



Healthy Community Initiative

*Thriving youth. Thriving community.*

Making  
Rice County a  
place where  
youth want to  
grow up, live,  
work, and  
give back

**2021**  
**REPORT TO**  
**THE COMMUNITY**



# Rising to the Challenge



It's been quite a year. From the global pandemic to social unrest around racial injustice, our world, our nation, and our communities have faced many challenges. Yet we have also seen great resolve and tremendous innovation.

From helping children get connected to the internet to supporting collaborative food distribution efforts across Rice County, HCI has delved into areas that weren't part of our original plans when the year began, but arose based on emerging needs and requests from partners.

As I look back at this unforgettable year, I am continually impressed and inspired by the willingness of HCI staff, board members, and community partners to do whatever was necessary to help support families during these challenges. Terms like "nimble" and "pivot" have been frequently used. However, they do begin to highlight the rapid shifts that were adeptly made to help those most in need.

People often say that change – and especially systems change – is hard and takes time. **However, this past year showed that we ARE able to rapidly shift systems – in education and government and nonprofits – to serve families.** As this new day begins, how do we hold on to that spirit – and ensure that systems are keeping kids and families at their center, particularly those from populations far too often overlooked?

We are excited about the opportunities ahead. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to partnering with you on this work!

Regards,

Zach Pruitt  
Executive Director

## Prioritizing internet and food access

During the pandemic, HCI staff members adapted their work to address emerging needs. Connecting youth and families to the internet and to food became a major focus.

To ensure all students could connect to virtual school in 2020-21, HCI's **100% CONNECTED** program provided free hotspots and broadband internet access to **429** students from 222 Rice County families. Families were eligible if the children received free/reduced school lunch, if they were clients of the Community Action Center, and/or if they faced economic hardship due to the pandemic.



*"A lot of families are struggling with internet access. We're here to make sure that they don't have barriers to getting connected."*

— Emily Culver, internet access specialist

### FOOD AND SCHOOL MEAL DISTRIBUTION

Growing Up Healthy staff helped Faribault Public Schools, Northfield Public Schools, and the Community Action Center distribute school meals and boxes of food in neighborhoods during the summer and throughout the school year. More than **200,000 pounds of food** were distributed to families in need during the pandemic.



RICE COUNTY

NORTHFIELD

FARIBAULT



# COLLABORATING FOR SUCCESS

HCI collaborates on 25+ local initiatives. We help organizations further leverage resources for their programs that benefit youth. Through our behind-the-scenes support we:

- ♥ Share knowledge
- ♥ Write and report on grants
- ♥ Build capacity
- ♥ Make connections
- ♥ Track and evaluate effectiveness
- ♥ Implement activities

Visit [www.healthycommunityinitiative.org/programs](http://www.healthycommunityinitiative.org/programs) to learn more about the support we provide and the initiatives we serve.

Thank you to our more than **750** community volunteers and partners who supported our work this year.





## Engaged 2,423 youth

and 482 adults in programming at three HCI-supported full-service community schools – **Greenvale Park Elementary School** in Northfield, and **Jefferson Elementary** and **Faribault Middle School** in Faribault

## Connected 189 young children

with high quality early childhood programs and resources



through the **Early Childhood Navigator** efforts

## Supported 93 high school students

serving on 24 different boards/commissions through **Northfield Youth on Boards**; launching **Faribault** effort in 2021

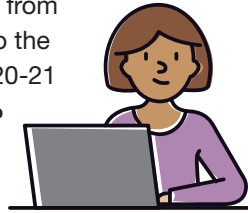


## Supported 75 local students

in pursuing their post-secondary degrees through the **Northfield Community College Collaborative**

## Connected 429 students

from 222 families to the internet in 2020-21 through **100% Connected**



## Served 406 students

in grades 6-12 through **TORCH** in Northfield. 100% of the **TORCH** Class of 2020 graduated on time – even amid the pandemic



Across its initiatives, HCI staff and volunteers provided **102,842** direct contacts with youth and families during 2020 – ranging from academic advising to connecting families with resources

## Launched the RISE program

(modeled after TORCH) in the Faribault Middle & High Schools. **RISE served 155 youth** in grades 6-12 who are students of color, from low-income homes, and/or will be first-generation college attendees

In the past 16 years, HCI has helped bring in nearly **\$18 million** in grants from outside Rice County to benefit local children and youth



## Trained 142 community members

in the evidence-based **Youth or Adult Mental Health First Aid** training, helping them identify and respond to individuals with mental health concerns



## Distributed over 200,000 pounds

of **food** to families in need during the pandemic, through the partnership of **Growing Up Healthy** and the **Community Action Center**

# CLOSING GRADUATION GAPS

In the past year, TORCH (Northfield) and RISE (Faribault) helped more than 500 students succeed in school, explore careers, and pursue post-secondary opportunities. These are students in grades 6-12 who come from low-income families, are students of color, and/or will be first-generation college attendees.

*"They push you, in a very good way. They make you want to become somebody."*

– Xochitl, TORCH participant



**TORCH**

- **16 years** of success; located at Northfield Middle School and Northfield High School
- **100%** of TORCH students from the Class of 2020 graduated on time
- **98.6%** graduation rate for students served by TORCH over the past 15 years



- **Launched in 2020-21** at Faribault Middle School and Faribault High School
- Provides tutoring, academic advising, and social-emotional resources

*"RISE has given me a quiet work place, academic support when I need it, and keeps me on track with my school work each week. It has helped me explore career opportunities and participate in events I might otherwise have not thought of myself."*

–Omar, RISE participant

# NEW HOME HOSTS MORE STUDENTS

The **Northfield Community College Collaborative**

(NCCC) moved into a larger space at the Northfield Community Resource Center in fall 2020 to accommodate its growing numbers. **Since it launched in 2018, the NCCC has:**

- offered **30** in-person Riverland Community College classes in Northfield
- supported students enrolled in more than **300** online classes
- provided holistic advising to more than **100** students

Collectively, its students have earned more than **1600** college credits.



*"I am a student at Dakota County Technical College and am hoping to become a trauma nurse. I really enjoyed the connections I made with educators and NCCC staff. They helped me get my foot in the healthcare field, and I am forever grateful."*

— Jorge, NCCC student

## HCI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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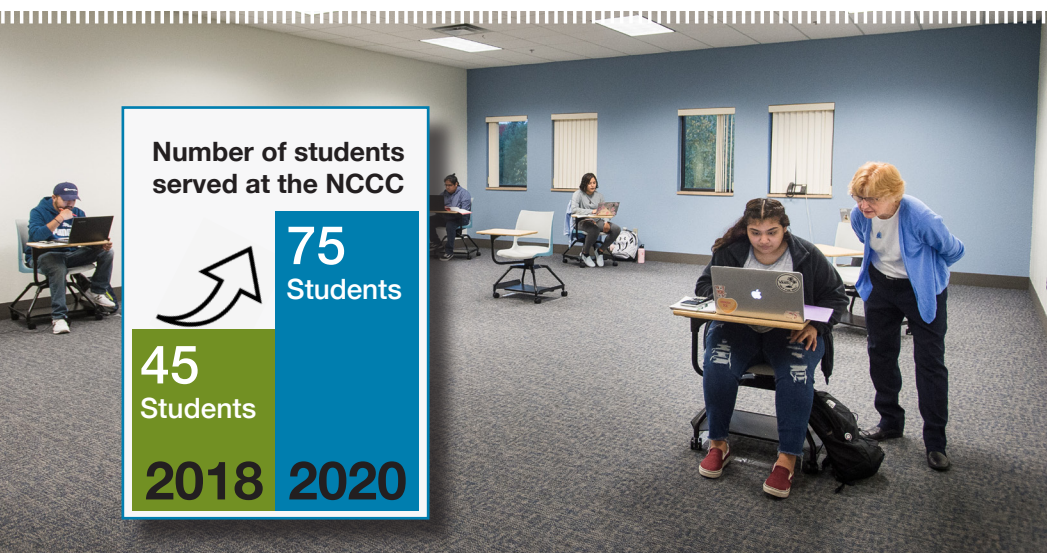
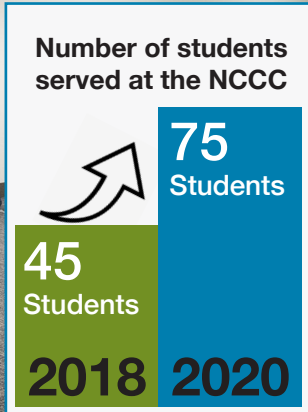
*Support Specialist*

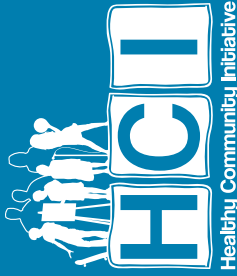
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# 2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 BUSINESS CHAMPIONS



For more information, visit

[www.healthycommunityinitiative.org](http://www.healthycommunityinitiative.org)