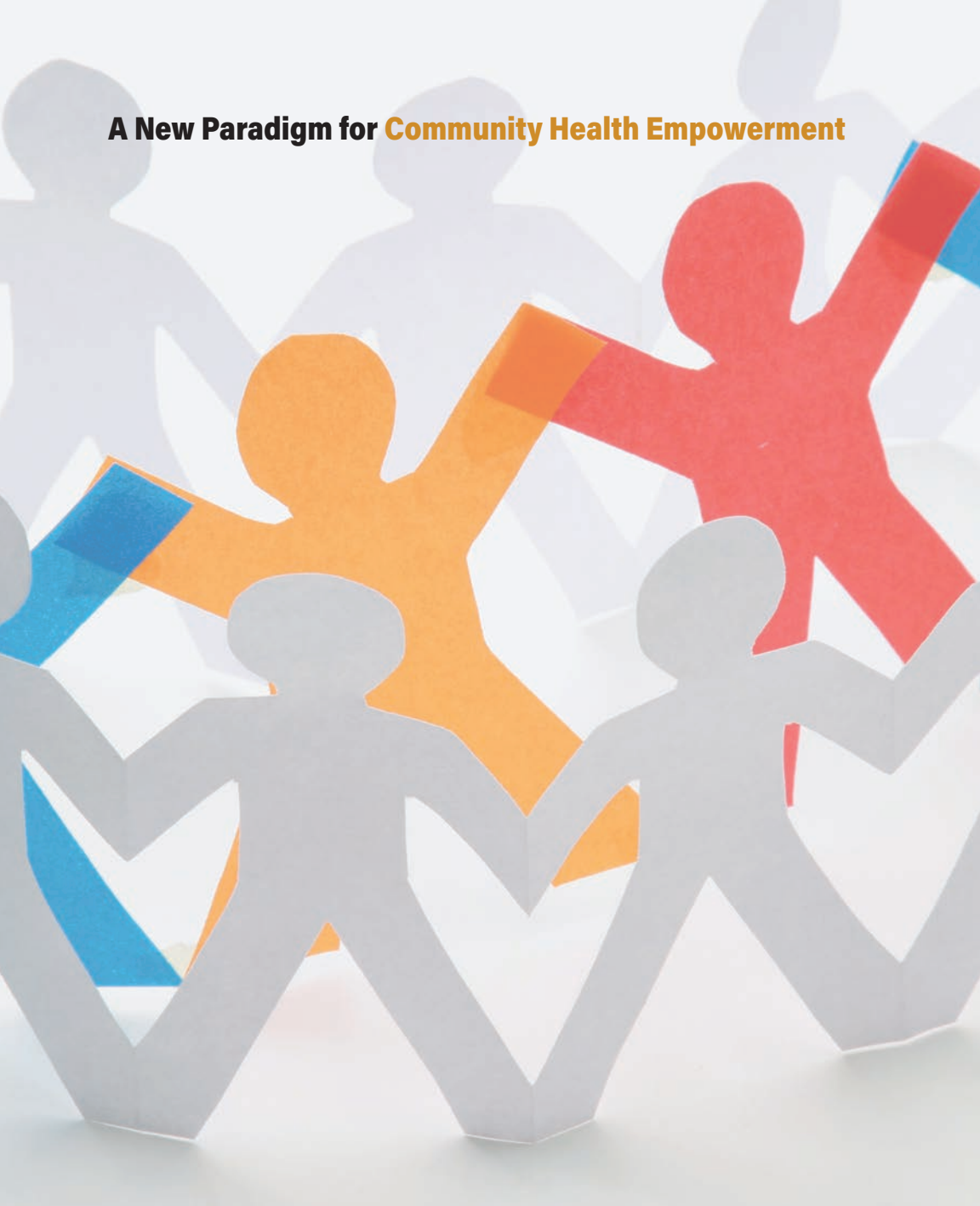


A graphic illustration of several stylized human figures made of paper, holding hands in a circle. The figures are in various colors: grey, orange, red, and blue. Some figures are in the foreground, while others are in the background, creating a sense of depth. The figures are holding hands, symbolizing community and support.

## **A New Paradigm for Community Health Empowerment**

**The Center for Health Excellence  
and Community Empowerment**

**Annual Report in Brief 2026**

**Empowering community  
by creating new  
collaborations with trusted  
partners, teaching and  
creating new systems to  
support research.**



**Participants at CHECE Inaugural  
Collaborative Research Symposium**

# Community Research & Empowerment Programming 2025-26

- ◆ Senior Connect Digital Literacy Training (multi-site)
- ◆ Living Your Best Life: A New Paradigm for Community Engagement
- ◆ Breathe Easy: Educating, Empowering, and Uniting Communities Against Menthol
- ◆ Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership Launch
- ◆ CHECE All Community Meeting
- ◆ CHECE Inaugural Collaborative Research Symposium & Service Awards
- ◆ Opening Plenary “The Revitalization of Newark: A Story of Resilience & Hope” at “Leading and Learning Toward a Future for All—A 25th Social Equity Leadership Conference (SELC) Anniversary Celebration”
- ◆ Training Future Community Leaders: A Project-based Approach at Rutgers–Newark—2026 ASPA Annual Conference
- ◆ Strengthening Community-Academic Partnerships Through the Community Scientist Program: “The Kiosk Project”—Translational Science 2026 Conference
- ◆ New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science (NJ ACTS) CTSA Presentation

## BY THE NUMBERS

**40+**

**COMMUNITY  
PARTNERS**

**4**

**COMMUNITY FOCUSED  
RESEARCH DISSEMINATION  
PROGRAMS**

**60+**

**CITIZEN  
SCIENTISTS  
TRAINED**

**800+**

**NUMBER OF  
RESIDENTS  
SERVED**



RUTGERS-NEWARK

Center for Health Excellence  
and Community Empowerment

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## Transdisciplinary Intergenerational Community Engagement Model (TICEM)

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**Involve community  
representation in all  
stages of program  
development and/or  
research design and  
implementation**

**1**

**Build trust  
between  
stakeholders**

**2**

**Leverage existing  
resources and  
opportunities**

**3**

**Foster reciprocity  
among stakeholders**

**4**

**Promote sustainable  
relationships and  
partnerships**

**5**

**Harness  
opportunities for  
intergenerational  
interaction  
to promote  
sustainability**

**6**

**Acknowledge and  
embrace value and  
encourage mutual  
respect among all  
parties**

**7**

**Integrate  
expertise brought  
by the various  
stakeholders**

**8**

**Address context  
and stimulate  
transformative  
change**

**9**

**Align goals &  
actions to produce  
usable information  
for all**

**10**

**Engage neutral  
conveners to  
reduce biases and  
ensure smooth  
and effective  
implementation**

**11**



# Community Matters

**C**HECE's signature Transdisciplinary Intergenerational Community Engagement Model (TICEM) promotes sustainable community empowerment using 11 tested principles—such as building trust, cultivating mutual respect, ensuring reciprocity, and developing programs within a shared context. By fostering respectful, inclusive environments, the model supports solutions that are more widely accepted and sustainable. The model centers collaboration across sectors, disciplines, generations, and areas of expertise to build meaningful, equitable, solution-oriented partnerships. Throughout the year, CHECE deepened its role as a convener of cross-sector partnerships among academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, faith-based entities, and community stakeholders. These collaborations supported a broad portfolio of initiatives focused on health promotion, aging equity, youth development, community wellness, and social determinants of health. Central to CHECE's work is the belief that communities are not merely participants in research and programming, but essential co-creators of knowledge, solutions, and sustainable change.

Developed through years of observation and research, TICEM provides a flexible framework that can be adapted by universities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses. It also empowers community members to better understand institutional approaches, strengthening their ability to communicate needs and priorities and to participate as effective partners in achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.



**Throughout the year,  
CHECE deepened its role  
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public agencies, faith-  
based entities, and  
community stakeholders.**



**Citizen Scientist and  
Community Partner  
Dr. Mary Dawkins  
co-chairs annual  
Living Your Best  
Life Event**

Intergenerational Fight Against Menthol Community Meeting



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Initiative



Senior Connect Digital Literacy Initiative



Rutgers University Advancing for Healthy Living Initiative, The Office of University-Community Partnerships, Center for Health Equity & Community Engagement

INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR

### The Rutgers University-Newark Digital Divide Initiative

Advancing Digital Equity and Telehealth Access Through Partnership

**WORKSHOP SERIES FOR SENIORS IN THE CITY OF NEWARK**

Learn how to use an Amazon Fire HD 10 tablet for

- Meetings ✓
- Doctor's Appointments ✓
- Accessing the My Chart Portal ✓
- Online Zumba & Chair Yoga ✓

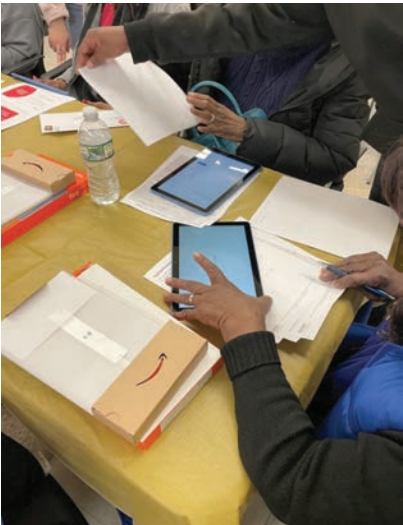
Classes will be held every Tuesday & Thursday at 10:00am November 5th - December 19th at the following sites:

- The Nellie Grier Center
- Boylan Street Center
- The Berthany Center
- The Vince Lombardi Center
- The Iron Bound Center

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

To register or if you need additional details contact Family Facilitator: Tanisha Prindle-Hartley at [tanishaprinde@gmail.com](mailto:tanishaprinde@gmail.com)

Funded provided by the Connecting Healthy Community Grant of Rutgers University - Newark



**CHECE has a proven  
record for catalyzing  
trust, collaboration and  
innovative, community-  
engaged research  
in vulnerable urban  
communities.**



**“Public health can’t afford to treat community voices as an afterthought. Real, lasting change happens when the people closest to a problem are partners in solving it. It’s essential that we build a state where there’s an unbroken thread connecting lived experience to research, research to policy, and policy to the community.”**

**—Dr. Raynard E. Washington,  
NJ Department of Health**



Dr. Raynard Washington, Commissioner, NJ Department of Health addresses the crowd at the CHECE Inaugural Collaborative Research Symposium

**CHECE Inaugural Collaborative Research Symposium**



**CHECE Service Awards**

- ◆ New Jersey Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker (District 28)
- ◆ New Jersey Assemblyman Michael Venezia (District 34)
- ◆ Jayné Johnson, Attorney and Public Sector Executive

**Our work reinforced  
CHECE's commitment  
to building sustainable  
infrastructures that  
empower communities long  
after individual projects  
conclude.**



**Members of the East Orange Senior Volunteer Corporation accept the first CHECE Community Empowerment grant.**

# Professional Development

**CHECE** strengthened its role as a capacity-building resource for community organizations and institutional partners. Through technical assistance, training, and collaborative planning processes, the organization helped partners develop stronger frameworks for community engagement, equitable decision-making, and program implementation. This work reinforced CHECE's commitment to building sustainable infrastructures that empower communities long after individual projects conclude.

## Journey to Better Health Mobile Exhibit

A clinical research education professional development opportunity for Citizen Scientists in partnership with the Center for Information & Study on Clinical Research Participation (CISCRP) and the Advocates for Healthy Living Initiative.



## Citizen Scientist Training

(in partnership with the New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Sciences)



**Building Bridges Course**

This past spring, Rutgers SPAA students had another exciting opportunity to take a hands-on approach to public service and community engagement through the course “Building Bridges to the Community.” The undergraduate course, taught by Dr. Diane Hill, assistant professor of professional practice at SPAA and assistant chancellor of University-Community Partnerships at Rutgers-Newark, is open to juniors and seniors and focuses on giving students the tools and experience needed to form and maintain meaningful partnerships with community organizations while also addressing real-world issues.



**Translational Science 2026 Conference—Milwaukee, Wisconsin**



**Strengthening Community-Academic Partnerships Through the Community Scientist Program: “The Kiosk Project.”**  
**Presenters: Epiphany Munz, MPA, Jennifer Hemler, Ph.D.**

**NJ FREEDOM SCHOOL EVALUATION**



**House of Miriam Freedom School (Newark)**

# CHECE Highlights 2025-26

## **1. PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- ◆ Re-envisioned CHECE with community partners.
- ◆ Formally established the center within Rutgers University–Newark (School of Public Affairs and Administration) and Rutgers Health.

## **2. EXPANDED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

- ◆ Strengthened collaborations with the Greater Newark Health Care Coalition, City of Newark, NJ Office of Faith-Based Programs, and the Health Care Foundation of the Oranges.
- ◆ Advanced multi-agency initiatives including Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Senior Connect to support aging populations and digital health literacy.
- ◆ Supported statewide Freedom School expansion and developed an innovative evaluation framework.

## **3. CAPACITY BUILDING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

- ◆ Expanded Building Bridges courses to enhance community-academic research collaboration.
- ◆ Trained and certified 60 Community Scientists to advise, teach, and partner with researchers.
- ◆ IFAM Tobacco Education (via INTS) – Tobacco Treatment Specialist Training with certificate option and community-driven dissemination and delivery
- ◆ Freedom School evaluation
- ◆ CHECE Inaugural Community Research Symposium (planning, recruitment & panelists 200 attendance)

## **SUSTAINABLE-LONG-TERM IMPACT**

- ◆ In FY2025-26 the Center for Health Excellence and Community Engagement (CHECE) demonstrated its nationally relevant model for bi-directional university–community engagement. CHECE formalized its operational structures, expanded strategic collaborations, implemented Transdisciplinary Intergenerational Community Engagement Model (TICEM)-infused community-based research and demonstrated measurable service contributions.

## THE TRANSDISCIPLINARY INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL (TICEM):

- ◆ Promotes bi-lateral communication between researchers and communities
- ◆ Positions community members as co-creators and advisors, not subjects
- ◆ Integrates research, teaching, and engagement into a unified strategy
- ◆ Builds long-term trust and institutional accountability

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD: RESEARCH, TRAININGS, DEMONSTRATION, PRESENTATIONS

- ◆ Presented at four National Conferences
- ◆ Conducted four local trainings (faculty/researchers, students, community)
- ◆ Senior Connect digital/health literacy training (Newark's 5 Wards, East Orange, Hillside), student and community trainers

## The Road Ahead

In partnership with the new **Rutgers Center for Family Medicine and Primary Care (RCFMPC)**, CHECE will deliver an integrated continuum of primary care services directly in patients' homes and communities. Together, they will address both medical needs and social determinants of health, improving outcomes while expanding Rutgers' capacity to generate measurable, community-level impact. CHECE has a proven record for catalyzing trust, collaboration and innovative, community-engaged research in vulnerable urban communities. Partnering with RCFMPC, this initiative will accelerate community-driven health solutions using evidence-based participatory methods.



# Major Partners 2025-26



*East Orange*  
NEW JERSEY

**PositiveCommunity.com**



**Programs  
for Parents**  
Comprehensive Services for Families and Children



GOURMET DINING



THE TOWNSHIP OF  
**HILLSIDE**



**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**  
School of Public Affairs  
and Administration



**COMMUNITIES IN  
COOPERATION INC.**



East Orange  
Senior Volunteer  
Corporation



**INTERFAITH  
ACTION  
MOVEMENT**



**University  
HOSPITAL**  
Newark, NJ

# Conclusion

**A**s CHECE looks toward the future, it remains committed to advancing a new paradigm of community-engaged research, scholarship, and action that promotes health equity, community empowerment, and social well-being across the lifespan. Through its highly structured community-engaged research model, CHECE continues to catalyze collaborative partnerships with underserved urban populations, academic researchers, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector stakeholders to address the complex and evolving challenges facing communities.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report reflect more than organizational growth—they demonstrate the power of collective action, authentic community partnership, and innovative scholarship to generate meaningful and sustainable change. By creating pathways for communities to inform research, policy, and practice, CHECE strengthens the capacity of residents and institutions alike to improve health outcomes and advance social equity.

Looking ahead, CHECE will continue to expand its reach, deepen strategic partnerships, and develop innovative research and programmatic initiatives that respond to community-identified priorities. Sustained investment in CHECE will increase the number of residents served, strengthen Rutgers University's anchor mission, and enhance the institution's ability to attract and support transformative R1-level research. Together with its partners, CHECE is building a stronger foundation for healthier, more equitable, and more empowered communities—ensuring that the benefits of research, innovation, and community engagement extend to future generations.





RUTGERS-NEWARK

Center for Health Excellence  
and Community Empowerment

**The Center for Health Excellence and Community Empowerment**

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