Initiative

2021 - 2022 | ANNUAL REPORT

Impacting Thousands of Students & Families.
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As we look back on our year it is humbling to reflect the growth of our Connected Initiative. What is even more humbling is to realize and the immense impact our initiative has had on literally thousands of students and families.

This time last year, our team of about 7-8 staff quickly to expand to what is now a team of close to 50. Our team met with school after, school presenting on the possibilities of new districts coming aboard. This time last year we were three districts, we are now 14 districts and growing. Last year we were navigating and driven to meet the needs of 7,000 students and families, this year we prepared to serve over 20,000 and growing.

The positive momentum and excitement as our team grew larger and over 40 new schools were added intensified our passion to connect community resources, services and items to those in need of them. We were creating new schools, strengthening the culture, enhancing resource availability, destigmatizing those reluctant to ask for assistance. Figuratively and literally we were filling these buildings with so many opportunities, people, services, investors, businesses, agencies, volunteers, and programs into our schools! Making these within an arm’s reach of everyone, we accomplished providing a bridge from the community to the school and back.

Individuals, business owners, agencies, and programs wanted to join in this shared mission of ensuring students and their families could be successful.

Part of creating a Connected School was building HUBs. HUBs turned out to be the pinnacle of a safe place for our schools. These spaces offered vast resource for a variety of needs. Hungry? “Go to the HUB.” Need a toothbrush and toothpaste? “Go to the hub.” The family needs groceries? “Go to the hub.” Mom needs health insurance? Talk to our Site Coordinator in the HUB. These spaces had an immense impact by supplying jackets, hats, school supplies, snacks... A lot of snacks! 800,000 distributed from our HUBs this year to be exact! Groceries...1.2 million lbs! We also took the burden that had been put on our teachers to provide much of these needs.

HUB Clubs arose and flourished, affording students that lacked a sense of belonging to aspects of school a fun and welcoming space for everyone.

We opened up buildings this year and brought the fun... 100’s of hours, providing families a safe, creative, educational space and time to simply engage. Classroom programming, invited hundreds of professionals into our classrooms to share the contributions they are making to the community. Students made friends with police officers, and librarians, they learned about farming, mental health, nutrition and so much more.

Through our LINK program, thousands of kids were identified as ‘struggling or having worries’ - we engaged them.

We assessed their entire families needs and we connected them to appropriate resources and services with a fleet of providers that we collaborate with. Ensuring these families and students not only had their struggle or worry taken
care of but that we were creating long term solutions, rather than putting ‘band-aids’ on problems. We tackled homelessness, food insecurities, domestic violence, mental health struggles, lack of dental care, and so much more.

Looking at trends and data throughout the 8 counties we were representing, we began filling gaps on a macro level, opening mental health satellite offices, health care centers, collaborating to offer dental services to all connected districts, increasing our food distribution, and hosting large community food drops.

Our Connected model intentionally simple by design; utilizing 4 components to tackle any hurdle that may be in the way of a student and their families from being successful. Classroom programming & Community connections, Family Engagement, HUBs, and LINK.

We showed up, we laughed with our families and teachers, we certainly cried with a few, we engaged, we educated, we introduced so many faces to classrooms and buildings from the once outside community, we are creating a new environment that is accepting and understanding to providing ‘needs’, no questions asked, we do nothing without our community and we do nothing without a team.

This past year could be summed up in so many ways, but at the end of the year what we are reflecting on most is that many of our students are in a better place than when we first met them with the help of becoming Connected.

Looking forward to what the future brings,

Melissa & Danielle
OUR HISTORY
How Far We’ve Come

- AFT Innovation Fund Award - Initial Seed money to Rome Teachers Association (RTA) to begin community schools work in Rome, NY - Rome Community Schools
- Teacher-led development of 501(c)3, Rome Alliance for Education (RAE)
- Hired Executive Director of RAE, Melissa Roys

CNYHHN, Inc.
Where Care Comes Together

- Expansion into Secondary Level- Embedding model into entire Rome City School District
- Awarded 35% of total AFT Innovation Fund
- Announcement of Expansion by President of AFT, Randi Weingarten
- Re-branded to Connected Community Schools

2016-2017

- Ribbon-Cutting at Bellamy Elementary, Rome CSD
- CNYHHN, Inc Formal Collaborative Partnership, Executive Director Jane Vail
- Partnership with Safe Schools Mohawk Valley to provide student support services
- Development of LINK
- Invitation to San Diego, CA Philanthropic Conference
- 3rd Year award of AFT Innovation Fund Grant
- Presentation to AFT in Washington, D.C.

2018

- Opening of 2 Connected Community Schools
  - Waterville Connected Schools
  - Dolgeville Connected Schools
- Embedded 9 Satellite Mental Health clinics across the 3 Connected Districts
- Formation of Community Response Team for COVID-19
- Milestone: reached 100 Community Partners for Advisory Board

2019

- Formalized the Connected Model and developed executive and administrative infrastructure
- Opening of 5 new Connected School Districts
  - Camden Connected Schools
  - Little Falls Connected Schools
  - Whitesboro Connected Schools
  - Oneida Connected Schools
  - Central Valley Connected Schools

2020

- NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
  - 5
New Partnerships Enhance Sustainability & Provide Support

- **January 2022, Opening of 3 Connected Schools**
  - Adirondack Connected Schools
  - Holland Patent Connected Schools
  - Oppenheim Ephratah St. Johnsville Connected Schools
- **March 2022, Opening of 2 Connected Schools**
  - Madison Connected Schools
  - Canastota Connected Schools
- **Formation of Connect-Ed, 501(c)3 subsidiary organization of CNYHHN, Inc. and co-leader of CCS Initiative with RAE.**
- **Executive Director, Danielle Martin has been part of the initiative since 2018.**
- **July 2022, Opening of 2 Connected Schools**
  - Mt Markham Connected Schools
  - New Hartford Connected Schools
- **As of August 2022, CCS now spans 3 BOCES, 14 Connected Districts, 58 Connected Schools, 7 counties, serving over 20,000 students. The Connected team has grown to 40+ staff including Site Coordinators, SEALS Coordinators, Central HUB team, Project Managers, Directors and Executive Leadership.**

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**BOCES**

The Community Schools Resource CoSer through 3 BOCES!

Throughout the Spring of 2021, the Connected Administration worked closely with Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES to create a Community Schools CoSer, a shared service model for the program so that school districts could receive State Aid reimbursement if they purchased the service through BOCES. The CoSer was approved through NY State Ed and as of July 2021, CNYHHN and RAE had established contracts with three area BOCES; Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES, Herkimer Fulton Montgomery BOCES and Madison Oneida BOCES which afforded an opportunity to expand the initiative’s reach to 13 school districts for the 2021-2022 school year.

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**CONNECTED CENTRAL HUB**

Relocation & Enhancement

The Connected Team had to pivot very quickly in September 2021, due to the closure of our Connected Staley Elementary School of the Rome City School District due to the flooding that hit Rome right before the start of the school year. The Connected Team moved their Central HUB to the main headquarters of the Connected Initiative on N. James Street in Rome, NY. Due to the exponential growth of Connected Districts, the Central HUB infrastructure has grown with now 3 staff and a well established delivery system to support the needs of our districts!
BIG INITIATIVES

OUR NEW VAN
Going The Extra Mile

Meet our new Connected HUB Delivery Van! We’re going the extra mile for students and teachers. It will be trucking and touring around to 58 Connected Schools! Deliveries will include: hygiene supplies, grocery items, school supplies, jackets, hats, mittens, SNACKS, after-school meals, TEACHER supplies and SO MUCH MORE - to all of our Connected HUBs. We’re thrilled to be able to deliver the necessities including approximately 10,000 pounds of food per week and serve 25,000 students and families across 14 districts for the 2022-2023 school year.

Co-leader, Melissa Roys, had a vision and, with support from Executive Assistant, Veronica Baker, that very quickly materialized into this whimsical design that represents who we are and what it means to be CONNECTED! Looking closely at the Connected Van, you will notice the rural and city communities represented, along with a FUN game to find our Mascot friends and all of the Connected logos throughout!

“We are invested in our community, we are invested in our schools and we can only do this together!” - Divisional Director of Impact Jennifer Waite

IMPACT CENTER DEVELOPMENT
Court on James Connected Impact Center

The Connected Community Schools Initiative has implemented a centralized HUB to connect Rome citizens with services that address many unmet resource needs, overcoming health disparities among vulnerable populations. The Community Impact Center will hub many non-profit agencies and community resources in a single location. The space identified is the building that previously housed Old City Hall in Rome. The roughly 18,000-square-foot building located at 207 N. James Street was home to the city's government for more than 80 years. The center will also serve as the main operations center for local school resource hubs. These hubs are currently being created in the school buildings of several area districts that participate in Connected Community Schools. “Our vision is to take what we have been able to do in schools and make it available to everyone in the community," RAE’s Executive Director, Melissa Roys stated. "There are people we know we could be assisting who are unable to access our school buildings, for instance, our senior population." The Impact Center will also “extend the day” to provide services after normal working hours so working families do not have to take time off from work to receive services. Non-profits will co-locate within the Impact Hub and provide resources and training for those in need. The vision is that every struggle a student, individual or family experiences will be met at one location. However, if the resources and services required are located within the HUB, there will be a well-coordinated effort to access those resources before one leaves the hub. Forging these local partnerships will allow the entire community to be more successful, productive and healthy.
“Connecting Community in Rome, NY” - The Connected Community Schools initiative was the topic of a New AFT Community Schools Case Study: “Connecting Community in Rome, N.Y., and Beyond” It chronicles the work in Rome, NY starting in 2016, when a district-wide coordination strategy started heating up and covers our multi-district expansion that tapped into a state funding CoSer BOCES strategy.

US Department of Education - Promise Neighborhood Presentation, which focused on homelessness and food insecurity throughout the nation. Co-Leader of the Connected Community Schools Initiative, Melissa Roys presented on how the CCS Initiative has continued to face these struggles head on in our Connected Districts and Communities.

LOCAL RECOGNITION

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

New York State Citation: In October 2021, the Connected Community Schools team received a New York State Citation from Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon for their hard work and impact on the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Recognized as 100 Heroes: As United Way of the Mohawk Valley celebrates 100 years of making an impact in our community, they celebrated 100 local heroes who have done the same. They were excited to recognize this community’s unsung heroes, the people who have made an impact in Oneida or Herkimer County, as part of United Way’s “100 Heroes.” 100 local individuals have been selected based on six categories that align with United Way’s mission. We are honored that our Leaders that started this collaborative effort were celebrated.

“I think when taking this position on this brand-new initiative what I recognized a really simple philosophy working collaboratively to ensure that students and families’ basic needs were met and they could participate in their opportunities and be successful” Melissa said. “I feel that myself and my team have made a difference, the initiative started right before COVID-19. We distributed millions of pounds of food and thousands of meals and assessed people’s needs.”

And Melissa’s call to action you ask? Because she was lacking growing up – so what better way to give back?

“I was a struggling kid that probably lacked all the supports that they needed and resources. I didn’t have self-confidence and didn’t feel I had a voice, so I think I was called to provide that to other kids and families,” she said. “I am very empathic to people’s situations. I truly believe the community as a whole has everything it needs but if we could do better about working collaboratively, they would be ok.” - Melissa Roys

“The work that I am most proud of is demonstrating ways that human service agencies can work collaboratively to make a difference,” said Jane.

“Our community has a tremendous number of services and initiatives and once you can build partnerships amongst these programs, vulnerable populations get their needs met and in turn, have a positive impact on our community as well. It’s a win-win for everyone involved.” - Jane Vail

Jane Vail, Executive Director of CNYHHN, Inc. recognized for HEALTH
CONNECT ED, INC.
Creation of a New Organization

Connect Ed, Inc. is a new subsidiary corporation of CNYHHN, Inc. that was established in 2021 to allow CNYHHN, Inc. to expand upon partnerships and programming to area school districts under the Connected Community Schools Initiative. CNYHHN, Inc. has been a core partner alongside Rome Alliance for Education, spearheading the model for the last 3 years. The creation of the new subsidiary will allow innovative growth for the partnering organizations for the Connected Initiative, while preserving CNYHHN Inc. designation as a NYS Department of Health Lead Health Home status without conflict. We are proud to congratulate Danielle Martin, who has been appointed as the Executive Director of Connect-Ed. Danielle has been a part of the Connected Initiative in her previous roles at CNYHHN, Inc., but this allows her to work closely with Co-Leader Melissa Roys to enhance and expand the Connected Community Schools Initiative.

ON THE INSIDE
What does a Connected Community School look like?

Our mission for the Connected Community Schools (CCS) Initiative is ensuring students, and families’ basic needs are met so they are able to engage in their education and be successful in our community. We want to ensure that students and families can achieve endless potential, without having their struggles or unmet needs act as a barrier to their academic, social, and emotional success.

Every Connected School has the foundation of our 4 components to ensure fidelity but every school takes the opportunity to enhance and create their own Connected Community School!

WE ARE CONNECTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- Family Engagement Opportunities
- Classroom Programming & Community Connections
- LINK
- HUBs
OUR 4 COMPONENTS

CCS initiative highlights for the 2021 - 2022 School Year:

Family Engagement Opportunities
CCS seeks to assist families with creating more positive experiences through fun and engaging activities with their children and their school, facilitating positive interactions with our staff and resulting in continued relationships and increased engagement in their children’s education. CCS never charges families and we are always conscious of hurdles, such as transportation.

Classroom Programming & Community Connections
We are always striving to provide our students with the most engaging and creative education. By adding programming from our community partners and professionals in the community, which brings hands on learning and experiences straight from our Experts of the Community. Our teachers love the help and our students love the experiences!

LINK™ is our single point of access for connecting students and families to the appropriate resources and services within their community based on identified needs. All who come through the LINK pipeline are assessed for any needs, on both an individual and household level, to ensure they have a support network in place and that each member of their team is working together to meet these needs both, short- and long-term.

HUBs
In 2021, we transitioned our physical space in our dedicated school buildings to our HUBs. This reflected the tangible items which support the needs of our students, families, and faculty/staff and the additional support provided through these Hubs by our Site Coordinators. The HUBs are now the 4th component of our initiative which provides snacks to students and teachers, clothing, hygiene supplies, school supplies, and additional tangible items that are supported by our formal partnerships and donations from the community.
LINK is always a difficult component to highlight, as it speaks to the struggles of students and families which are often quite personal. While we may not be able to share the empowering and inspiring stories that mark the true impact of what we do on a deep level, we can quantify the breadth of the LINK program’s impact on the community.

We received a total of 35,864 LINK referrals which included referrals from the school LINK team, student generated HUB referrals by connecting with their Site Coordinator. The primary identified need through our LINK referrals was mental health/behavioral concern for the identified individual.

We also received a total of 612 Self Referrals which are generated from parents/caregivers in the community that are reaching out to the CCS team directly for support.

Upon receipt of a LINK Referral, the Site Coordinator engages the parent/caregiver to complete the Universal Assessment for the student and family identified. Through collaboration with the school administration, the Site Coordinators will identify target services either within the district or from community-based providers to address identified needs from the assessment, family and/or school staff. The Site Coordinator will assist with all identified referrals to keep a seamless line of communication between families and the school staff to ensure that services are appropriate and effective.

A total of 1,610 assessments were successfully completed for the 21-22” school year. Throughout the assessment process, our team not only assesses the individual needs, but the needs of the entire family. A total of 1,810 ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUALS were identified and supported throughout the assessment process.

64% | Children 34% | Adults 2% | Seniors

The TOP 5 Areas of need identified throughout the Assessment Process:

- Mental Health
- Food Security
- Medical Care (Primary Care/Dental)
- Reliable Transportation
- Community Based Supports (Care Management, Advocates, Mentors etc.)
As a result of collaboration, outreach, and engagement with our students and families, we had a large success in connecting with supports services, tangible supplies and formal community based resources! Our CCS team was successful in making a total of 39,962, including LINK Referrals, Self Referrals & HUB Referrals. We learned this year that there was a universal need in connecting our students and families with Community Based Supports such as mentors, peers etc. to enhance their sense of belonging and natural supports to manage their everyday lives.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR HUBs**

2021 - 2022 - A Year Of Exponential Growth

Our Connected Districts went from 3 HUBs to 53 HUBs in every building to support the needs of our students, families and school faculty & staff.

Even as the constraints of the pandemic begin to wear off, we are still seeing the effects on food insecurity throughout our community. Distributing over 980,000 meals to the community since first opening, our school-based food pantry has now transitioned to “HUBs” to reflect the additional tangible resources and supports that are needed for our students and families to be successful.

During the school year, these HUBs provided snacks to students and teachers, housed clothing, hygiene supplies, school supplies, and books for any who needed it, and, of course, fed community members in need. We could not do this work without our partnership with CNY Food Bank, who distributes on average over 10,000 lbs of food to our central HUB on a weekly basis.

*Snacks available to children and classrooms in need – this year, we gave 495,208 snacks to Students.*

We learned that many students were coming to school for extended periods of time before and after the expected school day whether it was for sports, musical arts, etc. - this year, we provided 11,965 after school meals!

The HUB space has organically grown into a safe place for students to feel a sense of belonging. The HUB Club was formed to make some of the students official members of the space. Students are able to grab what they need at any time, whether that is a prom dress, sneakers, school supplies, an outfit for concerts or graduation, a simple snack or a bag of food to bring home for dinner. The HUB Club even offers daily support including social-emotional skill building, working on self-esteem, life skills and an overall a sense of belonging in the school community!

**Fuel Packs**

Many of our Connected Districts very quickly have asked the CCS team to provide additional support to coordinate and ensure that all families in need of weekend meals receive them and that it continues during the school holidays, breaks, and summer. We do not do this work alone, so we have called upon our partners at CNY Food Bank and additional Community Partners to provide financial support to sustain the fuel packs in identified districts. A total of 2,121 fuel packs have been provided throughout the 2021-2022 school year, and we continue to distribute them throughout the summer!
OUR CONNECTED DISTRICTS

- Adirondack Connected Community Schools
- Canastota Connected Community Schools
- Camden Connected Community Schools
- Central Valley Connected Community Schools
- Dolgeville Connected Community Schools
- Holland Patent Connected Community Schools
- Little Falls Connected Community Schools
- Madison Connected Community Schools
- Oneida Connected Community Schools
- Oppenheim-Ephratah-St. Johnsville Connected Community Schools
- Rome Connected Community Schools
- Waterville Connected Community Schools
- Whitesboro Connected Community Schools
**Connected Rome City School District**, our ‘Home’ Connected District continues to show impact that we never thought possible! The schools of Rome continue to work collaboratively each day to ensure the growth, health and happiness of all their students and families. Our Schools have opened their doors and let the community in. The community’s response to be involved with supporting students and families has been overwhelmingly successful! It would certainly take more than a couple of pages to chronicle the activities, engagements and impact, but here are some of the exciting highlights!

**Pack Your Pantry Resource Fair | August**
With school right around the corner and a Team of new Connected Rome Site Coordinators, the CCS Initiative wanted to pull the crew together for a community-wide event, still responding to the struggles of families. Dubbed the “Pack Your Pantry Resource Fair,” attendees were provided with an opportunity to come and “pack their pantry” with items from our food pantry and resource HUB. Many local resources and organizations came to share their information and stuck it out with our site coordinators in the rain, serving our fabulous community of over 200 families!

**Clothing and Food Giveaway | September**
With flooding causing the closure of Connected Staley Elementary, home to our Central HUB, there was an immediate need to clear out as much stock as possible, getting it out of Staley and into the hands of the community! With space provided by DeSalvo’s catering parking lot, the team set up an outdoor “shopping” experience for the community. All hands were on deck to ensure that we were able to not only clear space, but interact with participants to meet any additional needs they may have had outside of tangible goods. Over 300 individuals came and picked up clothing, shoes, winter gear, frozen and canned food items, and household supplies from our Central HUB.

**American Heart Association**
Laurie Schmidt from the American Heart Association came to Connected Ridge Mills to get our students pumped up for the Jumpathon challenge! Mr. Flagg shared that if each student completed 100 jumps the PTC would donate 1 cent per jump to the AHA.

**We Engaged Families**
Many evenings we invited families back into our buildings, after being out so long due to COVID-19. Family Paint Night was just one of many - held at Connected Gansevoort and coordinated by our Rome CCS Site Coordinator Bri in collaboration with the Connected Gansevoort PTC. This event had approximately 50 children and 100 adults engaging together in a group painting activity.
Our Rome HUBs

Space has been limited in Rome, but we have established HUBs in every inch available. The team has taken great strides in setting up the Connected Strouth Middle School Connected HUB. The space is available to students, staff, and families and will be filled with snacks, hygiene products, emergency groceries, and more! The team assisted in cleaning out the RFA Clothing Closet, organizing their existing stock to better support the students and families in the community.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

In April our Connected Bellamy Site Coordinator, Ali Lipinski, welcomed Cornell Cooperative Extension. They provided the students a presentation on Agriculture and were able to teach the students about the different parts of a flower! While over at Connected Dentia in April, CCS Site Coordinator Bri organized and hosted a night for families to create some really cool art tiles!! Heading over to Connected Gansevoort they were hosting a Spring Bingo Night.

Recycling Club

Connected Ridge Mills CCS Site Coordinator organized the Recycling Center that came into the classrooms, after which we began a Recycling Club.

YOU’VE GIVEN US THE MOST HELP WE’VE HAD OVER THE PAST YEAR. THANK YOU!!!!" - A parent struggling to find resources

Touch a Truck

The NYS Troopers, Oneida County Sheriff’s Office, Rome Police, and the Town of Lee Fire Department showed off their trucks and talked with the students and Coco the mascot. CCS assisted with providing Giant HUB Games for the FUN event, Coco even showed up!

Rome Capitol Theater Collaboration

Our friends at the Rome Capitol Theater collaborated with Rome CCS to host their 20th edition of Cartoon Madness during the week of February break. We even provided every family with Large Popcorn and a Drink! Coco and Cookie loved it.

LINK™

is difficult stories and struggles of our students and families to talk about sometimes, but this component of the Rome Connected Initiative has certainly had the most impact. Here is a testimonial from RCSD Site Connected Coordinator:

LINK Success Story | "A student came into our (Strouth) Connected HUB with sneakers on that were falling apart, I recognized his name from a previous LINK referral. I had been having a hard time connecting with his dad. We weren’t able to find a pair in his size while he was with me. But after reaching out to the larger team, I was able to find a pair of brand new sneakers and dropped them off at the house after work. He was so excited to have a pair of sneakers (let alone new ones), that this led to Dad wanting to participate in some other resources and services for the family."
**Connected Waterville Central School glided into their 3rd year!**

Connected Waterville met us with open arms, embracing the philosophy of working as a Team! We have also found tremendous support from the surrounding Community! Each of our Connected Districts are created the same but grow to meet the unique nuances of their community. Connected Waterville is proof of this, with much of their focus being on not only feeding families but teaching students how to grow and feed themselves, just as one example. We look forward to seeing Connected Waterville keep growing!

**School Based Health Center**

We are proud to say our CCS Admin had a large role embedding with the Health Center. After Connected Waterville was faced with lacking a partner for the initiative, we quickly introduced them to our Community partners from Upstate Family Health Center. It certainly took some work on everyone’s part, but quickly the doors were opened to all students and families to have access to health care right in their school buildings! The CCS team continues to work closely with the Health Center, which has been exceeding expectations with referrals and new patients. Site coordinator Miranda continues to connect families in need of primary care with the health center. The health center has also been able to provide Mental Health support to students within their space.

**“Look, Try, No Need To Buy”**

Creekside Community Outreach has been one of largest Community supports. In collaboration with our CCS Site Coordinator Miranda, they set up a free boutique for students. In this “Look, Try, No Need To Buy” room, students were able to browse and select items for the upcoming February semi-formal dance including dresses, suit separates, shoes, accessories, and makeup. Over 40 semi dresses and some formal vests were donated and the boutique was set up for 2 days! Approximately 75 dresses were shared with neighboring Connected Madison District and 30 dresses were shared with our Connected Adirondack District.

**Waterville Public Library**

We have collaborated a lot with our good friends at the Waterville Public Library, CCS Site Coordinator Miranda joined the kids and the Community for a day of indoor Winter Fun, complete with popsicle snowflake crafts and a take home activity. Miranda was able to interact with the kids in her Connected Community through fort building, a “Get to Know your Stuffed Animal” activity, and even a virtual bedtime story reading.

**Dental Services Coming Soon**

Superintendent, Dr. Spring, CCS Site Coordinator, Miranda Stockbridge and Mosaic Health Director, Kara Sweet met to discuss the implementation of a formal partnership to provide dental services to Connected Waterville Students.
Local Community Heroes
Local Community Heroes came to read to our Connected Waterville students. Readers included Nurse Renee Russell from the student health clinic, volunteer firefighter Jacob English, Sgt. Morgan, Sheriff Rob Maciol, Officer Toby Lindfield from the Oneida County Sheriff’s Department, and Waterville Times editor Patty Louise. Superhero Reading Night continued at the Waterville Public Library Superhero-themed night of Family Fun.

Focus on Wellness
The Connected Junior and Senior High school participated in a Wellness Fair at the gym. Students were given a passport to have stamped to ensure that they visited each table. Once they returned their passport at the end, they each received a prize. A staff Wellness Fair was held in May where faculty was met with a variety of Community businesses that demonstrated their specialties. Staff were even able to get a free massage as well as coupons and raffles for prizes!

Connected MPS Continues to Grow
We had lots of additions to our garden with the help of Mrs. Fox. Bright and beautiful flowers were added to the garden after reading a book on flowers! Kindergartners planted Sunflower seeds, guessing whether they would end up taller than they are. Other classrooms were busy planting boxes of vegetable plants. The plants themselves were donated by Brick House Acres. The students worked hard to grow tomatoes, basil, cucumbers, mint, egg plant, beans, squash and pumpkins.

Thanksgiving For All
The CCS team partnered with the Waterville Food Pantry for a Thanksgiving food drive to provide Thanksgiving baskets to family in need later this season.

Backpack Program
In December, Waterville CCS Team took on the task of making and distributing food packages for the Backpack Program to ensure students didn’t go without food during the holiday break. It contained some non-perishable food items to sustain the family during the extra time off school as well as snack items and pantry staples; 200 Backpacks were made and distributed!
Connected Dolgeville Central School Celebrates 3 Years Connected. We formalized our partnership with Dolgeville in 2019, one month prior to the pandemic and was unable to celebrate the Dolgeville School District for becoming part of the Connected Initiative. We were honored to celebrate with them at the conclusion of this school year on their 3rd year of being CONNECTED!

The impact on the school and families has been great, even immeasurable for some. When we speak of Connected Dolgeville we speak of resiliency, a school full of individuals that, when met with struggles and hurdle, continue to meet challenges head on and overcome. Connected Dolgeville often feels like ‘family’ in the way that a group of people continue to care for one another, work as a team and always are doing what is best for each and every one of their students.

Trick-or-Treat
Connected is about collaboration with the local food pantry, the Connected Dolgeville CCS Team assisted with the collection, storage, packing, and coordination of pick up of food for the Annual Hunger Coalition Food Drive!

Family Night
Cornell Cooperative Extension provided activities and dinner for those families who were able to join us! EFNP and Mosaic Health tabled the event and spoke to families about their services.

From Left: Julie Castor, Family School Navigator, Ashley Shook, Prekindergarten Teacher, Katie Rockwell, CCS Project Manager, Crystal Chrisman, Elementary Principal, Sarah Williams-Herringshaw, Site Coordinator, & Caitlin Madden, Community Educator-Cornell Cooperative Extension
Bike Rodeo
Students in grades 2-6 were invited to bring their bikes to the school for our bike rodeo. The police department facilitated helmet safety checks, tire pressure checks, a safety demonstration and an obstacle course for the students. Sarah coordinated with the Dolgeville Park Program so that the children were able to come up to school for the afternoon. Stewarts donated ice cream sundae kits to the event and lunch was distributed by the school cafeteria.

Community Response Team
In response to the flooding damage in the local community, Dolgeville’s CCS Team made sure the community knew they could reach out to us for assistance. The Connected Crisis Team was put to action and made a delivery of 20 family food packs, 100 hygiene products, 20 packs of diapers, 50 packs of wipes, 10 blankets, cleaning supplies, and water to be available for anyone who needed them.

Food Drop
Dolgeville CCS Team organized a Community Food Drop. CCS Team pivoted and set up food delivery for all families in Connected Central Valley, Oppenheim, and Little Falls that were affected by a winter storm that left many families without power for a couple of days. Over 400 families were served including 10,000 lbs of food! All of this was conducted in just under 3 hours! “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

L e N K TM
Connected Dolgeville is not alone with having students and families that struggle, but with the challenge of being a rural community sometimes far from resources and services the response to those struggles are oftentimes a bit harder to navigate - being Connected helped! Among many of the struggles families endured, we also were faced with the aftermath of house fires, Connected Dolgeville CCS LINK Team went above and beyond, securing food, shoes, diapers, hygiene and even replacing toys. Staying Connected to these families to ensure they continued to feel supported and resources and services were in arm-reach. Transportation, food insecurities, lack of appropriate clothing, domestic violence, mental health needs and primary care were navigated often. It was with a strong dedicated LINK Team, a caring Community and continued collaboration that we were able to come up and over many hurdles, and leave people in a better place and feeling Connected.
We were excited to create a Connected District in Camden. Superintendent Ravo Root and his faculty were team players from the start. We realized very quickly that Connected Camden never says “Can’t,” but instead replies, “We can and we will!” with a shared mission of assisting families and students. Each day we see the impact that being Connected has had on so many students and families in Connected Camden, and we have had fun! Connected Site Coordinator Tayler was invited to the fourth grade book club at Connected McConnellsville Elementary as a guest speaker, which Tayler still sees as a highlight of the school year. Together the group read the chapter book Crenshaw by Katherine Applegate. Crenshaw tells the story of a young boy whose family is struggling with homelessness and food insecurity. Tayler spoke with the group about their Connected HUB and the different items that are available as well as services and resources. The book club participants toured the HUB and had a rich discussion about the importance of helping others.

**Kindness Cafe**
Our Site Coordinators partnered with Connected Camden Middle School to host a Kindness Cafe! The team set up various stations and activities for students. The attendees played games, made kindness stars, and enjoyed a hot cocoa station.

**A New Motto**
Throughout the year, kindness has flourished in our Connected Camden District. We continue to promote kindness through events and activities. On one such occasion, the children created their own kindness stickers to give to a friend. “Stick with Kindness” has become a district motto!

**Self Care Day**
Mrs. Keller and our CCS team collaborated on a day dedicated to a topic that is critical to the well-being of our students and families – self-care. Our friends from NYS Snap-Ed delivered presentations on healthy eating for the attendees. We also pulled out our famous GIANT Games for students to play, because laughter and smiles are important for self-care!

**Vaping Concerns**
Many students, staff, and families in the community have expressed concerns about vaping. With the help of our friends at Center for Family Life and Recovery, we shared critical information about the effects of vaping. The presentation was well-received!
Family Engagement
Site Coordinator Tayler, our new Canastota Site Coordinator, Kate, and our mascot, Coco, held an event to interact with the Camden community and let them know what it means to belong to a Connected District. Community friends showed up from SNAP-Ed and Boy Scouts. Pop Warner signed up students for football and cheerleading, Irish dancers and karate students showed off their skills, and the YMCA hosted a free boot camp for families. The Oneida County Sheriff’s office assisted families with registering for Safe Child ID cards. 28 children received ID tags at the event!

Learning Fair
Connected McConellsville Elementary held a Learning Fair at which students researched a topic of their choice and presented their findings to the school. Site Coordinator Tayler jumped on board to highlight Coco and Connected Community Schools!

We have witnessed families receive new hope as we work together to address issues such as domestic violence, food insecurity, homelessness, medical issues, and mental health. Even something as simple as securing a pair of glasses for a student can make a huge difference to families. One particular instance highlights how our Connected Schools strive to collaborate with others and work as a team. A student recommended a business that might be willing to donate glasses, and they did!

HUBs
The Connected Camden HUB continues to provide over 120 families with extra food for long weekends and breaks. This year the amount of food that was sent out in Fuel Packs could have filled an 18 wheeler truck!

Need a Job?
CCS Site Coordinator Cole designed a bulletin board around summer job possibilities. Cole was ready to assist students with developing resumes and other professional development skills.

Dental Programming
We were thrilled to welcome Kara Sweet and Mosaic Dental to Connected McConellsville Elementary, where we collaborated to set up a mobile dental clinic! Mosaic Health Community Dentistry has been providing school-based dental services since 1995 and focuses on education and prevention in urban and rural areas of New York State. In the first week that Mosaic Dental was on site, approximately 33 children received services from the dental hygienist.
We believe that the Little Falls City School District was already Connected before we arrived to create a Community School. At a ribbon-cutting ceremony held at Benton Hall Academy, Connected Little Falls City School District became the sixth central New York school district to join the CCS Family. It was a wonderful day full of community support and student involvement. Students, faculty, and staff joined the celebration in their Halloween costumes. Benton Hall Academy kindergarten and first grade students sang the school song while CCS Mascot Coco danced along with them. Connected Little Falls is flourishing!

Getting Ready for School
Our Little Falls CCS team attended kindergarten orientation at Benton Hall, taking the opportunity to meet community members and facilitating a clothing giveaway for students and families. They also participated in the ninth grade orientation, where they met students and families, educated attendees on what it means to become a Connected Community School, and provided students and families with school supplies and snacks.

Classroom Programming
Caitlin Madden and the Cornell Cooperative Extension are providing classroom lessons that successfully meet students' social-emotional needs. The informative activities address some of the skills most critical for students: mindfulness, coping skills, and social skills.

Christmas On Main Street
The Little Falls CCS team held their first community event this year during Christmas on Main Street. CCS coordinated 20 students to volunteer and assist with the event, which included activities such as cookie decorating and jewelry making. The hot chocolate was flowing, and families were able to make beaded bracelets or necklaces while enjoying their refreshments.

LINK™ offers a safe outlet for parents and caretakers to discuss their struggles and know that support and help will be available. The Connected Little Falls LINK team assesses, assists, and supports numerous families to access basic social-emotional support, mental healthcare through the school's mental health satellite office, dental care, insurance and primary care, and assistance with homelessness. Food insecurity is on the rise, and the LINK team continues to ensure that students and families never go without.
HUBs and HUB Clubs

On any given day at Connected Little Falls, numerous students can be found at the HUB, a place that has grown organically into a safe space where students feel a sense of belonging. The HUB Club was formed to appoint certain students official members of the space. These students are able to pop in at any time to grab what they need, whether it be a prom dress, sneakers, school supplies, an outfit for a concert or graduation ceremony, a snack, or a bag of food to bring home for dinner. The HUB Club offers daily programming and social-emotional curriculum to work on self-esteem and life skills.

Connected Little Falls, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, and Daneli Partners joined forces to enhance the resiliency of our students and families under the Connected Umbrella.

Connected Little Falls City School District Superintendent Keith Levatino, Connected Community Schools Co-Leader Danielle Martin, SUNY Polytechnic Interim Dean of the College of Health Sciences Joanne Joseph, and Daneli Partners Chief Executive Officer David Casullo are pleased to announce a formal partnership between their four entities. In addition to enhancing students’ individual social-emotional learning, this partnership will provide students with hands-on experience in civic responsibility and exposure to higher education. In return, SUNY Polytechnic students will gain opportunities for research and to further explore their career interests.

The partnership has resulted in the creation and facilitation of a Civic Responsibility Committee. This committee will focus on a group of students who will create projects in their school and community that enhance student learning, engagement, and motivation. According to SEALs Coordinator Sarah Phillips, “This committee will be a good opportunity for students to get involved and develop a new level of pride and engagement in their school and community. The committee will be student-driven, giving them the flexibility to use their creativity, interests, and understanding of community needs to plan fundraising events and awareness initiatives. I’m excited to be a part of this new layer of our initiative and think it will fit perfectly into the ‘big picture’ of bridging our schools and communities to promote resiliency, acceptance, and compassion.” The two SUNY Polytechnic interns have already begun working in the schools and have each committed ten hours per week to this collaboration.

Satellite Mental Health Clinic – Community Health & Behavioral Services

Co-Leader of Connected Community Schools Danielle Martin collaborated with Dr. Levatino and his Administration Team to identify a solution to students’ increased mental health needs, as many students had been placed on waiting lists to receive services in the community. A new partnership was formed with Community Health & Behavioral Services to embed a satellite mental health clinic at Connected Benton Hall Academy and the middle and high schools. We are working together to reduce barriers so that help is available for those who need it.

Fuel Packs

Little Falls Community Outreach and the Little Falls Youth and Family Center collaborated with the CCS team to ensure that all families in need of weekend meals receive them and that the meals continue during the summer.
We were already on the ground creating a Connected School, but the ribbon-cutting made it official. The impact we have made continues to resonate through the lives of hundreds of students and their families. Connected Central Valley was open to connecting as a team and working together for the greater good of the community. Connected Central Valley Site Coordinator Bonnie hit the ground running and arranged a meeting with the team to discuss the AMEND program, which seeks to change the culture that supports domestic violence and invest in the health and development of students. Now we have a 20-week group program for young men!

Fun Times
Our Connected Family Easter Egg Hunt attracted over 100 people! Participants enjoyed games, chalk painting, music, and hunting for Easter eggs. A popcorn and movie night was held at Connected Jarvis Middle School, complete with an appearance from our very own mascot, Cookie.

Fuel Packs
Connected Central Valley responded to struggles with food insecurity by distributing Fuel Packs for students to take home on long weekends and breaks. The Fuel Packs included CVA t-shirts!

Laundry Love
Connected Central Valley Site Coordinators explored resources to assist families with laundry, which has continued to come up as a need through LINK. They decided to team up with the Laundry Love initiative. On July 14, Connected Central Valley held their first Laundry Love event in partnership with Colonial Manor Laundromat in Ilion, and the services continue to this day! The team was able to help families with MANY loads of laundry. They gathered monetary donations from the community to help fund laundry services and purchase laundry detergent. The Grand in Ilion stepped up as a major supporter of the event.

Jarvis Mott Marathon
Site Coordinators Ed and Bonnie facilitated a vendor table event at Connected Jarvis Middle School, where students wrote positive words on green ribbons and visited the vendors. Many of our community friends and partners attended as well. Ed displayed the ribbons on a school wall for all to see. The Christopher Newton Foundation donated water bottles for the event.
Global Play Day
Classes at Connected Fisher Elementary celebrated Global Play Day with GIANT Games from the Connected Fun Library. At Connected Barringer Road Elementary, students brought in their own toys and played outside. The HUB provided proper outdoor attire to students in need.

Just Being Me Club
The Just Being Me Club at Jarvis Middle School, hosted by Catholic Charities, has been impactful and fun for students. Just Being Me meets for crafts and activities as well as discussions about social pressures at school and on the internet. Students learn that it is okay to be themselves. They are encouraged to embrace themselves rather than trying to be someone else. Our awesome community partners at Catholic Charities also run the twice-weekly Treaty Program, which educates students about anti-bullying and conflict resolution skills.

Post-It Notes Of Kindness
On World Compliment Day, Connected Site Coordinators Bonnie, Ed, and Donna had students write compliments on post-it notes and place them on the glass doors of the cafeteria. The activity gave students a chance to learn about the HUB. Students also created colored tags for a Compliment Tree, all in the name of kindness!

Healthy Eats
Our friends and long-time partners from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County visited Jarvis Middle School to share healthy eating habits and other useful information from their NYS SNAP-Ed program.

Summer Youth Programming
We have worked diligently with Kathy Stalteri and the Herkimer County Youth Bureau to recruit students for the Summer Youth Program. CCS Site Coordinator Bonnie collaborated with students to write letters to their local legislators asking for endorsement for employment. She also assisted students with signing up for youth employment through Working Solutions. Over 30 students received employment assistance!
Bringing in Whitesboro to the Connected Family was very exciting for us. We received feedback from families in the community that they were anxious for this initiative. Connected Marcy Elementary and Connected Harts Hill Elementary received a presentation from The Center on diversity. All grade levels participated and seemed to deeply enjoy the information shared. A representative from the Burmese community whose first language was Karen accompanied the presenter, and the students had many insightful questions for her. They were excellent listeners and engaged in the discussion and presentation.

Connected Whitesboro District Community Scavenger Hunt
During the week of spring break, students and families visited local participating businesses to complete the Community Scavenger Hunt. After taking pictures at the various stops, they had their names entered for a chance to win a basket of goodies. Several lucky students were chosen as the winners!

Social Emotional Family Night Coordinators
Connected West Road Elementary welcomed the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County for a Social-Emotional Family Night. The families ate dinner from Panera Bread and visited assorted stations where they could make calming glitter jars, breathing buddies, and kindness bracelets. Some of our other Connected Site Coordinators joined forces to ensure a productive evening.

Family Library Night
Connected West Road Elementary collaborated with the Whitestown Public Library to offer a Family Library Night. Parents socialized and learned about the CCS initiative while students borrowed books, played games, and colored coloring sheets to turn in for free ice cream from Stewarts!

Connected West Road Lunch Groups
Students attended lunch groups with our CCS Site Coordinator in the HUB every Friday where they got the chance to discuss what was going on in their lives and how they were feeling, and complete fun interactive activities. Next year, staff are looking to increase the number of students who participate in these groups, as well as offer an after school HUB Club!

A Heartwarming Success Story
A teacher came into the HUB in search of clothing for a student who consistently comes to school in clothing that is a little snug on him. We were able to reach out to the other site coordinators, who gathered together a large bag of clothing for the student to choose from. The teacher was so appreciative and grateful that we were able to come together to offer her student this service.
The Connected Oneida Central School community has embraced the initiative. As we look back on the year, we marvel at the friendships that have formed with numerous community partners such as Oneida Public Library, the YMCA, the Recreation and Community Center, Walmart, the United Methodist Church, Stewarts, and so many more! These partners mobilized quickly in support of students, families, teachers, and the school community as a whole.

Fail Family Read Along
Connected Mascots Candy and Cookie joined Connected Willard Prior Elementary School’s “Storybook Halloween Walk.”

“Team Up!”
In partnership with students from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Connected Otto Shortell Middle School held presentations on empathy, anti-bullying, and how to be an upstander rather than a bystander in celebration of Bullying Prevention Month.

Laundry Love
We are well aware that a lack of clean clothing is often responsible for high absenteeism in schools, and Oneida CCS Site Coordinators wanted to do something about it. They met, planned, and coordinated with the new pastors of a United Methodist Church, a couple that was also involved with our initiative in Rome, to establish the first Laundry Love in the area. Families are now able to do their laundry free of charge, an initiative that continues to serve the community today.

Need a Coat….Grab a Coat
In response to the cold weather and the fact that many students lack appropriate clothing, our CCS team organized a Grab a Coat event in collaboration with First United Methodist Church. 400 coats were gathered up and over 100 students and families came to grab one!

A Book Reading
The Madison County Sheriff’s Department visited several elementary school classrooms to read Jan Brett’s The Mitten, an event which quickly gained popularity. The book reading received so much engagement on our Connected Community Schools social media sites that we began to hear from other law enforcement agencies requesting to be invited to our Connected Classrooms to read to the children.

#KindnessRocksProject
Our friends from Blocks and Rocks donated rocks to our Kindness Rocks Project

Salon Services
We are very thankful to Morning Salon for assisting with this amazing project! Salon Services was created by Miss Woodcock and was available once a week to students. The Connected HUB provided additional hygiene items, and students left feeling great about themselves, beautiful inside and out.

Coping Skills
Our amazing partners and friends from Cornell Cooperative Extension continued to present programs focused on feelings and coping skills. We always welcome their helpful and friendly faces to our Connected Community Schools!
All Adirondack schools completed implementation in January 2022 and were able to use the HUBs for lunch groups, dance parties, places to complete homework, and safe spaces for all students! Connected Adirondack hosted a Community Open House/Fair. The event was held on May 17 along with the Adirondack ribbon-cutting ceremony. Approximately ten community partners and local agencies joined and hosted tables to share educational and informational materials.

**Going To Prom**
Site Coordinator Jessica worked with the community to seek out prom outfits for students in need. By creating a flier, contacting local businesses, and partnering with Connected Madison District, Jessica was able to collect 25-30 new or gently used gowns, which she brought on site so that students could browse for the perfect outfits. Jessica was also able to connect with a tuxedo business, A Vitullo Inc. of New Hartford, which provided two free tuxedo rentals to local students.

**#KindnessRocks**
Thanks to a donation from Lowe’s Home Improvement, several seventh grade students got to finish out their school year with the Kindness Rocks Project. They painted rocks and hid them throughout Erwin Park. People were encouraged to find the rocks, take pictures of them, and post the pictures on social media using the hashtag #kindnessrocks in Boonville. The students also painted a special rock whose lucky finder would be awarded a free pizza donated by Luigi’s Pizzeria.
Community Gardens
In June, Site Coordinator Jessica joined forces with Dodge-Pratt-Northam Art and Community Center to create community gardens. She received several donations from local businesses to help with this project. Jessica’s vision was to allow students to participate, get their hands dirty, and collaborate with the community in order to develop a sense of pride in their area.

Food Giveaway
On July 22, Connected Adirondack Central School hosted a food distribution event for the district. Approximately 25 CCS staff members gathered together to assist in the giveaway. We were able to serve over 441 families, who were provided with meat, fruits and vegetables, and canned goods.
We couldn’t have felt more welcomed than when we pulled up to Connected Holland Patent only to be met with a giant “Welcome CCS” banner on our ribbon-cutting day. The students played a role in the event, both as observers in the crowd and as musical performers. Many friends and special guests came by to help us “connect.” Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES, Safe Schools Mohawk Valley, Center for Family Life and Recovery, Inc., Sheriff Rob Maciol, and Foothills Community Outreach are all working collaboratively with us to make change for the better.

Dedication
Since day one of implementation, Connected Holland Patent showed us how dedicated they were to their students and families. They also believe in the importance of collaboration and connection. The impact of becoming Connected could be felt immediately as we began building bridges to all that the community has to offer. Connected Holland Patent quickly began creating HUB spaces and inviting in community partnerships with such entities as Cornell Cooperative Extension, which is providing education on self-care. The CCS team participated in Career Day and offered students information about interviewing and professional development skills.

The Garden Club
The Holland Patent CCS team implemented an after-school Garden Club, where students are planting hydroponic seedlings. At the first session they planted basil and lettuce, and they were thrilled to see sprouts popping up. The middle school students created their own hydroponic wick systems with Miss Kim to bring home. We are so excited to GROW with the students!

LINK™ responded to many community struggles this year, such as unemployment, the need for mental health care, lack of insurance, food insecurity, and so much more. The HUBs within the buildings were appreciated by students more than we had expected. On a daily basis students could be seen grabbing hygiene items, snacks, and even groceries to take home with them. LINK will continue to assist families in navigating and securing resources, services, and tangible items that help enable our students to succeed!
When we first met with the OESJ Administrator, it was clear to us that OESJ needed to become Connected. We discussed many struggles facing district families, and we were anxious to offer some immediate assistance. The need is real in OESJ and there is still much work, support, and building of this Connected School to be done, but we are already seeing an impact!

I Scream, You Scream, We ALL Scream For Ice Cream!
An Ice Cream Social was held to celebrate students’ successful completion of summer school. The OESJ CCS Site Coordinator partnered with Stewarts to receive a donation of sundae kits. CCS Mascot Coco also attended the event.

PARP (Parents As Reading Partners)
Parents as Reading Partners is a huge event in Connected OESJ! During PARP activities, students were able to explore and ask questions. Several times during the event, participants expressed their needs, such as for food, backpacks, and school supplies, and had their needs instantly met at the HUB!

Fuel Packs
OESJ Site Coordinator Kelly Wood collaborated with the school nurse to identify families who needed food assistance through the summer. Kelly and the school nurse worked together to submit LINK referrals, provide outreach, and engage with the families. Each family now receives semi-monthly food boxes!

LINK™ is typically the most impactful component of our Connected Model, but is often the least spoken about since it involves the personal and private struggles families are having. Very quickly, our OESJ CCS team was faced with many of these struggles: homelessness, lack of transportation, domestic violence, medical needs, dental needs, unemployment, unsafe housing, and food insecurity. Some families were reluctant at first to share their struggles, but after seeing the support and resources our team has to offer, their reluctance evaporated. We look forward to building long-term relationships with these families!

Community Food Drop
In April, the Connected OESJ team partnered with our Community Response Team in Dolgeville to run a Community Food Drop. A storm had left families without power for days, resulting in the loss of stored and refrigerated food. Staff assisted in unloading the truck, packing bags, and assisting other members of the CCS team. In just under three hours, over 400 families received more than 10,000 pounds of food! Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.
Connected Madison Central School is one of the warmest, most welcoming schools we have worked with. Since the ribbon-cutting ceremony, our CCS team members have felt as if they are members of the Madison family. We share the mission and vision of ensuring that students and families are successful. At the ceremony, the student council president recited the Pledge of Allegiance, the pep band performed, and the select chorus sang. Several community members were present, including State Senator Rachel May and Madison Mayor Barbara Clark. The students and community came together to celebrate becoming Connected!

Off to a Running Start...
The second grade classroom comes down for a half hour every Wednesday for social-emotional learning with the Madison CCS team, Deb and Michele. They are able to do activities, play games, and enjoy snacks in the HUB. They discuss important concepts such as friendship and emotions.

Growing
Our Connected Community Garden students planted seeds in their classrooms which will eventually be transplanted to the school’s community garden.

Cookies with the Easter Bunny
Madison CCS staff and volunteers worked with the PTO to host Cookies with the Easter Bunny. All students were welcomed into the building for an afternoon of cookie decorating with the Easter Bunny and Connect-ed Mascot Candy. The HUB was open, offering GIANT games to play and make! A great time was had by all.

We were able to provide approximately 12 food boxes to families that were affected by the power outages this month. One of our community members commented,

When the Madison HUB doors opened, the students came right in! Immediately, the students began making use of the HUB’s fun library; GIANT Candy Land was a hit. The principal encouraged the primary school teachers to pick a time to bring their classes down to visit the HUB, have a snack, and check out all of the cool things on offer. Over the course of a single week, the HUB welcomed over 150 students to tour the space.
**Community Partnerships**
The CCS team received a generous donation from our partners at Creekside Community Outreach Center. With the combined efforts of Connected Madison, Connected Waterville, and Creekside, staff worked hard this prom season to make sure that all local students could attend their prom - and do it in style!

Between prom dresses, suits, ties, shoes, and even accessories, Connected Community Schools had our kids covered! In Connected Waterville, two days were set aside for the event. Madison Program Manager Deb helped the Waterville staff decorate the cafeteria and set it up with “Prom Gear.” They were ready to help students find something special to wear. Once Waterville students had selected their outfits, the staff shared 75 dresses with Connected Madison and 30 dresses with Connected Adirondack so that their students could access the dresses in their respective HUBs. By providing formal wear, we were able to help students who might not have been able to attend their proms otherwise. CCS is meeting the needs of our students, one prom dress at a time.

**Food Giveaway**
On June 20, the Madison CCS team worked together to put on a food giveaway in Oriskany Falls. With the combined efforts of volunteers from Creekside, the team was able to distribute 25,000 pounds of food, cleaning products, and hygiene products to approximately 600 families. Cars were lined up for hours, and the community members who participated in the event were delighted and appreciative of all the goodies they received.
At Connected Canastota District, becoming Connected late in the school year did not prevent them from impacting their families and students. We were met with open arms and thought of as instant members of the school community. We would like to add that we created a bit of fun, too!

On May 6, the district hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally announce the new partnership with Connected Community Schools. Those in attendance heard from school and community leaders about the value of the CCS partnership. The brass ensemble, led by Mr. Button, provided music. According to Superintendent Shawn Bissetta, "CCS is a huge part of our attempt to say, you know what, we're going to eliminate, as best as we can, these distractors, these barriers to learning." Congratulations to Canastota on becoming Connected; we are so happy to welcome you to the CCS family!

Preparing for What’s Next
At the Connected Career Expo, our CCS Team set up a table to give students the opportunity to practice filling out job applications. Students were given advice on what to wear to interviews, how to dress for a job, and interviewing skills.

Grub in the HUB
Connected Site Coordinator Reenie started a lunch group called Grub in the HUB where students can come down during their lunch period to socialize and talk about any stressors or concerns. They can also grab a GIANT HUB Game and play. It has been a huge hit!

Let’s Learn About Nutrition
One of Reenie’s highlights this year was being invited to the Consumer Science class at the high school to assist with a nutrition activity. The students were challenged to create and share recipes using ingredients from the HUB. They then began compiling their own recipes and researching others to develop and share an electronic cookbook. We heard that some of the outcomes were fabulous!

It’s a Good Day When it Includes Popcorn!
In May, a Wellness Day was held for all teaching staff. Participants received information from Madison County Parks on stress relief, as well as goodies! We pulled out our GIANT yard games and held raffles. At the popcorn bar, staff members got to create custom popcorn bags with a variety of toppings.

Community Food Drop
Connected Mascot Coco and the Canastota CCS team have been spotted quite a bit around the community! They loved marching and giving away candy at the Boxing Hall of Fame Parade. They also participated in the Community Food Drop in Oriskany Falls, attracting families from Canastota. The team was able to distribute 25,000 pounds of food, cleaning products, and hygiene products to approximately 600 families. Cars were lined up for hours, and families were thrilled.
Connected Collaboration

We LOVE a good Connected Collaboration. One of the highlights of the year was when the Junior/Senior National Honor Society collaborated with our CCS Site Coordinator to host a Summer Clothing Giveaway. The halls outside the HUB were filled with clothing and shoes of all different colors and sizes. Connected Canastota Site Coordinators assisted students with selecting clothes. The students also stopped by the HUB to grab a snack and chat. If someone couldn’t find something, our Site Coordinators began the search to locate it!

Bunny-Hop

In collaboration with Connected Oneida at the Kallet in the city of Oneida, we held an Easter event. Students and families had fun coloring eggs, playing games, making crafts, and even participating in an official “Bunny Hop.” Robert from CCS Street Game Night was a winner! The PTO and CCS team planned several activities, including GIANT games, shooting hoops, dancing with a DJ, and plenty of crafts and snacks. Over 75 students showed up to join in the fun!

LINK™

Some of our LINK referrals really tear at our heartstrings. One of our Site Coordinators shared this story of just one of the many LINK referrals which have been resolved successfully: “When reaching out and speaking to Mom, she shared that she preferred not to meet to complete a scan (assessment), and didn’t want any additional support or referrals in connection with anything other than a therapist for her son. She just wanted someone who could do in-person sessions with him outside of the typical business day. Mom was emotional during the initial phone call and expressed how concerned she is for her son and that she recognizes he is in need of some support. She stated that she wants and needs for him to be involved in therapy, but is overwhelmed with trying to find a provider who is not too far from her home, does not require cash payment up front, works with children, has non-traditional office hours, and is accepting new clients. Mom works full-time, and this child goes to his father’s home every other weekend for visitation. She has other children who participate in extra-curricular activities as well, and she is concerned that she might need to change their schedules to accommodate counseling sessions. I told Mom that I would be her feet and do the legwork necessary to find an established therapist who meets her needs and the needs of her son. I was able to find and speak with two local LCSWs, one who was only able to do early evening virtual sessions and another who could do in-person sessions and meet biweekly on Saturdays (woohoo!). I connected mom with both prospects and she has scheduled with the one who had an opening on Saturdays — to start THAT weekend. Mom was beyond relieved and happy. She sent this text to me: “It’s been a pleasure. You’ve been so helpful and made me feel like I wasn’t doing this alone. I will let you know if this ends up being a good fit. Thank you for all of your help!”

The Opportunity Shop

Our Connected Canastota Site Coordinator went to the Opportunity Shop, a local business in Canastota, to gather clothes for a couple of students who were in need. Our Site Coordinator had been working with this family on a number of things, such as assisting with food, planning to remove them from a domestic violence situation, housing, and insurance. Unfortunately, the Opportunity Shop did not have exactly what the family was in need of that day, but the staff took note of it. Only a short time later, the CCS team received a call from the manager who stated that they wished to use some of their funds to go to WalMart and purchase all of the items for the kids! What an awesome connection and partnership. It truly takes a village; it takes a community! Our Site Coordinator continues to provide support to the family, ensuring that they stay safe and healthy.
SEALs PROGRAM

Social Emotional Academic Learning Supports

New to the CCS vernacular, SEALs stands for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning supports, and was a pilot program in Little Falls City School District and Waterville Central School District. The SEALs Program is a collaborative program alongside the Connected Community Schools Initiative, the School District and our community-based partners. The SEALs program provided a multi-tiered response for intervention to address the mental health and well-being of all students. Programming is both preventive and proactive in nature by identifying students’ mental health challenges early on in their developmental trajectory and rapidly connecting students and their families with needed services in the community when warranted. The SEALs Program provides the following services: school wide universal screening, implementation & utilization of the Miss Kendra’s Curriculum, as deemed appropriate, lunch/after school groups and Mental Health Referral & Linkage.

Several areas were assessed including overall stress, emotional distress and students that were in high risk of diagnostic prediction of any disorder. The average scoring of high risk in all identified areas was less than 20%.
Universal Screening
The Universal Screening was implemented district wide, Kindergarten through 12th grade in both districts. The SEALs Coordinator collaborated with the building administration to educate families on the universal screening, providing the opportunity for parents to opt out per their request. The average of completing the universal screening between both districts was 59%. Elementary level students’ screening was completed by their parents; SEALs Coordinator distributed hard copy forms with the expectation of parents completing and returning back to the school for scoring. All Secondary level students had the opportunity to complete self administered screenings in their homerooms, PE classes, etc.

Outreach, Engage & LINK
SEALs Coordinator outreached and engaged parents/caregivers for students scoring high or medium overall. On a case by case basis, students were referred to mental health services, others were offered universal support through groups and other school/community based supportive services. This includes the access to the Connected Community Schools LINK operating system.

Targeted Supports/Group Prevention
Interventions impact district-wide culture, developing a sense of school connectedness and climate. This includes the SEALs Coordinator facilitating lunch groups, after-school groups and SEALs programming to provide an opportunity to enhance Social Emotional Learning and positive support. This will be driven by the outcomes of the SDQ findings district wide. This will be offered universally to ALL students, but the SEALs Coordinator will conduct individualized outreach to engage those students that score medium/high on the SDQ to provide preventative support and services.
COMMUNITY ELVES
Having A Happy Holiday Season

For two full weeks, the CCS team set up the CCS Toy Shop at our Rome headquarters to help families “shop” for their holiday gifts.

In preparation for our biggest year yet, the CCS team took several shopping trips to Walmart to bolster our supply of toys and gifts. An investment of $20,000+ was made by CCS through grants made available by Operation Sunshine.

During one of the shopping trips, while the team was at the checkout, a woman came up and donated $100! When asked what her name was and if we could snap a picture to thank her, she passed on the picture and said “let’s say Susan.” Such a touching moment from our amazing community and one of the many instances of generosity this year!

Throughout the initiative, the community continued to come forward with donations, some of which - like this amazing donation of winter coats - were triaged to our school-based hubs to get them out to families as quickly as possible!

In the weeks and months leading up to our “shopping days” the CCS Holiday Committee worked diligently to plan - outreaching local businesses to host donation bins, shopping and setting up our Community Elves headquarters, making signs, spreading the word, and outreaching 485 families in preparation to serve all 1,413 children registered to receive holiday assistance!

Thanks to generous donations from the community and our partnerships with Stuff the Bus, Toys for Tots, and Operation Sunshine, our Community Elves initiative reached new heights this year by providing gifts to over 1060 children and 362 families!

The Community Elves received approximately $10,000 worth of toys and gifts from Toys for Tots, $25,000 worth of items from Stuff the Bus CNY, and a total of an additional $15,000 worth of donated items from the community through both walk-in donations and collections in our donation bins throughout the community.

Thanks to generous donations from the community and our partnerships with Stuff the Bus, Toys for Tots, and Operation Sunshine, our Community Elves initiative reached new heights this year by providing gifts to over 1400 children!
Several times we were certain we were going to run out of toys but at the last minute the community came through and allowed us to continue serving children.

As we have done in years past, we set up our office as the Community Elves headquarters and had parents come in to "shop" for their children’s gifts. To abide by social distancing guidelines, we only allowed one individual from the family to enter the building, all present wore masks, and gloved staff members bagged the selected items for the parent, limiting the contact with the items.

In addition to gifts, families were also able to get laundry soap and quarters from the Rome Chapter of Laundry Love as well as gift certificates to purchase groceries. Families were also offered follow up phone calls to further discuss any other needs they may have and were provided with a phone number to call if they need any additional assistance.

All families assisted through the Community Elves initiative were also able to participate in our December food giveaway.

The team was also able to connect with some students through fun, socially-distanced activities in the CCS Hub, a program that seeks to keep our students get connected and engaged. Students were able to make fun winter crafts like holiday cards, decorations, and snowflakes, and they even got to tie-dye their own reusable masks!

The following businesses hosted donation bins to collect toys and gifts for us this holiday season:

- Arizona Tacos
- Alteris Restaurant
- Big Lots
- Boyz From Italy
- Cinema Capitol
- Dollar General – Turin Rd Location
- Rome ELKS Lodge #96
- Grandes Pizzeria of Rome
- LaRoma’s Pizzeria & Restaurant
- Lou’s Bargain Barn
- Nola’s
- Rome Country Club
- Schoff Polaris
- Snubbing Post
- Spectrum
- The Hub Eatery
- The Pizza Box
- VFW Auxiliary of Post 2246
- Bostwick Liquors, Inc.
- North Star All Star Cheer
- Spresso's Coffeehouse

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"Thank you so much for all you are doing for us, you have no idea how much this truly means to us right now. You have helped bring my stress levels down and even my depression has been better, this time of year is not a happy one for me anymore because I lost my grandmother 4 years ago today, my grandfather passed away in September of 2007, and my aunt passed away in May of 2017 plus my child is the only one of 3 kids still home. My oldest daughter doesn't talk to me so Christmas is one of my hardest holidays to get through, but I have been trying this year for u - and thanks to you it's not going to be a really bad one this year. Thank you for being my Christmas angel this year."
COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM
#WeAreConnected

Our team is prepared to meet the needs of the community, sometimes those needs are outside the school building and affect the community at large. An example is this year’s increase in food insecurity, which is still on the rise today. In response to this community need, the CCS Community Response Team frequently sponsors food giveaways in many areas of our connected district communities. We often end up becoming a center of support for our schools and communities.

Rome Community Flood Assistance
Clothing and Food Giveaway When flooding led to the closure of Staley Elementary, home to our Central HUB, we realized we needed to clear as much of our stock as possible out of Staley and into the hands of the community. DeSalvo’s Catering provided their parking lot as a space for our team to set up an outdoor “shopping” experience. All hands were on deck to ensure that we were able not only to clear space, but to interact with participants so that we could meet any additional needs they might have beyond the need for tangible items. Mascots were in attendance to attract passersby and to interact with the children. Over 300 individuals came and received clothing, shoes, winter gear, frozen and canned food items, and household supplies from our Central HUB.

April 25th Winter Storm Impacts Herkimer County
On April 25, the Site Coordinator/Program Manager from Dolgeville helped with a community food distribution event after a winter storm left many families without power. CCS set up food delivery for all families in the districts of CVA, Oppenheim, Little Falls, and Dolgeville. Staff assisted with unloading the truck, packing bags, and assisting other CCS teams. In just under three hours, over 300 families were served 10,000 pounds of food!

Madison County Food Giveaway
Talk about Community! On June 20, Waterville Connected School, Madison Connected School, and Creekside Community Outreach Center gave away 25,000 pounds of food, laundry supplies, shoes, and more. Over 600 families attended and received needed supplies as well as resources from local community programs. We couldn’t have done it without our friends at the Oriskany Falls Fire Department, who provided the perfect location for the event.

COVID-19 At-Home Test Kits
COVID-19 at-home test kits were made available through all Connected HUBs this month. Approximately 1,000 test kits were accessible to families at parent engagement events and in the HUBs.
Professional Development for our Connected School Communities CCS Administration organizes training and professional development for all Connected District faculty and staff under the Community Schools Cooperative Services. As the mental health needs of our students and families continue to rise, we have prioritized offering Mental Health First Aid training to all of our districts during the 2021-2022 school year. This summer, CCS Co-Leader/Executive Director Melissa Roys collaborated with the Rome City School District to offer 11 Mental Health First Aid training sessions to the Rome faculty and staff and to the community at large.

Staff Appreciation/Training
CCS strives to ensure that our larger team remains CONNECTED, despite the fact that many of us are located 50 miles or more from one another! We strive to offer a fun, supportive environment with continuous learning to ensure that our staff have the assistance and resources they need to succeed in serving our students, schools, and communities.

The CCS Team continues to participate in the training and community presentations to build upon their knowledge of resources and support for the families in our connected communities.

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In November, the CCS team convened for a training day, featuring presentations from the YWCA and Oneida County Department of Children and Family Services. The team also took the opportunity to support the Rome community by participating in the Veterans Day celebration at Veterans Memorial Park.
Team Day
The CCS team gathered for a presentation from Project Hope by The Neighborhood Center, followed by a day of fall festivities, complete with crafts, decorating, and a HUB-themed “Chopped” cook-off!

Daniel Barden Mud Run
CCS participated in the annual Daniel Barden Mud Run, an event which memorializes Daniel Barden, one of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in December 2012. Daniel is remembered as a kind, gentle child who was polite to everyone and had a zest for life. He loved the outdoors, sports, and getting muddy. The Mud Run honors Daniel’s memory by providing scholarship opportunities and charitable giving from the proceeds of the race.

The CCS Administration travels to HOLLYWOOD!
Our administrative team attended the National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference in Los Angeles this month. The team was able to network and learn new strategies to strengthen the initiative. Some of the themes addressed were incorporating academic support and partnering with higher education. Breakout sessions included working with our neighbors from Peaceful Schools and Wayne County Community Schools. We were thrilled to hear about the work that is being done so close to home. We found motivation in the knowledge that we are truly part of a connected initiative. It was a great learning experience for the team, and we are excited to return home and continue the mission.

End of the Year-CCS Staff Appreciation/Training
On June 29, our CCS team participated in a staff appreciation day. The meeting was held at Kirkland Town Park, where we shared food, enjoyed each other’s company, and recognized staff members who have been part of this initiative for the past three years. In the afternoon, we played a staff-wide kickball game between an orange team, coached by Melissa Roys, and a black team, coached by Danielle Martin. At the end of the day, the score didn’t matter; what mattered was the laughter and bonding we shared. We have an amazing team that works hard each and every day to bring resources to students and families. Our staff members provide safe spaces and bring in outside community partners for classroom programming and family engagement events. They connect with teachers and community members and liaison between multiple individuals and groups. We appreciate each and every member of our team.
PARTNERSHIPS
Connecting The Community

A community school is figuratively or physically housing supports and services within the school community. Over the last 5 years, we have successfully expanded our partnership with well over 200 organizations, businesses, community partners, faith based organizations etc. to ensure that any struggle or barrier that our students and families face that we can LINK them with the appropriate supports. We can not do this work alone or without the support of our community partners, so we THANK all of you!

Partnership Highlights 2021 - 2022

Satellite School Based Mental Health Clinics
CCS administration continues to collaborate with county mental health clinics, such as The Neighborhood Center and Community Health & Behavioral Services to expand Satellite Mental Health Clinics in the school setting. These sites are designated to provide a variety of clinical services to children and adolescents who have behavioral, social and emotional needs in order to promote their academic success in the school setting. The Rome City School District and Little Falls City School District implemented 3 new satellite clinics this school year!

School-based satellite mental health clinics and supports have been identified as an effective means of addressing the mental health needs of children and improving the learning environment. Partnerships between schools and mental health providers can result in improved academic outcomes through:

- Improved school engagement with children being better prepared/able to concentrate on learning.
- Increased attendance and reductions in drop-outs.
- Treatment and service coordination with school staff
- Parents are more likely to effectively participate in their children’s education.
- Assisting the school when addressing the Dignity for All Students Act.
- Mental health providers linking with additional community-based services to support the child and family.

School Based Health Center (SBHC)
A School Based Health Center was formed in collaboration with Waterville Central School, Upstate Family Health Center & the Connected team. Upstate Family Health Center (UFHC) is a Federally Qualified Health Center, offering family health care services to individuals of all ages. UFHC has a two primary locations in Utica, NY and Rome, NY with additional satellite sites in the Utica City School District and the Waterville Central School District. Upstate Family Health Center excitedly joined forces with the Waterville Central School Administration and the Connected Community Schools team to implement a School Based Health Center (SBHC) in the district. SBHCs provide high-quality comprehensive care to students and access to care for the family and community that can be your primary care practitioner and/or collaborate with the student’s primary care practitioner in caring for your student.

What are the benefits of School Based Satellite Mental Health Clinics & School Based Health Centers?
- Removal of barriers to access physical health and mental health care.
- Improvement of attendance and school connectedness.
- Reduction to health care costs.
- Improve health, wellness and overall quality of life.
Mosaic Health Community Dentistry joined forces very quickly with the Connected team with a focus on establishing formal partnerships with our connected districts, to have the ability to implement mobile dental prevention and education at the connected schools. The Connected team established a partnership early on this school year, after learning that many students and families did not have an established dentist or were facing other dental health challenges.

Each student who enrols receives free dental health and nutrition education, a dental screening, toothbrush and floss. The dentist/hygienist will also teach students how to floss and brush their teeth the right way, what snacks are healthiest, and how plaque and the decay process happen. Parents/Guardians of children enrolled at participating schools may also sign up their child/children for preventive dental services that include: dental exam by a dentist, dental x-rays, dental cleaning, fluoride treatments, dental sealants (if recommended).

The following districts are finalizing the formal documents to implement dental services for the upcoming school year: Waterville CSD, Madison CSD, Oneida CSD, Little Falls CSD, Central Valley CSD, Canastota CSD, Oppenheim Ephraim St. Johnsville CSD and Camden CSD. McConnelsville Elementary in the Camden Central School District was previously approved by NYS, so Mosaic in collaboration with the School and CCS team were able to successfully provide dental services to students in the Spring of 2022!

Laundry Love assists and supports individuals and families so they are able to do their laundry. Through the connected initiative, we learned very quickly that one of the many barriers for students to be successful in their education was the lack of clean clothes which hindered their attendance in school. Several of our districts have partnered with the national Laundry Love organization, community partners and the local laundromats to make this possible.

“IF I HAD CLEAN CLOTHES PEOPLE WOULD TREAT ME LIKE A HUMAN BEING”

-T-Bone (Eric), Laundry Love Co-Founder being.

Cornell Cooperative Extension has been a strong supporter of the Connected Initiative and one of our partners that shows up for many of our Classroom Programming & Family Engagement Opportunities! Cornell Cooperative offers an array of educational workshops and curriculums to enhance student and family learning such as STEM, Nutrition, Agriculture, Environment, Horticulture, Master Gardeners, and so much more! See many of our collaborative highlights working alongside Cornell in our individual districts successes this year!!