Bridge to a Sustainable Community

Since its inception more than 10 years ago, the Camden Higher Education and Healthcare Task Force has seen continual growth from its initial members of Camden County College, Cooper University Health Care, Lourdes Health System, Rowan University at Camden, Rutgers University-Camden, and Virtua. Throughout the years additional partners such as CAMcare and the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University have joined forces in its outreach in the City of Camden. The higher education and healthcare institutions also work with nearly 30 non-profit organizations on numerous collaborative projects in Camden.

Additional key partners now include Cooper’s Ferry Partnership, the Camden Redevelopment Agency, Camden County Improvement Authority, and the Camden Board of Education. Whether it is activities such as the 3rd Thursday Art Crawl or the Camden Special Services District’s “Clean and Safe Program,” these partnerships look to improve the quality of life in the City of Camden. Together this commitment has helped increase the level of economic, educational, health and social impact throughout the city’s neighborhoods from Fairview to Pyne Poynt. In 2013 the Camden Higher Education and Healthcare Task Force assisted more than 12,500 Camden residents through community service and volunteerism. The partnerships also worked with local schools to help enrich the lives of approximately 7,000 school-aged children.

In the context of the City of Camden, social capital refers to the collective value of knowledge, skills, innovation and resources. The various partnerships strive to improve the livelihood of the residents of the city because the broader view of the group extends beyond the traditional corporate mission statement. Toward that end, the Camden Higher Education and Healthcare Task Force provided more than 50 outreach programs that had a direct impact on families in the city. Some of the community outreach projects throughout the year included cleaning more than 200 vacant lots in the city, delivering 25,000 pounds of fresh produce to residents through a partnership with the NJ Agricultural Society and 49 young people getting a second chance and earning their high school diploma through the Gateway to College program.

At the core of civic engagement is improving the lives of everyday citizens. Although the partnership invests in the bricks and mortar of the city, it continues to seek ways to improve the lives of Camden’s 77,000 residents. This report highlights some of the programs, community relations, outreach and civic engagement efforts of the education and healthcare institutions.
A Shared Vision for the Future

Camden Higher Education and Healthcare Task Force focuses on investing in the City of Camden and New Jersey. Within the last few years Camden has seen new construction projects including the renovation of the Barnes & Noble Bookstore, the LEAP Academy STEM High School Building, Rutgers University-Camden's dormitory at 330 Cooper Street, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Rowan University’s investment in the historic bank building at 129 Broadway and the new MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper.

Other large projects underway include the development of the Haddon Avenue Transit Village near Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center and Rutgers University-Camden breaking ground on a new Nursing and Science Building at Fifth and Federal Streets. Such projects show a strong commitment to investing in the city.

Looking to the future, the Camden Higher Education and Healthcare Task Force is forward-thinking in its plan for economic and community development in the City of Camden. The strategy is to improve the physical environment, stimulate the local economy, increase family income, create access to quality education and to foster a safe, healthy community.

Camden Connections

In 2013 Rutgers University-Camden worked with students in grades 4 through 8 at Cooper’s Poynt, Molina, and Pyne Poynt schools through the Rutgers North Camden Schools Partnership. The partnership links students from the university as education ambassadors with teachers from the Camden City Public Schools to serve 300 students each day after school through a 21st Century Community Learning Center funded by a State of New Jersey grant.

The Creating Higher Aspiration and Motivation Project (CHAMP) and New Jersey Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (NJ GEAR UP) of Rowan University at Camden served more than 500 students in sixth through twelfth grades who attended local area schools in the 2012-2013 school year.

Virtua Camden worked closely with community partners to improve the health and quality of life for residents in the city of Camden and surrounding areas. D.U.E. Season Charter School which has more than 500 students located on the Virtua campus, is a model community partner. During the 2012-2013 school year, Virtua provided health and lifestyle education and services. These services included dental care, health fairs and even financial literacy training. Virtua also reached into the community to extend the same healthcare education and services to students at neighborhood Bonsall School.

During 2013, Rutgers University-Camden students spent more than 280,000 hours on community service, impacting the Camden community through such activities as neighborhood clean-ups, health care screenings, and more than 60 engaged civic learning courses that place students in the city as part of their learning experience.

A core group of Rutgers University-Camden faculty and students are implementing a specialized science curriculum for LEAP Academy’s 400 plus students in grades 7 through 12. Thanks to this Rutgers engagement, the LEAP Fabrication Lab allows students to participate in hands-on, design-based activities to bring STEM concepts to life while encouraging creative thinking and problem solving.

The Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA) partnered with the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority, Respond Inc., the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and neighborhood residents to
transform vacant lots into a community rain garden. Rain Gardens help absorb and filter impure water and help urban areas like Camden, where a small amount of rain can cause flooding and sewage overflow. In addition to the rain gardens, the CRA worked with the Housing Authority of the City of Camden and Cooper’s Ferry Partnership to employ 17 city youth and 28 local residents to clean and green over 200 vacant lots in 2013.

In 2013 the Camden County Improvement Authority and Union Organizations of Social Services ("UOSS") partnered to create a pre-apprentice program for City residents. The program developed by UOSS taught 15 young adults the job skills needed like time management, construction drawing review, budgeting, and communication for careers in the building trades. By completing the program, the students have a decided advantage for entry into a building trade apprentice program.

In 2013, CAMcare Health Corporation partnered with Camden Community Charter School to provide a nutrition education program for their students. Through the use of the USDA’s “My Plate” healthy portions guidelines, this program focused on teaching students how to make healthy food choices. The program included all 148 students enrolled at the charter school, grades K through 5 by having monthly classes taught by health center staff as well as having an after school nutrition class for parents. CAMcare plans to expand this program in the coming year.

Through the Hill Family Center for College Access, Rutgers University-Camden delivered a wide array of programs designed to help Camden families prepare for college. This free service is co-located in the Nilsa Cruz-Perez branch of the Camden County Library, housed on the Rutgers-Camden campus. The Hill Center served nearly 1,100 students from City of Camden schools during 2013.

Cooper serves as an original partner of the Camden Cooper Lanning Promise Neighborhood Initiative. Under the leadership of the Center for Family Services, the initiative is designed to strengthen Camden families in the Cooper Plaza and Lanning Square neighborhoods. In 2013, Cooper provided the upkeep and maintenance for several community parks including the dedication of two parks in honor of longtime Camden community leaders: the Joan S. Davis Park on 7th Street and the Sheila L. Roberts Park on 6th and Washington Street.

To support homeownership in Cooper Plaza and Lanning Square, Cooper continues to provide employees buying a home in the neighborhood with financial assistance to “Live Where They Work.” Since its inception, seven Cooper employees have taken advantage of the program and now own homes in the City of Camden.
Preparing youth to become tomorrow’s community leaders

The Camden County College Gateway to College academic program served students of the Camden City School district, ages 16-20, who have dropped out of school but have a desire to get back on track and earn a diploma and attend college. Gateway students not only have a second chance to obtain a high school diploma, but also earn college credits toward an associate degree or certificate. In June of 2013, New Jersey Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Rochelle Hendricks paid a visit to Camden County College in Camden to congratulate the first 49 high school graduates of the program.

The Camden City School District partnered with Cooper University Hospital to develop meaningful classroom discussions, assist with health screenings and measurements: Height, Weight, Vision, and Hearing, as well as, tracking student’s body mass index (BMI). Additionally, sessions are held for parents entitled: “Ask the Doctor.” The Camden school district also partnered with The Office of Diversity and Community Affairs at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (CMSRU). CMSRU provides a variety of health, wellness and educational enrichment programs. These programs include the Primary Urban Partnership (PUP) at Wiggins Elementary School and the Junior Urban Medical Pioneers High School Academy (JUMP-High).

The Rutgers University-Camden Future Scholars program is a college pipeline program that enrolled 50 8th grade students from Camden schools in 2013. From the first cohort of 46

Through his work with the South Jersey AIDS Alliance, Rafael Roman is a familiar face in many South Jersey communities, providing education and treatment information to HIV/AIDS patients and promoting safe needle exchange programs. Yet while looking out for the well-being of others, he ignored symptoms of a disease that could have claimed his life... until it was almost too late.

“It got to the point where I was so sick I couldn’t go up a flight of stairs or tie my shoe,” he said. “I was used to dealing with people who needed help. Now I was in that situation.”

Not sure where to turn, Roman looked to Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. He received a liver transplant at Lourdes in November 2011 and today is an active member of Lourdes’ liver transplant support group. The group consists of pre- and post-transplant patients at Lourdes and transplant patients from local area hospitals, their families and friends who are all dedicated to battling liver disease together. Today, Roman imparts his experiences to group members and looks to the future. “It feels good to be able to have ambitions again!”

Yarynell Rodriguez entered the Gateway to College program at Camden County College after dropping out of high school. She was searching for something more. After being contacted by the Gateway to College program, she realized it would be a good fit. Rodriguez

Personal Stories
with the Area Health Education Cooperative (AHEC). Every Thursday from June through October, the farmer’s market transforms the sidewalk into a colorful meeting place, with fresh food and much more. A vivid display of produce has become a rare sight in the city of Camden, so when the farmer’s market comes to town at Virtua, area residents flock to the corner of Mt. Ephraim and Atlantic Avenues to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Local patron and day-care provider Anganette Matthews is a regular shopper at the market: “I love being able to buy healthy food. It’s also great for the children I take care of; I can buy things that help expand their tastes. We don’t have many other good choices here.”

For nearby resident Mwalimu Wachanga, the market is a social platform. “The market helps me connect with many of the locals and share my interests,” he says. “Of all the places I’ve lived, coming home to Camden is the only place I have experienced culture shock. The younger generations are struggling, and we need to re-instill the culture that made Camden so great long ago. Events like the farmer’s market take us back to a better, simpler time.”

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As a young mother, her long-term goal is to graduate with an associate degree and then find a job in social work. Rodriguez hopes to work in the New Jersey’s Department of Children and Families and help others who share a similar story to hers. She is excited about what the future holds. After returning from class one day, her daughter who is too young to attend school asked, “Mommy, you have homework! When do I get to have homework?”

The lack of major supermarkets in the city of Camden makes it difficult for residents to get the basic nutrition they need for good health. Virtua recognized that void and established the farmer’s market in 2008, in conjunction with the Area Health Education Cooperative (AHEC). Every Thursday from June through October, the farmer’s market transforms the sidewalk into a colorful meeting place, with fresh food and much more. A vivid display of produce has become a rare sight in the city of Camden, so when the farmer’s market comes to town at Virtua, area residents flock to the corner of Mt. Ephraim and Atlantic Avenues to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Local patron and day-care provider Anganette Matthews is a regular shopper at the market: “I love being able to buy healthy food. It’s also great for the children I take care of; I can buy things that help expand their tastes. We don’t have many other good choices here.”

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Camden City Schools, and the LEAP Academy University Charter School are enrolled in the program.

Rowan University at Camden was home to 40 rising high school seniors from Camden. The Aim High Program is a comprehensive, developmental summer program designed to assist first-generation, economically diverse students who are interested in pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors and careers.

For academically talented, rising high school seniors who are English language learners, the TD Bank Scholars Program, an intensive summer program at Rowan University in Camden funded through a three-year $46,500 grant from the TD Bank Foundation, offered 16 Camden students opportunities for study at the University with English Language Learning support.

In 2013, a partnership between Cooper and KIPP Team Schools of New Jersey was finalized to establish the KIPP Cooper Norcross Academy at Lanning Square – New Jersey’s first Renaissance school project. The partnership will provide education for 2,000 Camden students ultimately providing five new schools serving Camden students from pre-k through 12th grade. The first elementary school and middle school for kindergarten through 8th grade will be located on Broadway next to the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University. The first class of Kindergartner students will start in the fall of 2014 and the new state-of-the-art building with athletic fields will open in the fall of 2015.

Commitment to the Community

Volunteerism is an integral part of the culture on the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University campus. CMSRU medical and premedical students engage in service learning projects within the city of Camden as part of the curriculum. CMSRU has partnered with many organizations including: Cathedral Kitchen, Volunteers of America, Center for Family Services and the Camden School District, to name a few. In 2013, students and staff provided over 4,000 hours of commu-
nity service by feeding the homeless, tutoring students, and working in community gardens with local residents.

For the past seven years, Virtua Camden has hosted a Community Day to provide area residents with free health-related services and family fun. Community members receive health screenings and information, and make connections with community resources. Additionally, the parking lot of Virtua Camden is transformed with activities such as pony rides, street hockey, moon bounce, dance performances and face painting. This event held in September attracts more than 500 area residents.

Rutgers University–Camden continues its efforts to attract businesses to the City of Camden. During 2013, Rutgers–Camden welcomed a 7-Eleven and a Subway to 330 Cooper Street, the new graduate housing facility on its campus. The campus also provides space to facilitate the performances and community services of the Symphony in C and the Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center, among many other organizations. In the summer of 2013, Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing launched a Marketplace for Healthy Living. This popular event was held every Tuesday and Wednesday from June through September to promote healthy living and healthcare to Camden residents. The Marketplace is a partnership of Lourdes Health System, Lourdes Medical Associates, Lourdes Wellness Services, the Camden Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Parkside Business and Community Partnership, Inc., Pastore’s Orchard and Farmers Against Hunger. Volunteers from Lourdes provided 347 health screenings to area residents. In addition the produce market and health screenings, student nurses read stories to 161 children through its “Reach Out and Read” summer program.

Camden County College’s Adult Basic Skills/GED Program enrolled 725 students ranging in age from 16 to 70 through four sessions in the 2012-2013 academic year. This was up from a total of 671 from the previous year. A total of 323 students improved one educational functioning level as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education, and 112 students passed the GED Test and received their New Jersey High School Diploma.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) delivered nutrition education to the students, parents and staff of all 32 of the Camden public schools at no charge to the Camden Board of Education. This USDA funded program has been delivering nutrition education to the schools in Camden since 1994. The lessons are researched based and behaviorally focused as well as meeting the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for Health & Physical Education.

For as long as she can remember, Adrianna Vadell had dreamt of working in the medical field. But she never knew that her dream was within reach – that is, until the rising 11th-grader from North Camden met Dana Jarow, her mentor in the Rutgers University–Camden students in LEAP’s Fabrication Lab, located in the LEAP STEM building on Cooper Street.

The partnership allows Rutgers University–Camden students to mentor the LEAP high school students on their projects. The lab is equipped with design software, a 3-D printer, a laser cutter, and other technology so students can sketch and design model prototypes for projects. When a LEAP student designs say, a gear for a robot, the Rutgers–Camden student assists with the machinery to bring the design to life.

“This lab allows the students to work together on taking their ideas through the complete process from conception,” says Dr. David Salas-de la Cruz, an assistant professor of chemistry at Rutgers–Camden and director of the LEAP Fabrication Lab. “We want it to serve as a vehicle to expose both Rutgers and LEAP students to STEM disciplines and apply their skills to creating real designs. It’s about getting them to believe in themselves and it’s allowing them to tap into their creativity.”

Today, Valerie has no cancer in her lymph nodes and is grateful for her new lease on life.
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

• Camden City Summer Youth Program
• Camden County College’s Gateway to College
• Rowan CHAMP/GEARUP
• Rutgers-Camden KIPP Partnership
• Science Preparation Alliance of Rutgers and Camden (SPARC)
• BizEd Program with Rutgers School of Business
• Rutgers Future Scholars
• LEAP Academy
• Rowan Partnerships in Action at Lanning Square School
• Lourdes Institute of Wholistic Studies Massage Therapy Associates Degree Program with Camden County College
• Hopeworks’ N Camden
• LEAP Academy STEM Campus
• RN-BSN-MSN Partnership with CCC, Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing and Immaculata University
• D.U.E. Season Charter School
• YMCA of Burlington and Camden County
• Headstart Dental Screening Day
• Give Kids a Smile Day
• Camden County College Adult Basic Skills/GED Program
• Cooper Medical School at Rowan University Global Health Interest Group (GHIG)
• Rowan University Pathway Program
• Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts
• Rutgers School of Law pro bono programs
• Nurse Anesthesia MSN program partnership with Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing and Drexel University
• Cooper Medical School of Rowan University’s (CMSRU)
  - Premedical Urban Leaders Summer Enrichment (PULSE) Program
  - Primary Urban Partnership (PUP)
  - Junior Urban Medical Pioneers High School Academy (JUMP HIGH)

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

• Big Brothers/Big Sisters
• Boys & Girls Clubs
• Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (CCHP)
• Camden County Habitat for Humanity
• Camden County Improvement Authority
• Camden Redevelopment Agency
• Camden Riversharks
• Cooper Lanning Civic Association
• Cooper Sprouts Community Garden
• Camden Special Services District (CSSD)
• Campbell’s Soup Obesity Initiative
• Center For Family Services
• City of Camden
• Cooper’s Ferry Partnership
• Lanning Square West Residents Association
• New Jersey Tree Foundation
• NJ Partnership for Healthy Kids
• Respond Inc.
• St. Joseph’s Carpenter Society
• Woodland Community Development Corporation (Internships)
• Food Bank of South Jersey
• Cathedral Kitchen (Health Literacy)
• Mount Ephraim Avenue Choice Corridor Task Force
• CAMcare partnered with NJ Commission for the Blind
• Cooperative Volunteer Program with Osborn Family Health Center and Brimm Medical Arts students.
• Urban Promise
• Hope for Education between Cooper University Hospital and Rowan University
• Volunteers of America Delaware Valley

HEALTH PROGRAMS - Services for Camden Residents

• Healthy Weight Classes with CAMcare and Rutgers University
• Cooper’s Camden County Cancer Screening Project (CCSP)
• Latino Cancer Survivors: support group at Cooper’s Roberts Pavilion
• NJ Cancer Education and Early Detection Program
• Virtua’s CASTLE program: mental health services to help children
• Virtua’s Evans-Wisniewski Dental Center
• Virtua’s Kyle Wil Family Health Center
• Lourdes Health System’s The Bridge: Teen Support and Enrichment Program
• Lourdes Medical Center’s Child Development Services (CDS)
• Lourdes Medical Center’s Early Intervention Program (EIP)
• Tri-County Community Health Assessment Collaborative
• Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
• Cooper Urban Health Institute
• Cooper’s SAFER Steps Program
• Lourdes Market Place for Healthy Living
• Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center Share and Care Committee: Thanksgiving Baskets and Family Christmas Adoptions
• CMSRU’s Camden Community Collaborative Practice (CCCP)