Members of Common Ground’s three health coalitions, representing more than 50 organizations, built the relationships and consensus that make health improvement possible. More on page 19.
"INDIVIDUALLY WE ARE ONE DROP. TOGETHER WE ARE AN OCEAN."

- RYUNOSUKE SATORO, JAPANESE WRITER
Many of the health challenges confronting the Finger Lakes region are impossible for any one organization to solve alone. That’s why we bring together leaders to build common ground on strategies for improving health. Health care systems, government, education, nonprofits—all have a seat at our tables.

**REGIONAL REACH AND MORE**

Located in Rochester, N.Y., Common Ground is the state-designated Population Health Improvement Program (PHIP) for the nine Finger Lakes counties of Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates. But our influence extends well beyond those borders. In recent years, we have partnered with the New York Department of Health to provide technical support for the 10 other PHIPs across the state. Similarly, we provide training for medical practices across New York through the Practice Transformation Network and other programs.

**DATA DRIVEN APPROACH**

Research and analysis are at the heart of community health improvement, grounding discussions and programs in a fact-based understanding of the issues. Common Ground maintains the region’s most comprehensive collection of health and health care data and provides the expertise needed to make sense of that information. We document trends and measure progress for programs and the region as a whole. We drill down into the data to understand and bring attention to health inequities faced by marginalized communities in rural and urban areas alike.

**BACKBONE SUPPORT FOR HEALTH TRANSFORMATION**

With a team of more than 40 analysts, clinicians, policy experts, community engagement specialists and other staff, Common Ground has built the capacity needed to spearhead health improvement initiatives for underserved populations, including programs to improve clinical care, to address chronic illness and to support the physical and cognitive health of children. We also power up efforts led by other partners, lending measurement expertise, connecting players and providing leadership insights. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Common Ground operated with a budget of $6.3 million in fiscal year 2018-19, funded through federal, state and county governments, private foundations and health insurers.

**2018 BY THE NUMBERS**

- **41% DROP** in the rate of adults with blood pressure of 160/100 or higher since 2010
- **55 NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS**, churches, libraries and other organizations creating safe, active play spaces in 2018
- **50 PARTNERS** from Steuben, Schuyler and Chemung counties on the Central Southern Tier Health Alliance
- **160 MEDICAL PRACTICES** assisted with quality improvement in 2018
- **$13.8 MILLION SAVED IN ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS** through CTAAB reviews from 2015 to 2018
- **6855 MY HEALTH STORY SURVEYS** completed in 2018
- **225 DATA VISUALIZATIONS** shared in the 2018 Health Equity Chartbook
- **1200 SIGNATURES** on a petition asking city council to put kids first in its updated comprehensive plan
- **245 ORGANIZATIONS** on 25 cross-sector tables in 2018
- **$30.3 MILLION FOR CLINICAL INNOVATION** in our nine-county region since 2012
- **2018 SIGNATURES** on a petition asking city council to put kids first in its updated comprehensive plan
Community leader and New York State Regent Wade Norwood succeeded Trilby de Jung as CEO of Common Ground in July 2018.

Formerly chief strategy officer, Norwood brings to the position more than three decades of service in public office, education and regional health improvement. Common Ground’s board of directors unanimously approved his appointment.

“We are exceedingly fortunate to have among the ranks such a trusted and inspirational leader as Wade Norwood,” said Marilyn Dollinger, board chair. “As we seek to more effectively address poverty, poor housing, lack of education and other social determinants of health, we need a person with exactly Wade’s strengths—someone who can mobilize the community and bring us together to solve important health challenges.”

In Common Ground management since 2006, Norwood has been central to the strategic direction of the nonprofit and a consistent advocate for those most at risk. He is well respected regionally and statewide, noted Dollinger. He co-chairs the state’s workgroup on the health care workforce, serves on the Board of Regents and has deep and positive relationships with key offices in Albany, thanks to his two decades in state politics before joining Common Ground.

Closer to home, Norwood plays a leadership role on Systems Integration, a local cross-sector effort to integrate services and data for families impacted by poverty. He has a seat at the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Commission and is a decision maker for All Kids Thrive, a cross-sector initiative developing innovative early childhood interventions through Medicaid and education funding.

A leader in Rochester’s faith community, he is president and senior pastor at the Holy Jerusalem Spiritual Church.

Trilby de Jung served as Common Ground CEO from 2014, leading a team of 40 data analysts, clinicians, researchers, community engagement specialists and other staff. Prior to joining the nonprofit, de Jung directed health advocacy work at the Empire Justice Center, served on the faculty at New York University School of Law, and was deputy director of policy at the AIDS Institute of the New York State Department of Health.

“As we seek to more effectively address poverty, poor housing, lack of education and other social determinants of health, we need a person with exactly Wade’s strengths—someone who can mobilize the community and bring us together to solve important health challenges.”

— Marilyn Dollinger, Common Ground board chair
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<th>JANUARY</th>
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<td>Common Ground begins tracking and analyzing data for clinical depression and pediatric asthma to support Monroe County Medical Society’s efforts to improve the way primary care and pediatric practices handle these illnesses.</td>
<td>Common Ground wraps up a series of policy alerts and meetings to ensure a regional voice in the state’s health care Regulatory Modernization Initiative.</td>
<td>Prevention Agenda video encourages residents to provide feedback on the state’s six-year plan for improving health, helping to generate more than 1,000 responses from the Finger Lakes region.</td>
<td>Common Ground launches free coaching services to help medical practices meet the state’s new Patient Center Medical Home recognition. By the end of 2018, 60 practices enroll.</td>
<td>The Central Southern Tier Health Alliance begins its second year, focusing on early childhood and chronic disease among the unemployed and underemployed.</td>
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**2018:**

**A YEAR OF POPULATION HEALTH IMPROVEMENT**

**JULY**

We wish a fond farewell to Trilby de Jung, CEO of Common Ground Health since 2014. She led a team of 40 employees and oversaw major federal, state and local grants before handing the leadership baton to Wade Norwood.

**AUGUST**

More than 30 sites across the city of Rochester participate in PlayROCs Your Neighborhood, which transforms underutilized areas into play spaces for the day.

**SEPTEMBER**

The My Health Story survey closes with responses from 6,855 residents about their health and the barriers they face to staying well.

**OCTOBER**

Common Ground’s Healthy Equity Chartbook documents the heavy toll of poverty and race-related disparities on health with more than 200 graphs, maps and charts.

**NOVEMBER**

A short movie about the Complete Streets Makeover of Parsells Avenue and Greeley Street debuts at the Little Theatre, showcasing this creative way to test street enhancements that could make roads more welcoming for walkers and cyclists.

**DECEMBER**

With the publication of a 10-year retrospective, our High Blood Pressure Collaborative celebrates its programs and progress, including a 41 percent drop in dangerously high hypertension rates since 2010.
HEALTHI KIDS EXPANDS TO WHOLE CHILD HEALTH

For the past decade, Common Ground’s Healthi Kids Coalition has focused on children reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, advocated for more physical activity in schools and better food in schools and neighborhoods, and called for safer, more accessible play areas and streets.

Thanks to continued partnership with the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, the coalition’s approach to children’s health is growing broader to include the social, emotional and cognitive health of kids birth through age 8. Part of the Health Foundation’s new Healthy Futures Strategy, this expansion aims to increase and improve health and well-being for kids and families, including promoting healthy environments for development.

Healthi Kids will work to change policies, systems and barriers to health that families face, building on its links with schools, communities and families in Monroe County.

The Health Foundation chose this approach to child health to look at kids as whole people, said Dina Faticone, Common Ground Health’s director of community health and engagement. “We will build on what we have learned through our healthy weight work to impact that crucial early childhood foundation.

Research has shown that in the first few years of life, more than 1 million neuro-connections form every second. “Those first few years are the building blocks for healthy development.”

Studies have found stress from bad experiences in childhood can disrupt brain development. This often happens in parts of the brain that help us plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle tasks. This damage can harm learning, behavior and physical and mental health, but protective factors – such as a good relationship with a caring adult – may turn around a bad experience, Faticone noted.

Other strategies include building healthy relationships and habits and teaching skills and competencies. Others involve creating secure environments and psychological safety.

By focusing on the whole child, Healthi Kids hopes to see long-term gains in children and in our communities.
CAFÉS ASK, ‘WHAT PREVENTS YOU FROM EATING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS?’

In October 2017, Common Ground Health dedicated itself to the Food and Health Connection project, an ongoing exploration of the disconnect between our region’s agricultural abundance and the high rates of diet-related health issues in many of our communities. Together with partners at S2ay Rural Health Network, Foodlink and a steering committee of local experts, the project is seeking to learn more about the access that different communities have to fruits and vegetables, and how these varying levels of access are connected to rates of diet-related illnesses.

During the past year, Common Ground hosted six community cafés in nine Finger Lakes counties. Based on the world café model commonly used in social sciences, these gatherings brought people together in a casual group setting to break bread and have a conversation about specific issues. In this case, the conversations were focused on the participants’ access to, and regular consumption of, fruits and vegetables.

Participants were drawn from specific groups, such as parents with school-aged children, regional public health directors, academics, other non-profit organizations or partners in regional health initiatives. In November, a café took place with church leaders from Common Ground’s health ministry program.

The groups revealed that the obstacles are complex. For example, when people are used to a certain kind of diet that doesn’t include many fruits and vegetables, they need to make a conscious effort to change what they eat — three meals a day and all the snacks in between. For many, that can add up to a lot of choices and decisions that require time and energy, and it can feel overwhelming.

Creative approaches inspiring residents to increase their vegetable consumption across the region will be highlighted in the final report.

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HEALTH CENTER ACHIEVES PATIENT-CENTERED MILESTONE

Three years ago, before the community health center His Branches partnered with Common Ground Health, this was a typical scenario:

Moments into a patient’s visit, Medical Director Dr. Matthew Mack would realize he didn’t have the MRI results he needed. He’d then dart to the front of the office to find out where they were. A secretary would search for, and ultimately find, them — just in time for the patient’s visit to end. The center’s two locations, in the 19th Ward and Beechwood neighborhoods, experienced similar challenges.

“It was planned chaos all day long and across the board,” says Sue Swift, who serves as a quality improvement advisor on Common Ground’s practice transformation team. She worked with staff at both locations on providing comprehensive care before, during and after patient visits.

His Branches’ relationship with Swift as a consultant introduced critical strategies and skills to the safety-net practice. As a result, the center reduced wait times, stretched follow-up visits from 15 to 20 minutes, improved patient outcomes, and implemented a host of other care enhancements.

Those quality improvements recently helped His Branches earn renewal as a New York Patient-Centered Medical Home, recognition that the practice is using a holistic, patient-centered approach and is committed to continuous improvement. Research shows that practices using the medical home model benefit from lower health care costs, improved patient experience and better health outcomes.

Using metrics to track its entire patient population, rather than only focusing on those who show up for appointments, the center has a much broader perspective and greater ability to close gaps in care.

Perhaps the biggest impact has come from establishing care teams, each one comprised of a provider, a nurse, and a patient advocate. The teams meet 30 minutes before the first patient appointment to plan out the day with intention. These huddles ease tension for staff and for patients — the majority of whom are uninsured, qualify for Medicaid, or are otherwise vulnerable — especially when emergencies arise.
Josephine Mayfield is at Majestic Hair Design in Irondequoit for a wash and roller set. But owner Debbie Wise is slipping in another service—a blood pressure screening—for free while Mayfield is under the hair dryer.

Wise stares at the digital blood pressure monitor. Mayfield closes her eyes, cups her hands in her lap and breathes slowly. The numbers stop flashing.

“173 over 116,” Wise says.

Mayfield grimaces. She’d confessed at the beginning of her appointment to skipping her blood pressure medicine this morning, but now adds new information.

“I think I might’ve missed two or three days,” she answers.

Wise stays encouraging, congratulating her for speaking up. “Before you leave, I’m going to get you some literature.”

Debbie Wise is one of nine hair salon and barber shop owners who have become community health educators, people who have been trained to take blood pressures, encourage clients to see their doctors if the readings are higher than normal, and pass out health-related material. They are part of a group of 25 stylists and barbers in the Rochester area who offer blood pressure monitoring as part of a communitywide health campaign supported by Trillium Health and the High Blood Pressure Collaborative.

Salons and barbershops are ideal places to raise awareness about health disparities in African American and Latino communities, says Phyllis Jackson, the community wellness project manager at Common Ground Health.

Cassandra McCrea-June, who owns Diva Defined in Rochester, puts it this way: “Everything gets shared in the chair.”

The community health educators are paid a stipend and required to spend 10 hours on education every week, with at least two of those hours dedicated to blood pressure screenings. They document their findings and follow-up with clients on their next visit. They also attend monthly meetings to learn new information from guest speakers, take refresher courses, and plan events.
Chartbook documents the heavy toll of poverty on health

Completing the most comprehensive examination to date of health disparities across the nine-county Finger Lakes region, Common Ground Health’s updated Health Equity Chartbook used data analysis from multiple sources to understand health inequities and to inform efforts to eliminate them.

While the data showed that poverty is a key driver of health problems and inequity and that poverty affects all racial and ethnic groups, health outcomes for African Americans are generally significantly worse than socioeconomic status alone would predict.

Race and ethnicity had been looked at in earlier reports, but this was the first time Common Ground Health explored the impact of socioeconomic status and geography on health outcomes as well. This deeper dive found that African Americans have a 74 percent higher premature mortality rate than whites, and at every socioeconomic status level, African Americans have significantly worse premature mortality rates than their white and Latino peers, a disparity largely due to heart disease.

The 185-page charbook is a free public resource for use in presentations, grants, reports and other efforts to improve health. To further explore the barriers to optimum health, Common Ground Health also conducted a community health equity survey – My Health Story 2018. More than 6,800 people completed the survey, including 1,208 people making less than $25,000 per year.

Health impact assessments prove to be an effective planning tool

Common Ground Health and the Genesee Transportation Council produced two Health Impact Assessments looking at the potential health benefits of bike sharing and of better utilization of the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park, a 90-mile corridor spanning from Rochester to almost the Pennsylvania border. These large studies give policy makers and planners the tools they need to incorporate health concerns into transportation assets.

Based on an innovative analysis of illness rates in neighborhoods, the bike share report recommended placing new bike share stations in census tracts with the poorest health outcomes and near grocery stores, parks and other community resources to encourage active transportation. The bike share assessment was the outgrowth of an 18-month process involving community input, data analysis and a review of national best practices.

Zagster, the national leader in bike-share programs and the local provider in Rochester, held up the HIA as a “great example of the value of using an HIA.” The company adopted many of the HIA recommendations, including reducing fees for riders with an EBT card and prioritizing placement of new bike stations using the HIAs chronic disease census maps.

To promote more physical activity along the Greenway, the Greenway HIA recommended analyzing data from newly installed trail counters, in part to document the relationship between trail use and trail conditions. It also suggested new trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes and public-transit stops to attract new users, along with developing ADA-compliant grade/trail surface conditions at all road crossings. Download the HIAs at CommonGroundHealth.org/publications.
Common Ground helps practices continuously improve

Common Ground's Practice Transformation team assists medical practices in developing a team-based, continuous improvement model that research has shown improves outcomes and the patient experience, increases provider and patient satisfaction, and lowers costs. In 2018, Common Ground's practice transformation team assisted approximately 100 practices with quality improvement through the federally-funded New York State Practice Transformation Network.

In addition, the team helped 60 practices meet Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) standards for New York state, including 34 practices from UR Medicine, 24 private practices and two Federally Qualified Health Centers. PCMH recognition requires practices to master a number of skills, including streamlining operations, using team huddles to prepare for patient visits and tracking patient data to improve overall outcomes and guide quality improvement efforts. Through a state grant, Common Ground provided PCMH consulting at no cost to practices.

To provide regional feedback to New York state on the PCMH requirements, Common Ground convenes the Regional Oversight and Management Committee (ROMC), which brings together representatives from insurance companies, ACOs, government, business, providers and other groups.

For lead doctors and practice managers in both programs, the practice transformation team developed a series of 12 leadership sessions. The curriculum covered such topics as implementing change in an organization, modeling leadership to create a strong team culture, and comparing methods to enhance a culture of change.

Healthi Kids promotes active transportation, safe streets and the power of play

In addition to expanding its change agenda to focus on the whole child, the Healthi Kids initiative continued to advocate for more physical activity in schools, better food in schools and neighborhoods, and safer, more accessible play areas.

In September, the Healthi Kids team partnered with Reconnect Rochester and 10 other organizations on a creative way to make neighborhood roads more welcoming and safer for walkers and cyclists. The “Complete Streets Makeover” temporarily transformed Parsells Ave. at Greeley St. from a high-speed straightaway to a pedestrian friendly oasis, with realigned curbs, public art and a colorful mural and crosswalks. City and county officials will study the response to the changes to determine if the new streetscape should become permanent.

Healthi Kids also partnered with 20 organizations to spearhead the Drive 2B Better multimedia education effort to improve street safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. This campaign aims to address the prevalence of motor vehicle-pedestrian/bicyclist accidents, as nearly 4,000 injuries and deaths involving motor vehicles and bicyclists/pedestrians occurred in Rochester from 2010 to 2017. The campaign focuses on the “three s’s of safe driving”: slowing down, scanning for pedestrians, and spacing vehicles at least three feet away from bicyclists when passing. Through the Drive 2B Better website (drive2Bbetter.com), more than 2,002 people learned about safe driving.

In September, families from Rochester’s Beechwood neighborhood partnered with Healthi Kids and other organizations to create a painted Story Walk at Sully Branch Library and the Thomas P. Ryan R-Center. The playful design, with sunflowers, corn, pumpkins and other plants, encourages visitors to play foursquare, hopscotch and skip into and out of the library and R-Center.
For the past decade, the High Blood Pressure Collaborative has worked to prevent stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and other complications of hypertension through initiatives in clinical and community settings, including churches, salons and barbershops. Through these efforts and interventions by others—such as incentives for clinicians through the hospital systems and cigarette bans by local pharmacies—the rate for adults with dangerously high blood pressure of 160/100 millimeters of mercury or higher has declined 41 percent across the Finger Lakes region since 2010.

As of June 2018, the percent of residents with hypertension who have their high blood pressure controlled—lowered to 140/90 millimeters of mercury or less—reached 78.8 percent, up from 71.3 percent in 2010.

Common Ground tracks results through the nation’s first community-wide high blood pressure registry based on de-identified clinical data from the region’s two major hospital systems, as well as independent practices. In 2018, the registry grew to include data from 202,970 patients.

The collaborative is supported through a partnership between the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and Common Ground. Its focus on reaching out to residents where they live, work and worship and supporting meaningful relationships with one’s medical team has created a model for preventing and supporting many chronic illnesses.
“Ubuntu is a Bantu word that roughly translated means ‘I am who I am because I have us.’ Common Ground Health is what it is because of our relationship with our partners. On the strength of those connections, on the strength of our ability to find common ground together, we can move our whole community.”

- Wade S. Norwood, CEO Common Ground Health

Community members celebrating the PlayROCs campaign. Led by Healthi Kids, the collaborative initiative works to make Rochester’s neighborhoods safe and accessible for playing, biking, and walking.

Photo: L. A. Murdock Photo, LLC