interrupting domestic violence means involving the criminal justice system and oftentimes takes place after acts of violence have already happened. For marginalized and stigmatized individuals in our community, such as those who misuse substances or People of Color, involving the criminal justice system is not a safe or realistic option and so instances of violence go uninterrupted and cycles of violence remain unbroken. This project is supported by a 3 month NEK accountability needs assessment in which we gathered feedback that speaks to the desire and demand for this kind of service, and it centers the participation and feedback of POC and those with lived experience of DV, and accountability via their participation on the project's Advisory Committee.

### Vermont Learning Support Initiative (VLSI)

Piloting NEK-wide community- and school-based efforts to engage with and support local neurodivergent learners and their families, through afterschool programming for middle-school students and regular family-inclusive meetings featuring discussions, presentations, and affirming activities. We will also expand our efforts to the same population in the St. Johnsbury area. By sharing experiences and finding common ground, our goal is to promote self-esteem and resilience in parents and their youth, who know the painful reality of being marginalized and stigmatized because they learn differently. To learn more about neurodiversity, [visit this webpage](#).