

HCI:HE HEALTH IN ACTION



KANSAS HEALTH
FOUNDATION



June 2019

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UPCOMING DATES:

- JULY 8
HCI:HE COMMUNITY
LEARNING WEBINAR AT 2PM
- OCTOBER 10-11
HCI:HE COMMUNITY GATHERING

Featured Resource Links

- The [2019 Heartland Conference on Health Equity and Patient Centered Care](#) is coming up on August 6 & 7 in Overland Park, KS.
- [Rural Health Transformation Center Webinar Series](#) will feature insights and experience from a 1-year award-winning rural community health initiative.
- The Midwestern Public Health Training Center is offering the [Sizzling Summer Webinar Series](#) on Persuasive Communication.
- Have an idea to make your Kansas community a healthier place to live, work, and play? Need some cash to make it happen? Funding through [KHF's Healthy Communities Challenge](#) is still available!
- Every month, the Kansas Health Foundation electronic newsletter, Health Happenings, features a story about a focus area, grant, partnership or program involving the Foundation. Sign up for Health Happenings [here](#).

Event Recap: *RWJF Life in Rural America Symposium*

On May 21, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated solely to health, convened the *Life in Rural America Symposium*. The event, which expanded upon two groundbreaking reports on life in rural America, featured experts and community leaders from rural and tribal communities and focused on locally-driven solutions.

A recap of the symposium including a link to the livestream recording can be found on the [RWJF website](#).



Image Source: Accessed on June 6, 2019 from <https://www.rwjf.org/content/rwjf/en/email/life-in-rural-america-symposium-2019.html>

Sarah Smarsh, a Kansan and author of the New York Times bestseller *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*, was one of the keynote speakers. At approximately 3 hours and 25 minutes into the livestream, Sarah speaks about her meeting in May '19 with HEAL Reno County.

Experimenting with food access and place-based work



Building trust and relationships is important to sustainable policymaking.

It's a cornerstone of authentic engagement efforts, but isn't always intentionally built in to a work plan or included in project budgets. The Convergence Partnership, a group of philanthropic organizations and health care institutions across the nation, awarded a one-year grant to the Kansas Health Foundation in 2018 to improve health equity and food systems work.

Five of the 18 HCI:HE communities were invited to take part in an experiment to develop and implement activities to build trust and relationships with their priority populations. They also crafted ioby fundraising projects to support food access projects alongside residents and worked with community foundations to leverage local funding. The grant was both an experiment for the Foundation, as well as the communities.

According to Jeff Usher, Senior Program Officer at KHF, "We wanted to experiment with developing relationships by providing resources directly to the focus populations in the five chosen communities to allow residents to determine the use of the funds for intentional relationship building, and think differently about how those funds could improve local food systems."

Community Liaisons in the five communities were encouraged to try new, creative activities to build trust and relationships with their target populations. And all of the strategies were developed either alongside the residents or with them in mind.

The work wasn't always easy.

"Building trust and relationships is hard work!" said Sarah Green, who coordinated the project for KHF. "The Community Liaisons challenged themselves and their local teams to think of ways to interact with members of the priority populations that prioritized listening and learning. It's often easier to put a plan in place and get it done – this was slower, and more deliberate. Everyone learned something from the experience."

The five communities, and some of their successes, are:

- **Arlington:** The Reno County HEAL coalition hired a "community engagement specialist" in the small town in the western part of the county to help connect county staff with rural residents. The community engagement specialist directed part of the project's budget as she saw fit.
- **Arma:** Livewell Crawford County hosted a series of community meals to collect and distribute data about access to healthy food and the outsized impact it has on the community's low-income residents. The community voted to create a community garden and a local distribution center for the produce, and created a resident team to do the work.
- **Garden City:** The Livewell Finney County coalition worked with "canvass coordinators" in their neighborhood of interest to talk with local residents. The canvass coordinators were trained in active listening and facilitation techniques and followed up with resources requested by the residents. The canvass coordinators are creating a cookbook using recipes from residents.
- **St. Francis:** Livewell Northwest Kansas worked with patrons of the food pantry in this town to build community, overcoming language and social barriers to fellowship in this frontier community.
- **Wichita:** The Health and Wellness Coalition worked closely with Spanish-language broadcasting stations, as well as a local interpreter, to translate materials and information from English to Spanish.

Equity & Inclusion: We Can't Address It If We Don't See It

More and more, conversations are aligning about how vital it is to address root causes of disparity to make progress on building community, belonging and creating a shared humanity that nurtures and validates all members.

The work of change and healing takes time, patience and humility. It takes changing institutional, structural, and political practices and policies. It takes holding to purpose while also holding space for each other, especially when it is hard or uncomfortable. It takes a change of heart and mind and values. While training is a starting place, it is rarely sufficient to create the kind of traction on cultural change necessary to get our communities where they need to be for optimal outcomes for everyone.

There are many tools available to help groups and communities learn together about their culture around equity and inclusion. We will share some resources over the next few newsletter editions to encourage engagement in this important dialogue and learning.

One such resource is [racialequitytools.org](https://www.racialequitytools.org). On this website, there are an incredible array of videos, assessments, articles and resource guides to use individually and in a group setting. We invite you to join us in exploring these resources as a path to healing and reconciliation.