

The Power of Storytelling Makes the News

The We Engage for Health (WE4H) team believes in the power of storytelling.

That is why they are now leveraging stories to

educate the community about COVID-19. Dr.

Melinda Butsch Kovacic, a Co-PI of the grant funding the program, was

interviewed by [Channel 5 News](#) following a release of an article in a [University of Cincinnati eNewsletter](#).

During the interview, she said: "We develop our stories with the community so they have greater relevance." The interview was timely as it drew much attention to our

[Coronavirus Learning Companion](#) on the WE4H website.



*community-led learning
and research for health*

this issue

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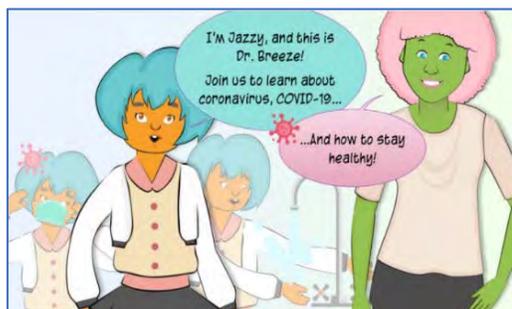
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Coronavirus Learning Companion

The WE4H Coronavirus Learning Companion is for people of all ages who would like to learn about the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 disease via friendly comic-style stories that can be viewed as a video, read online, or downloaded and printed. The use of stories helps readers and viewers to more easily understand, remember, and apply the information to their own lives. Importantly, the stories and accompanying science activities explain the purpose and science behind COVID-19 public health recommendations – the WHY. Parents and teachers can share this information with their children and students, respectively, to initiate discussions of why social distancing, wearing face masks, and hand washing will prevent infection and spread of coronavirus. The materials have been viewed by over 3000 website visitors thus far.

In the first story, Coping with COVID-19, a young asthma patient named Jazzy visits her doctor via telemedicine. Jazzy learns about the novel coronavirus, the COVID-19 disease it causes, and why hand washing, social distancing, and face masks help keep more people healthy. The story offers a fact-based, but reassuring approach to sharing this essential information. Next, in our Soap Surprises, Jazzy and her mom do an experiment to find out if soap really is such an important part of washing coronavirus, and any other germs, off our hands. Last, Jazzy and her mom explore shaving cream in a story called Foamy Soap Fun. Shaving cream is just foamed up soap and can be used to make colorful prints on paper by adding food color to the shaving cream. Instructions for the activity follow the story so readers can try it themselves.



Power of Stories Research Project

Student researcher Juliana Zacher also believes in the power of stories. This summer, she designed an experiment to directly assess the value of WE4H's graphical stories compared to a flyer without graphics and poster with graphics. The WE4H story evaluated for Phase 1 was a shortened version of the main story in the Coronavirus Learning Companion. The study was administered via our WE4H website (N=25) and by Sheila Nared over a 3-day period at the Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses (N=52). Participants were surveyed for their knowledge and self-efficacy (a measure of self-confidence in doing something) before and after reading one of three formats. Interestingly, online study participants had greater self-efficacy for social distancing, face mask wearing and hand washing after reading the WE4H story compared to either the flyer or poster. In-person, however, participants had highest self-efficacy after reading the flyer and poster. Overall, both online and in-person participants had high levels of knowledge. According to Zacher, "It looks like people came in with a lot of prior knowledge on the subject; still, the study allowed us to test our protocol, and prepare for Phase 2 which will include information on a topic that is less well-known – COVID-19 vaccination."



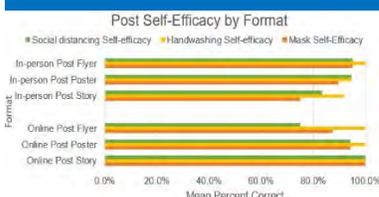
Successful Virtual Citizen Science RAP & Eyewitness Community Survey Alpha Pilots

This summer, WE4H completed two alpha pilots. In June, our WE4H interns and 4 members of the University of Cincinnati Citizen Science Club participated in our first Citizen Science RAP alpha pilot after the stories had been reviewed by WE4H Advisory Board Members. Pilot participants were able to engage in RAP sessions virtually over 6 sessions offered over a 3-week time period using the Zoom platform. Each RAP session included 2 stories each. The RAP stories are: RAP 1) Hunting for Heat with Citizen Science and Considering Citizen Science; RAP 2) Protecting People and Consent Concerns; RAP 3) Leading Questions and Research Quest; RAP 4) X title and Research Revision; RAP 5) Sorting Surveys and Summarizing Surveys; and RAP 6) Cancer Questions and Cancer Conclusions. Participants provided valuable feedback about story text and graphics, accompanying activities and knowledge and self-efficacy evaluation questions. Revisions are currently underway in preparation for the beta phase of testing – possibly with members of the West End Community Research Advisory Board.

“Citizen science is scientific work done by the public and professional scientists”

Immediately following the Citizen Science RAP pilot, the alpha pilot of our Eyewitness Community Survey (ECS) was begun. The ECS is a tool that allows citizens to make observations of their environment and systematically document them electronically via a REDCap survey. Questions in the tool inquire about buildings and use of spaces by people, public infrastructure, recreational and natural resources, air quality, waste and recycling, and traffic and safety. Participants are asked to take and upload a photo and describe how the objects in the photo impact health. If a surveyor's geolocation feature is turned on while making observations, the information collected can easily be mapped for visualization. Before making observations, potential participants were asked to engage with 3 stories. The first explains the purpose of the ECS and seeks to consent them to participate. The 2nd story provides a broad training about environmental health so as they make their observations, they better understand the importance of question. The 3rd story provides detailed instructions on how to use the data collection tool correctly. Participating Citizen Scientists take a pre/post knowledge and self-efficacy survey so that we can measure the impact of participation on the Citizen Scientists over time. Overall feedback of the stories was very good, but some revisions were suggested. These changes have since been made. Selected community members were invited to provide voice-overs for all the characters in the stories which has allowed videos of the stories to be created for use in the beta pilot.

Phase 1 of a reproducibility study led by Ian Snider was also done simultaneously with 5 panoramic photographs. 5 universities and 2 elementary students made observations in the photos 1 week apart. Percent agreement was calculated between individual observations and between observers. Questions with lower agreement will be addressed prior to initiating the beta pilot.





Keep Norwood Cool Partnership

WE4H started a new partnership this summer. The Participatory Mapping to Keep Norwood Cool (KNC) Study is funded by a CCTST Community Health grant. The study aims to identify heat islands in Norwood with the goal of planning modifications to improve the health of citizens. KNC was first initiated in 2018 by Norwood resident Ms. Dana Boll, a life-long environmentalist, to bring awareness to and advocate for healthier microenvironments in Norwood using a community readiness model and innovative designed solutions. Especially during the summer months, Boll has noticed concrete and black-topped areas in Norwood to be hotter – so much so that people avoid using those spaces. She would like to do something about this by considering several cooling strategies to reduce the effect of heat islands as well as lower air pollutants that are often associated with them. During the summer, intern Kristy Waters helped to organize a Climate Relay where participants carried air sensors on pre-planned walking or bike routes on three days in the last week of July to measure air temperature and levels of air pollution. Similar Climate Relays are planned during one week each season. In addition, citizens will be invited to use the Eyewitness Community Survey to make observations in their community. A health survey will also be administered. A preliminary analysis comparing readings for sensors placed at 2 fixed locations was completed and [presented by Kristy](#) at our community report out. The analysis showed higher temperatures and particulate matter 2.5 at the Norwood Health Department on busy Montgomery Road compared to a residential location on Elsmere Street.

2020 WE4H Interns

This past summer, Ian Snider (left) worked with Dr. Elshaer to study the [reproducibility](#) of the Eyewitness Community Survey. This year, he will be sophomore biology major at the University of Louisville. Juliana Zacher (middle), who will continue to intern with WE4H throughout the academic year, is also a sophomore at Miami University majoring in Microbiology. She will continue to [study the power of stories](#) compared to materials with and without text using our new Vaccine Story. She was mentored by Susan Gertz and Dr. Hershberger. Kristy Waters (right) is a recent graduate of Xavier University. Starting in the fall of 2019, she worked with Dr. Butsch Kovacic and over the summer with the Keep Norwood Cool team to implement [air sensor testing](#). She is hopes to apply and later to attend medical school to become a Primary Care Physician.



Our 2020 fall high school interns Madison Biddle and Adrienne Aitken are high school seniors joining us from the Ignite Institute in Kentucky. Madison Biddle and Arienne Aitken join the team as our first remote interns, through COVID 19! Both interns joined want to learn more about health research and which they hope will inform their future career choices if their career dreams are right for them. Currently, Adrienne wants to be a military surgeon while Madison desires to one day open her own family therapy practice. Eshika Kohli is a sophomore at Xavier. She plans to attend osteopathic medical school after graduation. She will mainly work with Susan Gertz this fall.

Partnership with Wednesdays with WE

How does racism impact our health? This is the question that was pondered over 6 weeks during the Wednesdays with WE virtual discussions facilitated by Sheila Nared, director of the Trauma Recovery Center at the Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses in Cincinnati's West End. Five sessions began with WE4H story starters created by Sheila, Susan Gertz and Dr. Butsch Kovacic. In week 6, the group chose 5 big ideas to consider for future efforts: 1) Advocacy and Support (a We Got Your Back program), 2) Opportunities for honest personal story sharing, 3) Financial Literacy programs and 4) Digital Literacy programs, and 4) Psychological Screenings of potential and existing police officers. Sheila is using what was learned to inform grant applications to support future programming.



Team Member Highlight

Mrs. Jacqueline Humphries (on left in photo) has been a part of the WE4H team since the beginning. However, in spring of 2020, she accepted a paid position as our official community coordinator. We first got to know Jackie as she served as on the The West End Community Research Advisory Board at Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses. Jackie has devoted her life to volunteering and making a difference in her Cincinnati Community. Her role for WE4H is to help residents become more aware of their health risks and take greater responsibility for their health. As a community coordinator, she will invite community members and community organizations to learn through our programs and activities as well as serve as a Health Is Happenin RAP facilitator. She herself has found them to be so much fun. "I am just a regular person. I am doing this with a purpose and I am blessed ... it is my responsibility and honor to be with WE4H – I'm living with a purpose."



Upcoming Activities

• Coronavirus Learning Companion (CLC)

We are currently expanding our partnerships with schools and organizations and offering greater support via our [CLC Teacher Page](#).

• Power of Stories Study Part 2.

Juliana Zacher and Susan Gerts completed writing and graphics of our vaccine-focused story and sought feedback from members of our advisory board and larger team. Their feedback required changes. As a result, we have 3 versions of the story: a [longer story](#), a 6-panel and a 4-panel story – also in Spanish. The 4-panel story will be used for phase 2 of our Power of Story study.

• Eyewitness Community Survey Beta Pilot

In July we alpha piloted the ECS. This fall, we hope to field test in in Norwood after beta testing it with a willing community partner. Let us know if you are interested in supporting the effort!

• Citizen Science RAP Beta Testing.

In June, we alpha tested our new RAP 6-pack virtually with our interns and members of the University of Cincinnati Citizen Science Club. We are beta testing it with members of the WE C-RAB starting in November.

• Health Is Happenin' RAP

There are ongoing efforts to be able to offer the RAP virtually therefore requiring revision of the activities. Stay tuned!

Health Is Happenin' RAP

Last summer, the WE4H team created and alpha, beta, and field tested in the West Community our first RAP programming - Health Is Happenin. Because of delays related to our ethical board review and COVID-19 restrictions, our qualitative evaluation via focus groups – was also delayed. However, in August, we finally were able to hold our first focus group of RAP community facilitators. There were 5 major findings: 1) RAP activities empowered future participation as facilitators, 2) RAP encouraged the community to engage in health activities beyond the program, 3) participants felt they moved from partnership to ownership in their community, 4) they enjoyed spreading their enthusiasm, and 5) increasing others' appreciation for the WE4H program. Taken together, the group indicated that being a facilitator and active partner allows them to feel like they belong to something bigger than themselves. Here is a participating facilitator quote:

“...[RAP] helps the community learn more about health and research and get the opportunity to be a part of something that in a lot of cases they don't get to be a part of...and it also educates them... helps them better [understand] themselves as well as others....I also like helping people and telling them about We Engage for Health ..., how much of a difference it'll make in their lives.”

Rethinking WE4H Participation in Health Events

In the past, members of the WE4H team have supported local health events including those offered by Consider the Poor, the First Ladies for Health and the WE C-RAB. In May, we had planned to support a Community Matters-sponsored event in Lower Price Hill (canceled because of COVID-19 quarantine). We created stories on 4 topics for the event: lead, air quality, stress (see right), healthy and food/nutrition. On October 11th, the First Ladies event will only offer COVID-19 testing and flu shots. Still wanting to support the event, our 4 panel vaccine story will be included in nearly 2,500 care packages that will be distributed at the event!

