

# Youth Health Initiative:

## Promoting Healthy Lifestyles to the Youth of the Waltham Community Harrison Lucas



### Experience

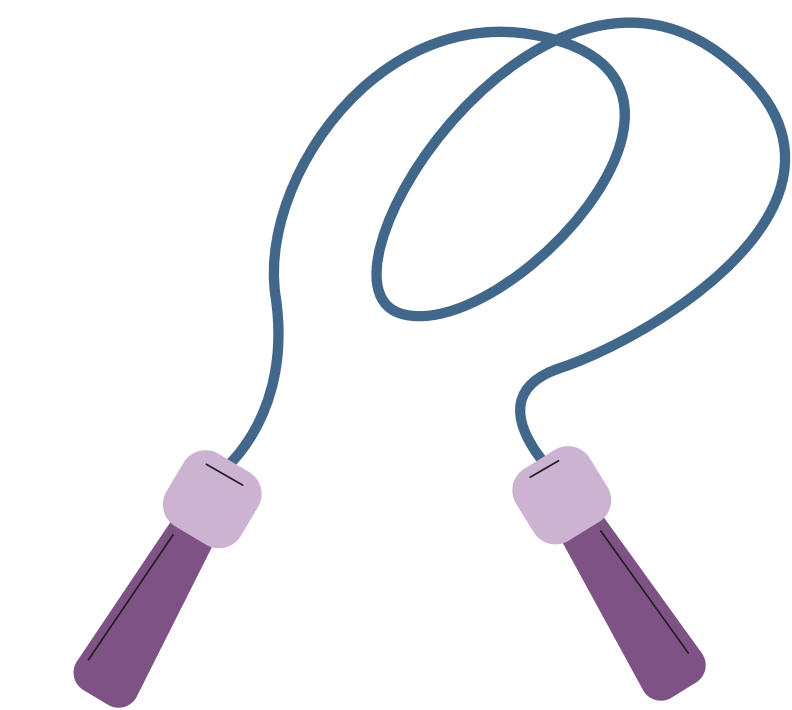
"The Youth Health Initiative" was a 7-week program that sought to promote healthy eating, physical fitness and overall wellness among middle schoolers. Execution of the program involved presenting materials each week, giving the middle schoolers treats to keep them engaged and promote participation, and disseminating fruits such as apples and oranges for snack. The overall goal was to promote healthy eating and activity. The latter part was achieved by jump roping for 20-30 minutes after each lesson. The culminating event was a jump rope contest where the kids won either Brandeis swag or trinkets. While the program was a success overall, there were a few challenges. Firstly, the same kids were not consistently there each week, so it was harder to gauge impact. Communication with my community partner was also difficult at the time. In terms of lessons about the community, I learned that knowledge or information about health is lacking and that while the Waltham community is very diverse, nobody was cognizant of consistent healthy eating and how it looks.

### Lessons/Takeaways

Support on all levels is necessary to succeed in community engagement. If I did not have support from my volunteers, Rich Collins and Samuel Scholars, it would be difficult to execute this program. They not only gave me courage, but they also played a role in helping me complete the program. I have the ability to coalesce a group of people around an idea related to community engagement. Sharing my project to others and having people agree in it to the point of being volunteers was very rewarding. I have seen an improvement in my leadership and communication skills. Communicating with my community partner taught me to speak succinctly, meaningfully and thoughtfully, as to not waste my community partner's time or my own. Putting on a project like this allowed me to exercise and strengthen my leadership skills.

### Sustainability

I am implementing the project next spring. I plan on starting a jump rope cohort/club on campus in the fall in order to support the efforts of the Youth Health Initiative. My community partner stated that they will continue to use the jump ropes and implement it into their regularly scheduled program as well.



### Acknowledgements

I want to thank the Rich Collins Fellowship and Grant Funder for the financial support to bring my vision for community engagement into fruition. This was a great opportunity to step out of my comfort zone, do something I am passionate about, and spread awareness about wellness in my community to the next generation.

