

Coming soon!

WE4H participants will soon be able to earn virtual badges to show their accomplishments!

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See us at CitSciVirtual 2021!

By Madison Biddle



WE4H will be joining presenters from around the world at the Citizen Science Association May 2021 conference **CitSciVirtual: Local, Global, Connected**. As described at citizenscience.org, conference organizers "... want to hear about the current state of citizen science, as well as what you've learned that is going to shape the face of citizen science in the future." WE4H will be participating with two workshops and two posters. Workshops will include live, synchronous material as well as asynchronous material that will be accessed via the CitSciVirtual web platform.

Power of Stories Workshop: WE4H creates and offers stories in various formats as part of our citizen science projects. Attendees will learn what makes a good story and get support to begin stories for their own citizen science projects. A "Power of Stories How-To Guide" will help them continue developing their stories.

Data Interpretation Workshop: The success of citizen science activities is often judged on the data captured. In this workshop, attendees will learn how to effectively organize, evaluate, and use data and consider ways of sharing data through stories.

Eyewitness Community Survey (ECS) Poster: A poster presentation will introduce the ECS project. ECS is a citizen science research project that focuses on how environmental factors might impact health in a community. ECS features an online survey tool that community members use to gather data. Data collected during pilot testing of the ECS tool will be shared.

Citizen Science (CS) RAP Poster: A poster presentation will introduce the CS RAP program. CS RAP is a series of sessions (online or in person) featuring stories, discussions, and hands-on activities on topics that include understanding citizen science, ethics of research, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.



New Program Evaluation Story

By Carmen Culotta

Evaluation team member Carmen Culotta created a new story for WE4H to help participants understand program evaluation and their role in it.

WE4H participants play an important part in program evaluation through completing surveys or participating in focus groups.

The story explains program evaluation through a conversation between Sam and Carter about a summer job placement program for youth. The story aims to address three big ideas: (a) program evaluators collect information from people to learn how a program is working, (b) programs are evaluated, not people, and (c) programs use evaluation information to demonstrate program success and make improvements. The new story will be used in upcoming WE4H programs.



ECS Winter Pilot

By Adrienne Aitken

Completion of the Environmental Community Survey (ECS) Beta Pilot in winter 2020 brings this WE4H citizen science program one step closer to use by all interested communities. Twenty-seven participants ranging from middle/high school to college students participated by making observations in their neighborhoods using a provided data collection tool on their phones. An analysis of the data collected during the pilot is underway with a scientific paper to follow.

The pilot consisted of four parts: Observation Day 1, Post-Knowledge Quiz and Citizen Science Feedback, ECS Pilot Repeat Observations, and Focus Groups.

Parts 1–3 spanned December 16, 2020 to January 15, 2021. Part 4 focus groups took place January 18–29, 2021. Prior to Observation Day 1, participants watched three videos explaining the purpose of the ECS, downloaded the ECS Consent Confirmation Sheet, and practiced using the mandatory data collection tool.

On Pilot Observation Day 1, all pairs/trios set out to record at five different observations around their neighborhoods with the geolocation feature in their phones turned on. They were asked to plan at least one hour to complete observations at the five locations, all on same day. Observations were done simultaneously but independently. Participants were asked to choose locations that were unique, such as business areas, schools, or recreational places.

Once participants submitted Day 1 observations, a Post-Knowledge Quiz and Citizen Science Feedback survey were administered. Seven days after the first set of observations, a new observation link was sent for the repeat observations. Participants traveled to the same exact locations at the same time of day and completed another round of observations. As before, participants submitted a Post-Knowledge Quiz and Citizen Science Feedback survey.

Direct feedback from the participants themselves via focus groups were led by evaluation team member Edie Morris on a Zoom call. Edie asked various questions about the overall experience of being a citizen scientist, technological issues, the benefits of working with a partner, and so forth. Analysis of the focus group discussions is underway.

WE4H intern Madison Biddle is now entering the pilot data into ArcGIS StoryMaps. A storymap is a collection of photos and information that are digitally pinned to a correlating map to show locations where pictures were taken and data collected. The completed storymap will be viewable at storymaps.arcgis.com.

Pops, Vito, and Big Sam enjoy a socially distanced community picnic while learning about vaccines and how they create immunity to diseases.

GO TO STORY



Power of Stories Research Update

By Juliana Zacker

A key feature of We Engage 4 Health is using stories to engage and educate. Our participants have consistently expressed their enjoyment in reading about Pops, Jazzy, and our other characters to learn about various health topics. But the WE4H team wondered, “What sets stories apart from other ways to share information?” Starting in summer 2020, Juliana Zacker began working alongside the WE4H team to answer this question with a research study called “The Power of Stories.” Spoiler alert: stories do have measurable impacts on knowledge and self-efficacy.

The Power of Stories study set out to determine ways in which stories might be a better way to convey information than traditional text or text with graphics formats. The study investigated whether people learn more from stories, if their self-efficacy increases more, and if they enjoy the stories more. Between November 25, 2020 and January 13, 2021, 144 participants completed online pre and post surveys after reading one of three information formats (randomly provided to them) containing equivalent information. These formats were the story “Vaccine Victory,” text alone, and text with graphics.

Initial analysis of the data suggests that participants who read the story gained more knowledge about the necessity of diverse vaccine trials than those who read text with graphics. They were also more likely to consider taking part in vaccine trials than those who read text alone. Participants who read the story or text with graphics also enjoyed reading their format significantly more than those who read only text. WE4H is continuing to analyze the data to look for relationships between participant’s learning styles and what format they prefer to learn new information. WE4H will also look at whether people who were given the story to read prefer to read more stories for new information. The WE4H team is excited that the power of stories is not only real — it’s quantifiable!

Website Refreshed!

By Eshika Kohli

With the pandemic continuing to limit in-person learning opportunities, the WE4H web-based content becomes an even more important resource.

In recent weeks, Eshika Kohli has been working alongside Susan Gertz to update the WE4H website. They are working to increase clarity and organization so that visitors can access WE4H resources more efficiently.

One important change is updating the Coronavirus Learning Companion (CLC) section of the website to be more engaging and user-friendly. Now, our visitors can more easily locate and view our stories about coronavirus, COVID-19, vaccines, and lifestyle changes associated with the pandemic. Instructions for hands-on activities add to the experience. Recently, two new activities were added to the page featuring the “Vaccine Victory” story: “Playing a Pandemic” and “Investigating Immunity.” Additionally, Susan and Eshika are working together to expand the Teacher Resources section of the CLC. This page contains activities and close readings for each story so that teachers can easily use these resources in their classrooms! Visit us at we4h.life!

New WE4H Partnership and Ethics Oversight Process

By Melinda Butsch Kovacic

Two of the primary objectives that WE4H Principal Co-Investigators set when the grant funding was awarded were that:

- 1) Our programs and activities would be co-designed with community representatives while considering the unique characteristics of our partnering communities and
- 2) Our partnership would be mutually beneficial to both our interdisciplinary team members and organizational stakeholders.

To this end, Erin Wagner has led the development of a formal, annual process to help our team assess how well we are meeting these goals. The process will begin this spring with the sharing of our first WE4H Community Stakeholder Annual Report with all our partnering stakeholders including the WE4H team. The report will summarize all our development and evaluation activities completed over the year as well as how our materials were shared on our website and through our programming. Our stakeholders will be asked to review the report as well as past WE4H Times Newsletters and complete a 16-question Reflection Survey assessing stakeholder mutual benefit, communication, study implementation protocols and dissemination of our work.

Our WE4H Evaluation Team will then summarize these Reflection Surveys and use them to inform their 3-member team's formal evaluation using our Ethics Oversight Rubric which also includes assessment of our data collection and ethics protocols housed in REDCap in addition to the areas covered in the Reflection Survey. In the end, the Evaluation Team will provide us with a final report that our team can then use to identify areas of excellence and areas needing improvement. A brief summary of our final report findings will be included in our Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) required by our program's funder, the National Institutes of Health.

Facilitator Training Pilot a Success!

By Shereen Elshaer

Community Facilitators are an essential part of bringing WE4H programs to the Cincinnati area and beyond. To ensure that new Facilitators are confident in their roles, WE4H has developed Facilitator training for our Community Research Advocate (CRA) and RAP Session programs. In Early February, the WE4H team successfully tested the facilitator training workshop materials with WE4H advisory board team members Vonnie Tawwab, Luwana Pettus Oglesby, Jackie Humphries, and Sheila Nared, and guest, Paula Sherman.

Community Facilitators bring WE4H program materials to life through engaging program participants in activities and discussions and creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels heard. To help Facilitators excel in their roles, training for both CRA and RAP Session Facilitators focused on what a facilitator is (and is not) along with the listening and questioning skills that make a good facilitator. The training was strengthened with practice activities using role play and facilitation scenarios.

The CRA version of Facilitator training specifically focused on how to facilitate Research Ready discussions as CRAs reach out to community members with the Research Ready story and other resources. The RAP Facilitator training is designed to help future Facilitators understand their roles and responsibilities in Health is Happening and Citizen Science RAP Sessions and to use the Leader PowerPoints and Facilitator Guide effectively.

Participants loved the training and indicated how useful it was. Jackie Humphries is especially excited to start sharing the Research Ready story with her young family members and friends! Valuable feedback from the test group has guided our next step – developing a Phase 2 of the training that focuses on role play to practice facilitation skills. Phase 2 training will be scheduled in Spring 2021.

Team Member Highlight

By Susan Gertz

WE4H team member Sheila Nared is the coordinator of the Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses' Trauma Recovery Center (TRC).

In addition to her role at the TRC, Sheila is actively involved with the work of WE4H and has developed several projects that create connections between WE4H and other groups and expand WE4H outreach.

In 2020 and 2021, Sheila has

- planned and conducted Wednesdays with WE, a series of discussions on the impact of race on domains of health.
- planned and proposed the recently funded project "WE Together: Reducing Isolation in West End Residents Living with Disabilities."
- worked to connect WE4H with leaders of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ) with the goal of helping WE4H disseminate materials through their network and creating a trauma-specific story for CSSJ.

Sheila is a highly valued member of our team and always a pleasure to be with! We look forward to the coming years working together.



New Community Research Advocates Research Ready Program

By Melinda Butsch Kovacic

The Community Research Advocates Research Ready Program is a community outreach program being developed by WE4H. The program will be offered by Community Research Advocates (CRAs) who share with community members to help them become "Research Ready." A "Research Ready" person understands the value of research and is open to considering participation in research at whatever level they feel comfortable. CRAs are typically community representatives with a personal connection to communities and/or specific diseases.

After attending a formal, 2-phase Research Ready Facilitators Training, CRAs will be asked to share the Research Ready Story with their families and friends and facilitate discussions to help them understand the story's Big Ideas: understanding what research is, how research participants are protected and kept safe, and the critical value of having people of all backgrounds participate in research. With time, we expect that CRAs will also be invited to establish relationships with various researchers with active research studies to learn about their target diseases and studies and help them to tailor their marketing materials for the community. The CRA can then help the WE4H team to create additional story content to be added to the Research Ready Story to help Research Ready participants better understand specific studies that are enrolling.

To date, we have piloted Phase 1 of our CRA Facilitator Training with three of our community partners and created a "Genetics Add-on Story" to support a study entitled "Engaging Adolescents in Decisions About Return of Genomic Research Results." Recently, we were awarded a Urban Health Pathway and University of Cincinnati Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement Working Group Grant to create story add-ons specifically for cancer. The grant identifies and provides training and incentives to community members wanting to support cancer research studies and trials. We will soon be offering opportunities to become a CRA and/or help create our cancer stories!

CCTST COVID-19 Critical Community Challenge Project Results

By Shereen Elshaer

In early July, 2020 WE4H partnered with University of Cincinnati researchers to understand and improve adherence to CDC COVID-19 guidelines regarding mask wearing and social distancing in the greater Cincinnati area.

Guided by community partners' insight, the research team developed an online survey to assess attitudes toward COVID-19; related behaviors (social distancing and mask wearing); and motivators to engage, or not engage, in risky behaviors.

Over 5000 participants around the USA completed the online survey of which 3101 are from the greater Cincinnati area. The data showed that among other factors, lower education levels and living in rural areas correspond to less adherence to COVID-19 mitigation efforts. (See graphs below.)

Quantitative data (survey results) were strengthened by focus groups and interviews. So far, three focus groups (3–5 participants each) and three personal interviews were conducted. The discussions revealed how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted people, especially with economic shifts, strained relationships, and COVID-related stress and worry. A desire to protect elderly and high-risk family and friends shaped participants' ways of adapting and rethinking priorities. A hesitancy towards vaccines was also observed. Reasons were speed of vaccine development, historical mistrust, and bad experience with vaccines. This vaccine hesitancy is in line with the survey results indicating almost 33% of participants are less likely to get the vaccine when available. To ensure equitable community representation, community partners distributed a shorter paper version. Analysis is on-going. A future survey will further investigate vaccine hesitancy.

Collaborative Grant Submissions

By Madison Biddle

Through late 2020 and early 2021, the WE4H team has been active in submitting grant proposals that enhance the WE4H mission and create new collaborations. Several are already funded, and others are under review. Work on the newly funded projects begins in spring 2021.

WE Together: Reducing Isolation in West End Residents Living with Disabilities (March 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022)

Funding: CCTST Community Health Grant

PI: Sheila Nared with Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses
Academic PI: Melinda Butsch Kovacic, MPH, PhD, with partnering community

Summary: Creates a program for adults with disabilities, that may be visual or physical, in the West End. These adults are also experiencing isolation due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Cancer Community Research Advocates: Helping Community Become Research Ready (March 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022)

Funding: UC Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement and the UC Next Lives Here Urban Health Pathway

PI: Melinda Butsch Kovacic, MPH, PhD

CP: Vonnie Tawwab

Summary: Creates a research project to help develop preventive actions against the health disparities, cancer specifically, showing a higher death rate in African Americans in the Cincinnati area.

A Community-based Approach to Understanding and Improving Adherence to CDC COVID-19 Guidelines: Developing Evidence-based Strategies to Improving Mask-wearing and Social Distancing In Public (January 2021)

Funding: CCTST COVID-19 Critical Community Challenge Grant

PI: John R. Kues, PhD; Melinda Butsch Kovacic, MPH, PhD
Col: Shereen Elshaer, MBCh, MPH, MD; Laura Hildreth, MS; Jackie Knapke, PhD; Angela Mendell, MS; Stephanie Schuckman, MA; Julie Wijesooriya, MPA

Summary: Moving onto Phase 4 of the project, understanding where the community sits with COVID-19 and the upcoming vaccines.

Story-Based Self-empowering Program to Improve Food Literacy in Breast Cancer Survivors (March 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022)

Funding: UC Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement and the UC Next Lives Here Urban Health Pathway

PI: Seung-Yeon Lee, PhD

Summary: Creates a food literacy program for breast cancer survivors of the local African American community.

Risk Groups by Demographics

