



ABOUT US...

A collaboration of Women’s Services, Crawford County System of Care, Center for Family Services, and Peace 4 Crawford, **HOPE** is a community-based initiative that uses trauma-informed practices to create a community that is healthy and resilient. A community where residents are healthy enough to take advantage of opportunities and reach their full potential.

HOPE is more than a title, the name is actually an acronym representing four categories of focus that support a healthy community.

Health: facilitating health interventions, relieving stress, and building resilience

Opportunity: building social and economic capital and financial security

Placemaking: developing and improving public and private spaces.

Engagement: fostering empowerment through leadership development and community building.

Resilience & Unity in the **HOPE** Community

5th Ward

2022

Year in Review

A Word From Our Steering Committee

Crawford County's framework for creating a healthy community is based on the premise that understanding and addressing the impact of trauma on populations and communities are powerful and effective public health innovations to support holistic healing and recovery. The initiatives and programs described below are examples of our accomplishments on the pathway of creating a community of health that is equitable, impactful and replicable to other communities.

Creating a Trauma-Informed Crawford County – Peace4Crawford and Courageous Conversations

As the understanding of trauma deepened, it became clear that trauma was at the heart of the most challenging issues facing our community. In 2015 the [System of Care \(SOC\)](#) formed [Peace4Crawford](#) (P4C) with a mission and charge to create a trauma-informed county. Members of local community organizations, consumers, and mental health professionals meet monthly to develop and disseminate resources to prevent, identify, and treat the effect of [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#) and trauma. P4C and a cadre of trained volunteers developed and delivered trauma training to over 7000 county residents, many of whom work in social services, health care and education. The City of Meadville has committed to train its staff, first responders and volunteers by mid-2023. P4C has created tools and support for organizations to conduct

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internal audits of policies and practices to inform changes in structures and processes, identify the need for staff capacity building, and to measure change over time. Other initiatives have included the establishment of a warm-line to provide assistance to county residents who were isolated during the pandemic and collaboration with neighboring counties and Edinboro University to present an annual trauma conference that is often “sold-out”. As

P4C shifted the existing community norm from asking “what is wrong with you?” to “what happened to you?”, we recognized the importance of expanding our focus beyond individual healing to examining and changing local systems and norms that perpetuate over-arching, enabling conditions that lead to trauma such as poverty, racism, patriarchy, homo- and transphobia. Courageous Conversations, an affiliated grassroots group of local community members, City Police and local black and white ministers extended the work of P4C through a series of facilitated meals with diverse groups of community members and local police officers. Conversations focused on the risk and prevention of incidents of police violence, implicit bias, and disparities between white and minority students in school disciplinary actions.

HOPE: a trauma-informed community development initiative

Decades of poverty and disinvestment in neighborhoods fracture and deplete social networks creating a culture of hopelessness and mistrust of one another and local government that adversely impacts and inhibits the growth of healthy individuals and communities. Inspired by the work of the Neighborhood Resilience Project, and using the findings of the SOC community data project, the HOPE initiative was launched in 2019 in Meadville's 5th Ward, one of the most severely trauma-affected communities in the area.



Community Coffee Hour with special guest, Fire Chief, Pat Wiley

HOPE is an acronym that stands for health, opportunity, place-making and engagement and is a collaborative of SOC, P4C, Women’s Services, Inc., and the Center for Family Services. Its mission is to enable every community member to become healthy enough to realize and sustain opportunity. Viewed as the first of a succession of communities where this approach will eventually be deployed, the 5th Ward is home to about 140 households.

Project staff are residents of the community with invaluable lived experiences and deep knowledge of the community. Residents struggle with poverty, mental health challenges, drug use and trafficking, blighted housing, high levels of stress, and weak social networks. Data collected from a health survey of 70% of residents identified challenges related to mental health, chronic illness, food security, affordable housing, and access to essential services (see charts below).

HEALTH SURVEY-KEY FINDINGS
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- 34% have been the victim of a crime
- 11% are dissatisfied with living conditions (mold, leaks, pests, missing smoke detectors, etc.)
- 13% are always or often lonely
- 20% have difficulty affording food, heating, housing and/or medical care
- 58% were negatively affected by COVID

HEALTH SURVEY-KEY FINDINGS
PHYSICAL HEALTH

- 66% of respondents have chronic diseases (hypertension, diabetes, heart and respiratory disease)
- 69% have not seen a dentist in the past year
- 48% did not take a prescribed prescription in the past year
- 49% rarely or never exercise

HEALTH SURVEY-KEY FINDINGS
MENTAL HEALTH

- 38% of adults have a mental health diagnosis
- 30% rate their mental health as poor or fair
- 50% of youth have a mental health diagnosis
- 37% of youth caregivers are dissatisfied with youth access to mental health services.

The health survey was one part of creating an understanding of the state of the community’s health. A social network analysis and a photographic study conducted by residents that captured barriers and enablers to health, rounded out the picture of the area’s challenges and strengths. Our portrait of the community’s current state of health was shared at the first all-neighborhood health workshop.



Team Home Depot builds a shed for the HOPE Project

Resident input provided an additional dimension to the analysis and surfaced many ideas for what they could do to make their neighborhood a healthy and resilient community. A resident council was formed to incorporate these ideas into an annual plan with

time-bound and measurable objectives to improve health, opportunity, the physical environment and to involve more residents. Work during the initial phase of the initiative has focused on meeting immediate needs of residents while also building trust and social capital, as a foundation for sustained involvement of community residents in doing the work of making lasting change. Staff and residents have mobilized support from a diverse set of partners that include the City of Meadville, PennDot, Alcohol and Drug Abuse, French Creek Conservancy, Home Depot, Center for Family Services, Allegheny



Neighborhood Health Workshop

College, PNC Trust, the Meadville Medical Center, Women’s Services, Bethany United Methodist Church, and the Pennsylvania Coalition on Domestic Violence.

Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences.

Although still early, we can already identify a range of positive results. Residents are more often engaging with one another socially and in partnership to help one another to repair homes, clean up their neighborhood and to advocate with elected officials for needed infrastructure investment to

Unity represents connectedness. It means standing together for every thick and thin matter, in harmony and agreement.

prevent flooding and health hazards. Current initiatives include an after-school program for local children; weekly coffee hours that provide a safe space for conversation and sharing of experiences; advocacy with the city for infra-structure improvement; annual neighborhood cleanups and holiday decorating contests; the building of a community garden, and the establishment of linkages with health care providers and employment and training opportunities.

HOPE Steering Committee



Joe Barnhart,
Project Director
*Crawford County
System of Care*



Marcia Metcalfe,
Board Director
Women's Services



Sarah Roncolato
Senior Pastor
*Stone U.M. Church
Bethany U.M. Church*



Jason Nesbit,
Executive Director
*Center for Family
Services*



Bruce Harlan,
Executive Director
Women's Services

Members of the HOPE Steering Committee have long histories of working throughout Crawford County to improve the well-being and safety for all of its residents. They have different jobs and experiences, yet they still share a common commitment to preventing trauma and building resilient and healthy communities. As a governing body, they provide oversight and support to the work that is happening with HOPE, and could not be more pleased with the progress. They see people who are connecting with one another to identify and solve problems. They see a community with a voice that is getting stronger and recognized by government leaders and services providers. They see a neighborhood where residents take pride in their homes and their shared spaces. And, they see community members reaching out their hands to one another in a spirit of collaboration and empowerment in order to make things better for everyone.

GEOGRAPHY: Fifth Ward of Meadville PA

Originally known as VALONIA / VALLONIA / VALLONIA CITY

June 11, 1868: Incorporated as Valonia from Vernon Twp.*

[Boundaries not given in the decree; according to the petition:] Beginning at a point on French Creek near New Bridge, thence n. 14° w. 500 feet, thence n. 77¼° e. 250 feet, thence n. 14° w. 2,015 feet to Rogers Ferry Road, thence along said road n. 77¼° e. about 1400 feet to French Creek, thence by the various meanderings of French Creek to the place of beginning.

Jan. 14, 1904: Annexed to Meadville as the Fifth Ward*

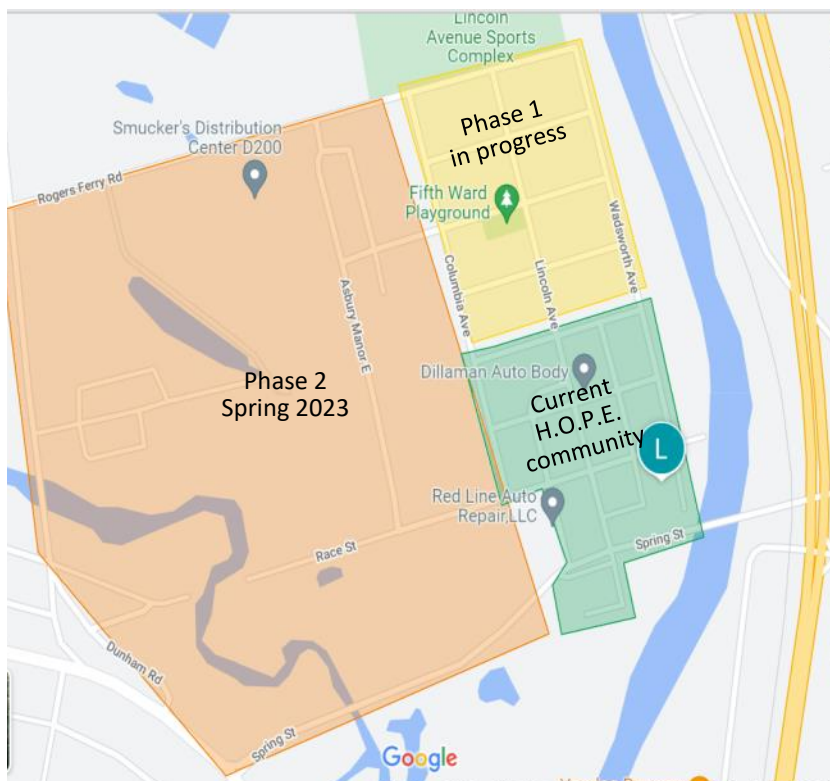
Ordered ... that the territory included within the boundaries of what was known as the Borough of Vallonia be, and the same is arranged into and created a new ward of the City of Meadville, Pennsylvania, which new ward is hereby designated as the Fifth Ward of said City of Meadville.

**As laid out in 1866 by executors of the Edward Huidekoper estate.*

The community of 5th Ward is located in Meadville Pennsylvania. It has a population of about 150 families, give or take. It is located in a floodway and historically has been underinvested in due to this designation, therefore, the infrastructure is in poor condition. It is more or less separated from the rest of Meadville by French Creek and accessed via the Spring Street bridge. There is one small store that has carryout pizza but there are no grocery stores with fresh food in the area. Aging housing stock, the cost of living, and the lack of government assisted funding to make repairs and improvements leaves residents vulnerable to predatory loans or subpar contractors. Improved communication with local government entities has made navigating some of the barriers a bit more clear and provides a pathway to potential improvements. Bethany United Methodist Church serves as a meeting and event space for HOPE related activity. The memorial garden that is being installed is located cattycorner to Bethany.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2023 EXPANSION PLANS

Over the next two years, HOPE's primary focus in the 5th Ward will be to address important health challenges, and to continue to build and strengthen social relationships and capacity among neighborhood residents. In early 2023 we are expanding the geographic boundaries to include contiguous areas, expanding our total outreach to about 150 households. By the end of 2023, we expect to have identified an additional small community in Crawford County to replicate this work. Additionally we HOPE to make new partnerships and strengthen existing one's as we continue to create healthy and resilient communities.



The HOPE Initiative: HEALTH

Community health refers to non-clinical approaches for improving health, preventing disease and reducing health disparities through addressing social, behavioral, environmental, economic and medical determinants of health in a geographically defined population.

To understand the current health of our community, data was collected and analyzed from a health survey that 70% of adult residents completed. Neighborhood residents also worked together to collect a series of photographs of their community that in their opinion represented strengths for creating a healthy community and barriers and challenges to individual and community health. Participants considered the findings and worked together to come up with ideas for how they could improve health to make the 5th Ward area a resilient and vibrant community. By far the need that was most mentioned was to create additional opportunities for neighbors to connect and get to know one another. Residents have a strong interest in strengthening relationships with their neighbors.



HEALTH

“For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.”

Millard Fuller

The HOPE Initiative: OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity making means leveraging the skills and strengths of ourselves and our networks to get things done collaboratively. It means having something good to bring to the table, and being a person who actively connects people around you, so they can get together and do good stuff.

Opportunities are vital to growth and healing, therefore we work within the community to help each other become healthy enough to sustain opportunities as well as to create our own. One example is the 5th Ward junk haul. Many residents can’t afford the high cost of discarding junk that doesn’t go in the regular garbage, so that means accumulation, storage outdoors, and some even discarding it on conservancy land, in French Creek, or on city/county properties. We were able to partner with the City of Meadville to take advantage of their yearly clean-up event with [Bayshore Homes](#) committing to sponsor it for the next 5 years. This has been a huge success and has contributed to a more welcoming environment and peace of mind for residents.

There have been other opportunities over the past year such as the recent purchase of the Race Street Lumber Complex by the Historical Society of Meadville, a community member becoming a first time home owner while choosing to remain in the 5th Ward area, residents organizing toy drives, as well as coming together to meet neighbors safety/emergency needs via in-kind projects. From self-improvement to community-improvement, the 5th Ward Community is taking advantage of whatever opportunities come their way.



Community Junk Haul

The HOPE Initiative: PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to discover needs and aspirations. This information is then used to create a common vision for that place. The vision can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, do-able improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public spaces and the people who use them.

It is important to feel as if the area around you is a place where you can work, play and relax and that it is yours. In many community initiatives, others outside of the community come in and decide what it is you need or should want, then disappear, leaving community members with a strong feeling of mistrust. The HOPE framework listens to residents, letting them decide what is needed and how we can assist with their visions. Fifth Ward residents have some very clear and important placemaking goals such as the repair and improvement of Spring Run. The wall on one side has fallen in and currently blocks water flow leaving a perfect breeding ground for already problematic mosquitos as well as the deterioration of the ground below in some sections, leaving some hazardous conditions for those traveling the sidewalks and streets in the immediate area.

Residents took advantage of a HOPE Café with the City of Meadville's City Manager Maryann Menanno, Zoning Administrator Gary Johnson, and City Planner Peter Grella to share this and other concerns they hadn't been made aware of. Within days city workers came to investigate and make some temporary repairs until the spring when it can be addressed appropriately. Residents also expressed the desire to have an outdoor space for a memorial/community garden for events specific to the 5th Ward as well as spaces for regularly scheduled monthly and yearly social gatherings. The HOPE Resident Council is hard at work making these activities and events happen.

We are in full force with getting our community memorial garden started. Our garden committee is led by Carol Johns along with Eric Trypus, Larry Walker, Sandy Horn, and Cam Leshner. Additionally, the Penn State Extension Master Gardener Coordinator of Crawford/Mercy Counties, Kinorea Tigri is teaching classes to the community on how to utilize the land alongside Allegheny students who are helping by providing seedlings and technical assistance. Shout out to Al Furno and family who allowed us to lease the lot located on the corner of Kerney and Wadsworth Ave. to make this memorial garden possible. The community also has begun a new tradition for the holiday season with The Harvest Potluck Dinner as well as the existing HOPE 4 the Holidays Decorating Contest. Many plans are also in the works for a potential fruit orchard, community rummage sale, farmers markets and more!



The HOPE Initiative: ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (CDC, 1997).

Engagement is a key piece to building a healthy community. When residents have questions, ideas, needs or concerns, we provide information on who to talk to, possibly facilitate a HOPE Café, or come along side residents as they engage whatever entity is appropriate. This can be local, county, state or federal government, non-profit organizations that provide services, employers, healthcare providers and much more! Last year we saw many community members actively requesting information, seeking services and advocating for the 5th Ward community. So many connections were made this past year and the community is only going to add more to their list of wants and needs for a healthy community.

Community members with special guests, Meadville Mayor Jamie Kinder and Tyra Townsend from the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Resilience Project.



H.O.P.E. Staff and Volunteers



Maria Rosado-Husband,
*Trauma-informed
Community
Development
Organizer*



Carol Johns,
*Assistant
Trauma-informed
Community
Development
Organizer*



Cam Leshner,
*Bonner Student
Allegheny College*



Evelyn Connor,
*Student
Allegheny College*



Coopers "Avenue of Lights" toy drive benefitting Toys for Tots



Before



After

**Garage Re-hab
In-kind project**

The HOPE Initiative: RESIDENT COUNCIL

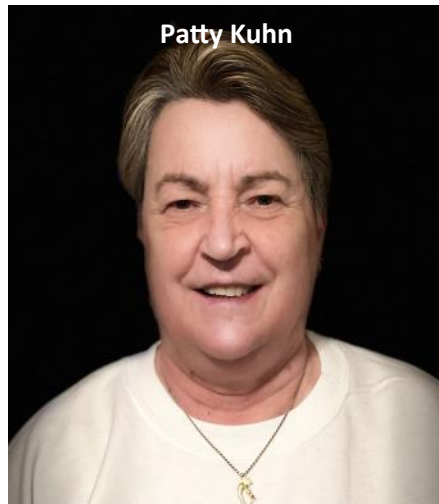
Through our involvement with HOPE and now as HOPE Resident Council members, we have met so many people in our community that we had never known previously in our decades of calling this place home. It has brought us joy and given ourselves and other residents the desire to get more of our neighbors involved in this project. Our perspectives have drastically changed due to the increase in communication between residents, as well as developing a better understanding of trauma at a community level. For this reason, we are invested as a resident council in continuing our commitment to becoming a more healthy and resilient 5th Ward community.



Rhonda Husband



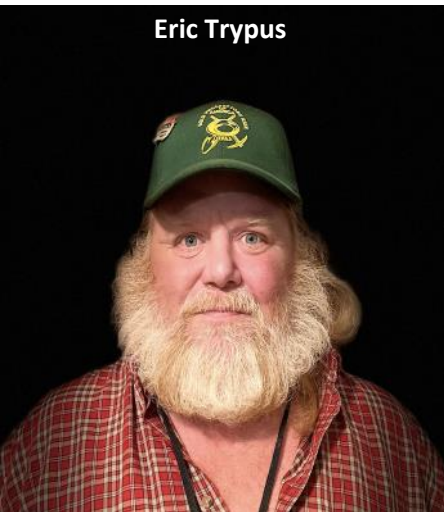
Carol Kuhn



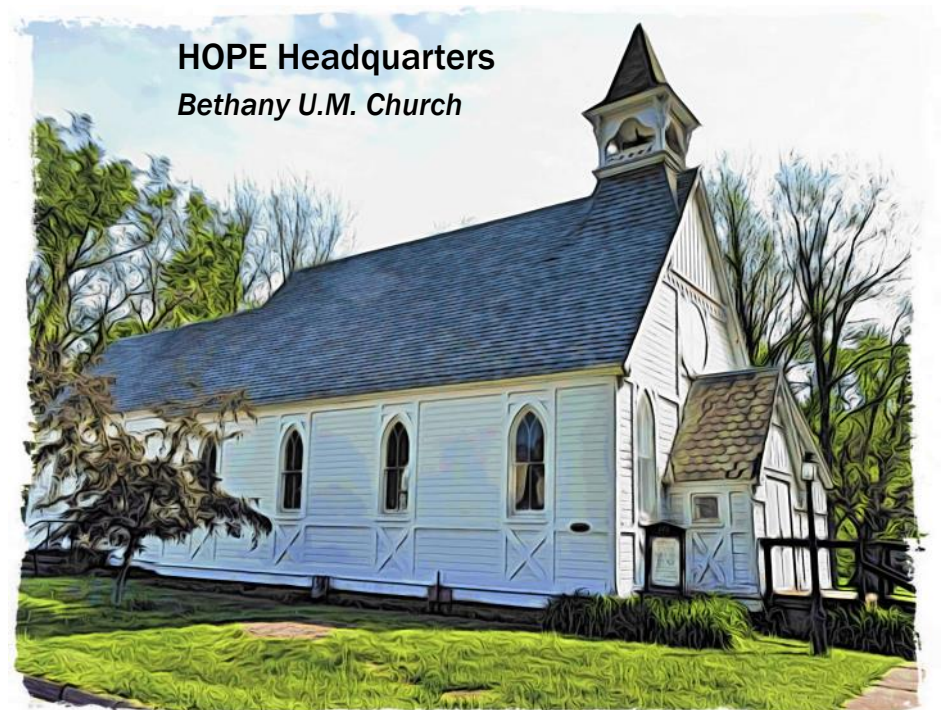
Patty Kuhn



Sandra Nichols



Eric Trypus



HOPE Headquarters
Bethany U.M. Church

The congregation of Bethany United Methodist Church, in the Fifth Ward of Meadville, has allowed their building to function as a base for HOPE. The HOPE Initiative closely aligns with the commission of the Church. By supporting and working with HOPE, the congregation feels that it is helping to meet the many needs of its neighbors and surrounding community.

The HOPE Initiative: TESTIMONIALS

Sarah Miller, a Women's Services Prevention Educator shared with us the following: "The universe lined up in my favor and I was able to attend at the last-minute the TICD Institute in Pittsburgh this past summer. I have been a sidelines cheerleader and fan of the HOPE community for years and I was honored to be included in the training. I learned an amazing amount of information and made connections with people that mean so much to me. My day job is on the prevention team at WSI; the Institute got my wheels turning for how we can use TICD principles in our work with local schools. I look forward to getting more involved with the HOPE community and the expansion of TICD throughout Crawford County."



Mickey Zelasco, Community Health Worker (CHW) Program Supervisor at Center for Family Services says: "Talk about a great community! The CHW has partnered with HOPE on many occasions now. CHW had a participant who lived in 5th Ward who came to us with needs of repairs to her garage. The participant was being cited by the City due to her garage needing roof repairs. The persons roof had a tarp on it due to leaking. CHW reached out to Maria at HOPE and was welcomed with open arms. Maria immediately started working with the participant, residents of 5th Ward and community partners like Home Depot to get the roof fixed, while the CHW contacted the City of Meadville to get an extension. Talk about team work! The City was also very helpful and willing to work with everyone to help this resident of 5th Ward accomplish the goal of fixing that roof so she could avoid a fine. The roof repair was accomplished only due to the community residents and

partners of the community working together to get it done. CHW's also are appreciative of being invited to coffee hour in the 5th Ward. It has allowed us to be more involved with the community and get our program's name out there for everyone to know. We are so grateful for the 5th Ward community and what HOPE has done to not only improve the environment in 5th Ward but to also bring the residents together so they feel like their voice counts."

Cam Leshner, HOPE Volunteer, commented, This year, I have seen community members grow together and become local leaders. Each week, we had new people reaching out and asking to be involved in our project. People that have never worked together before began to bond over sharing a community identity. I am so proud of the environment that we have created together. I am equally proud of the movement for social change taking root as well. As a result of the HOPE Initiative, I feel that people are more empowered and feel more capable and connected."



HOPE IS A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE OF...



HOPE COMMUNITY PARTNERS INCLUDE:



Master Gardener



The Chalk Shop
Wasson Electric
Plaza Lanes Meadville

JT'S Steamtable
Academy Theatre
The Movies at Meadville
Eddie's Footlong

Kilted Kiln
Tattered Corners
Salty Spa
J Amatto & Son



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