PARENTAL GUIDE

2023

What you should know about

GAMING

Potential Risks for Children and Teens

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LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Parent,

Like many activities in which children and teens engage, video gaming poses potential dangers. We have created *What You Should Know About Gaming 2023* to help parents and guardians better understand these dangers. Advanced game consoles coupled with high-speed Internet allow your child to play games online with people all over the world. Many games feature social and interactive elements such as chat or online competitions; others can be expanded or altered by downloading player-created content on the Internet. In addition, gaming can often affect young people's mental health, lowering self-esteem and self-efficacy and increasing anxiety, aggression, and even clinical symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders.

While video games feature built-in, adjustable safety and privacy settings, there is always the risk of bullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and online predators. By educating, monitoring, and limiting video game use, your child's mental, physical, and emotional health can be supported and maintained. Video games can be a great source of entertainment and learning for the whole family, but it is important for parents to fully appreciate what the experience of playing games today encompasses.

As a parent myself, helping others protect their children from potential threats to their health, safety, and well-being is a particularly meaningful part of my work. It's up to us to be informed about what and how our children play and to make appropriate choices on their behalf. Fortunately, there are many tools and resources we can use to better understand the games we bring home, as well as to help ensure that the gaming experience our children are enjoying is a safe and secure one.

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB®) rating system is one such tool, providing helpful guidance about the content and age-appropriateness of computer and video games. Parental controls are available on all new video game platforms, letting us exercise even greater control over the games our children play. When it comes to games played over an Internet connection, knowing the tools to ensure our kids are safeguarded from inappropriate content and encounters with other players they would be better off avoiding is crucial.

If you have any questions or comments about safe, positive, age-appropriate gaming, please email me at jeffrey@legacyhealthendowment.org.

Thank you,

Jeffrey Lewis
President and CEO
Legacy Health Endowment

THE DANGEROUS WORLD OF ONLINE GAMING

Once seen only in adults, online gaming is now a normal hobby among young children and teens.

There are many new and advanced games seen on the Xbox and PlayStation. New games on hand-held devices, like Nintendo Switch and cellphones, are also common. Online gaming can be a fun pastime, but it does pose serious risks to young gamers.

⚠ POTENIAL DANGERS

SCAMS

87% of gamers purchase in-game goods, like currency. This improves players' gaming experience, but can also be a way scam artists look to steal money. Be aware of any fake websites that offer virtual goods. Make sure to never share personal information and to use a strong password for your account.

ADULT GAME MATERIAL

Many adult-only games show images of blood, violence, drugs, and prostitution. Adult language is also often present. Make sure to follow Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB®) ratings to match the right video game to your child's age.

MENTAL HEALTH

Poor mental health outcomes are related to the addictiveness of video games. This includes low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Addiction is also more likely in males and among younger children.

ONLINE PREDATORS

- Your child must set up an online account to play video games with others. When doing so, have your child hide their real age or name from other gamers. This may protect them from predators who search the Internet for young users and pose as a teen or child.
- If a predator does discover your child's profile, they may try to meet with them in person. This is often done through live conversation where predators can use technology to change their voice. This may trick your child into believing they are playing with another kid.
- A stranger may try to earn your child's trust and convince them to share personal information. The location of your home could be revealed whether you - the parent or guardian - are home. Predators may try to do this by giving advice on how to win or offering gifts.

WARNING SIGNS OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is a growing problem that can be just as hurtful as traditional bullying. Be mindful of signs that your child is being cyberbullied. Also, make sure your child knows to use proper "netiquette" (or online etiquette) when playing games online. Gaming can be an intense hobby, with emotions running high. Cyberbullies may harass other gamers with name-calling and "trash talk" that could be offensive. This language often comes from adult gamers who do not know they are playing with a child. This can impact the mental health of your child and expose them to adult topics. Be aware of the types of video games your child is playing through the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB®) rating.

- Uneasy, nervous, or scared about going to school
- Unwilling to share or talk about information on their accounts
- Nervous or easily startled when texting or using social media
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset after going online or gaming
- Sudden weight changes
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities or hobbies
- Depressed or anti-social

Tips on how to protect your child from online predators

!
Be cautious of compliments from other players.

This may be used by a predator to start a relationship with your child.

Not everyone is who they say they are.

Fake profile pictures and profile details are convincing and common.

Do not arrange to meet with someone you met online.

While not all people are dangerous, this could place your child in a risky situation.

Keep communication open with your child.

This will encourage sharing if anything makes them uncomfortable online.

HOW REAL ARE THE RISKS OF ONLINE GAMING

8.5%

of American youth gamers (ages 8-18) are clinically addicted to playing video games

500,000

The FBI estimates that approximately 500,000 sexual predators are active on the internet on any given day

THE MOST COMMONLY USED DEVICES FOR VIDEO GAME PLAY IN TEENS:

- 86% Game Console
- 73% PC
- 60% Portable Gaming Device

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS OF ADDICTION TO VIDEO GAMES:

- ANXIETY
- OBSESSION
- UNABLE TO SET LIMITS
- LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS
- ANGER
- USE AS AN ESCAPE FROM STRESS
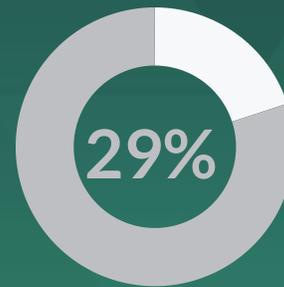
29% of kids will give out personal informational if asked online
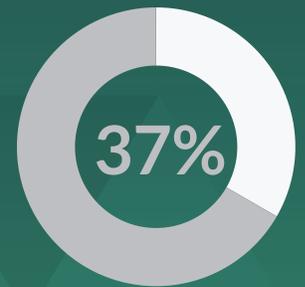
37% of those 12-17 year olds say they have been cyberbullied

1 in 5 kids have received unwanted solicitation online

- 89% of sexual advances occur in a chatroom or via instant messaging.
- 75% of youth who were approached online did not tell their parents.
- If your child has interacted with a predator, they may engage in risky behaviors, like drugs. Your child may also distance themselves from others and become secretive.

8 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE ONLINE

EDUCATE
Explain to your child that their online friends may not be who they say they are. Many predators pose as kids and can use technology to make their voices sound younger. Remind your child often to never share personal information online, even with friends.

LOOK OUT FOR MODS
Some games allow players to modify content in ways that could change its Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB®) rating. These changes can be made using special cheat devices or a free program called a "mod" that can be downloaded for free.

BE CAUTIOUS
It is important to control in-game purchases on your child's account. You can do this by limiting access to credit cards and not linking them to online gaming profiles. Purchase notifications can also occur by setting up an email to your child's account. It is important to set monetary limits with your child. It is too easy to spend large amounts of money.

DON'T DISCLOSE
Make sure your child knows not to share personal or financial information online. This can occur when making a profile, purchasing goods, or engaging with others. Privacy is key to safety.

BE AWARE
If you are not sure who your child talks with online, ask to see their gaming account. You can also watch videos recorded on the gaming device to search for inappropriate content.

SET LIMITS
Set and discuss limits on what your child can do on the Internet. Establish rules with which you are comfortable.

BE INVOLVED
Keep your game console or PC in a common area of the home so you can keep an eye and ear on the action. Ask what they are doing and with whom they are playing online.

STAY INFORMED
Educate yourself and your child about the online world of video games or social networking sites. Use resources like this guide to learn how to keep your child safe.

ESRB® RATINGS

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB®) ratings describe what is seen in a game or app. This allows parents to decide which games are right for their families.

ESRB® ratings make it easy to inform parents. However, actions are still needed to protect your kids online. Learn to set parental controls, start a conversation with the ESRB® discussion guide, and limit screen time.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Titles rated EC have content that may be suitable for ages 3 and older. No inappropriate content is shown.

EVERYONE

Titles rated E have content that is suitable for all ages. Some cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, and mild language may be seen.

EVERYONE 10+

Titles rated E10+ have suitable content for those age 10 and older. More cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language, and some suggestive themes are likely to be seen.

TEEN

Titles rated T contain suitable content for those age 13 and older. Violence and blood, suggestive themes, crude humor, gambling, and some use of strong language may be seen.

MATURE

Titles rated M have suitable content for those age 17 and older. Heavy violence, blood and gore, sexual images, and strong language may be seen.

ADULTS ONLY

Titles rated AO contain content only for those age 18 years and older. Long scenes of heavy violence, graphic sexual images, and nudity may be seen. Microsoft does not allow AO titles on any Xbox consoles.

RATING PENDING

Titles listed as RP are awaiting final rating from the ESRB. The symbol appears when the game is being advertised before release.

TOP 10 TIPS
TO GIVE YOUR GAMER

Be aware of voice-masking features. While masking can be used for safety, predators may use it to pretend to be someone they are not.

Remind kids that anything they write (or say) can exist permanently online.

Remind kids that they are playing against real people.

Embrace the diversity in the gaming community.

Use a screen name (gamertag), not their real name.

Ignore or block any players that make them feel uncomfortable.

Do not share personal details with anyone online.

Encourage them to tell an adult if they experience cyberbullying or abusive and inappropriate behavior.

Beware of strangers. Kids under 15 should only play with people they know in real life or who are parent-approved.

Teach children to embrace the positive aspects of gaming. Games can give kids a sense of accomplishment, help them manage stress, and provide a way for them to make friends. Some kids even learn about other cultures and languages. Encourage your child to play games that help them learn, develop problem-solving skills, and work with others.

TOP 10
VIDEO GAME STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

Understand your child's motivations for playing video games.

Periodically check your child's online activity by viewing your browser's history.

Have regular talks with your child about the games they play and their experiences, who they talk with, and how to stay safe.

Set limits with your child on how long they can play video games each day.

Keep your parent password private. Believe it or not, some parents ask their kids to set up parental controls.

Set parental controls on Xbox, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation, Windows 10, or iOS consoles. Be aware that there are many blogs, YouTube videos, and more that show kids how to turn off parental controls.

Play the game with your child to learn it. This allows you to spend time with them through an activity they enjoy.

Your child may be gaming on multiple devices, like consoles, phones, and tablets. Be sure to set parental controls on each device.

Kids are now introduced to gaming at an early age with the extensive use of mobile devices. It is critical that you maintain age-appropriate games for your kids. That does not mean to strictly follow the age guidelines on a label, but to know your individual child and make decisions based on what is most appropriate for them.

Check the ratings and reviews of games or apps before buying. This makes sure the game is age-appropriate for your child. All current information on safety and gaming features is at your fingertips on esrb.org.

TWITCH FOR GAMERS

The age of web streaming is here to stay, and the popular streaming website Twitch is leading the way. With more than 140 million active users on the platform, Twitch is the most popular destination to watch streamers play games and engage with their community.

On Twitch, users can watch others livestream as they play games, providing commentary throughout. Coupled with a robust chat system that allows streamers to interact with those watching, Twitch can be a magnetic platform for gamers of all ages. Teens frequently visit Twitch to watch their favorite games being played, chat with other fans, and discuss events in real time. If your kids love games, odds are they have shown an interest in Twitch, and you'll want to make sure they know how to use the platform safely and appropriately.

Can My Kids Communicate with Others via Twitch?

Twitch is, at its core, a social platform. Streamers can DM (direct message) fans, and fans can interact with each other via the built-in chat function. Many popular streamers make their own community guidelines for their streams and hire/choose "chat moderators" to discipline users who are behaving inappropriately.

Does Twitch Offer Parental Controls?

As of now, Twitch doesn't offer any type of parental controls or blocks for streams. If you are logged in, you can set chat filters to block discrimination, sexually explicit language, hostility, and/or profanity. You also have the ability to report and block users if they violate the Twitch community guidelines.

What Are the Risks to Children Using Twitch?

A study carried out from October 2020 to August 2022 and published by Bloomberg shows that over 279,000 children were targeted on the website by predators. The Twitch predators enter the live chats with children and ask them to do different things, such as "perform TikTok dances," show their full bodies or engage in explicit acts. Some predators "tip" or give donations to the users who take their suggestions.

Live predation has been a problem on Twitch for years, but there are signs the pandemic made it worse. While reports of apparent child sexual abuse online skyrocketed 73% from 2019 to 2021 according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), they increased 1,125% on Twitch.

How Can You Keep Your Child Safe on Twitch?

1. Create an open line of communication with your child.
2. Go over the importance of the terms of service.
3. Restrict use of the platform to family areas in the home.
4. Frequently check and monitor your child's Internet use through parental control apps.

DISCORD FOR GAMERS

More than 150 million people use Discord each month, and if you're a parent chances are your kids are among them. Discord's explosive popularity thus far has been fueled primarily by teens and young adults who flock to the platform to connect while playing games, do homework together, hold club meetings, sing karaoke, or just hang out. Think of Discord like a combination of Slack and Skype. It features groups called "servers" organized by topic and you can chat using video, voice or text. Discord is designed to help video game players find each other, coordinate and communicate while playing their favorite games online. Users can join servers that focus on specific topics and these topics vary widely, from games, like Fortnite or Roblox, to general interests like science, music, second languages or coding.

Is Discord Safe for Kids?

The greatest risk for kids on Discord is likely exposure to adult content or cyberbullying. Most servers are still centered on gaming and many of those games contain violence and mature themes. Many servers can be heavy on explicit content. According to one Wall Street Journal article, "racial slurs, sexist comments, politically incorrect memes and game-shaming" are common occurrences. Some servers are specifically designated as 18+, but all you have to do to join them is click a button saying you're 18 or older. The platform does not moderate content, and only reviews something when users report it. All open platforms come with risks, so it's important to talk with your cihld about what to watch out for. Common Sense Media says the safest way to use Discord is for kids to stick to private servers where they know all the members and only accept friend requests from people they know.

SOME SAFETY SETTINGS TO CONSIDER

You can adjust your settings to restrict incoming friend requests to friends of friends, or turn them off entirely.

You can adjust your settings so that only people in your friends list can send direct messages (DMs).

You can enable a filter that scans DMs for inappropriate content.

When you create an account, the default settings are open, so they need to be adjusted. There is no way to permanently lock the settings, so kids could potentially change them without parents' knowledge.

REDDIT FOR GAMERS

Reddit is a social news site where users create and share content. Some of this content is only suitable for those 18+ and is marked as NSFW (Not Safe For Work). For some parents, this makes them wonder whether Reddit is safe for use by teens or children.

The site has communities called subreddits for different interests and any user can create a subreddit. Teens can often find communities to discuss their favorite video games or hobby. They can also find more general communities like r/mademesmile where users share content to spread happiness. There is even a subreddit specifically called r/teenagers for those 13-19 years of age to discuss things relevant to them.

THREATS:

Reddit has a variety of threats, including pornography, white supremacy, hate speech, and really dark topics that a young person may find confusing, disturbing, and upsetting if they see it even accidentally. Users can stumble into a group that is inappropriate for their age, and a vulnerable teen could easily be manipulated.

The biggest problem with Reddit is some of the content itself. For example, NSFW (Not Safe for Work) content is seen readily on Reddit. This category can include sexual material, violence and bad language, and numerous subreddits are devoted to it. Another example of inappropriate content that can be accessed by anyone with just one click is NSFL (Not Safe for Life), referring to explicit content that is likely to be horrific and traumatizing.

HOW TO KEEP KIDS SAFE ON REDDIT

Have regular conversations about the communities they're visiting. Ask your child about things that happen and what kind of content they see in their communities. If they are comfortable to speak with you about the positive things, they might be more likely to come to you with concerns.

Implement privacy and security settings where possible. Although Reddit has minimal privacy and security settings, there are some that are useful. Browsers, app stores and broadband also have parental controls you can set to encourage safety. You can consider the following as well:

On both iOS and Android, just use the Reddit app without logging in. You can browse subreddits, but NSFW content will be blocked by default. You can also:

- Collapse "disruptive" comments that contain rude or disrespectful content while browsing
- Appear invisible online
- Keep their account out of Google search results

On iOS, if they want to log in so that they can interact with subreddit content, just make sure they leave the NSFW toggle in Settings off. You can also:

- Limit who can follow their account
- Turn off personalized content and information collection
- Implement two-factor authentication for additional security logging in

ADDICTIVENESS OF GAMING

Video game addiction, also known as Internet gaming disorder, severely reduces control over gaming habits with negative consequences seen in many areas of a person's life, like self-care, relationships, school, and work

HOW COMMON IS IT?

1.7%-10% of the U.S. population experiences a video game addiction while 8.5% of youth ages 8-18 suffer from a gaming disorder. The reason for such a wide range is because diagnostic criteria for Internet gaming disorder is not agreed upon within the medical community.

SYMPTOMS

- Psychological: impulsive, low self-control, anxiety
- Behavioral: increased money on gaming, increasing time playing per day, offline gaming community meetings, gaming community membership

ADDICTION

Addiction, as defined by experts, is when one cannot stop playing even if they know they should. There is a driving "need" to play, and the individual feels miserable if they are not playing.

As with other types of addiction, withdrawal is experienced when not gaming. Symptoms include fatigue, headaches, insomnia, aggressive emotions, and intense cravings. Playing video games affects the brain in the same way as drugs or alcohol in that they trigger the release of dopamine, a chemical that reinforces behavior. As a result, playing video games without limitations becomes an addictive stimulus.

ADDICTION CAUSES

Many people struggling with gaming addiction play multiplayer games on the Internet. These experiences offer adventure inside a fantasy world and players can live a different life as a new character.

MMPORGs (massive multiplayer online role-playing games) provide a sense of comfort, welcomeness, and usefulness that a person may not be experiencing in real life. For many of these players, gaming is a part of their social life and is pivotal to their self-esteem.

Steps Parents Can Take to Avert Addiction

Create a plan specific to gaming time. Make sure that gaming isn't affecting other aspects of your child's life like homework, exercise, proper nutrition, or sleep.

Be mindful of how video games and electronic devices are being used. Make sure that no personal information is shared with strangers online. Ensure that no unwanted messages, ads, or downloads are occurring on devices.

Keep gaming in common areas. This will help with keeping track of your child and increase your awareness of their online presence.

Play games with them and set a good example. This allows you, as a parent, to see what they do online. It can also help you have a better understanding of the time limits you set around gaming.

Focus on real-world games with younger children. Tactile hands-on toys, books, and art supplies are much better for your child's development than video games for entertainment.

RESOURCES AND LINKS FOR PARENTS

THE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD (ESRB®)

https://www.esrb.org/tools-for-parents/

COMMONSENSE MEDIA

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/parents-ulti-mate-guides

PLAYSTATION

https://support.playstation.com/s/article/PlayStation-Safe- ty-for-Parents?language=en_US

XBOX

https://www.xbox.com/en-US/community/for-everyone/ responsible-gaming

NINTENDO SWITCH

https://www.nintendo.com/switch/parental-controls/

WINDOWS/PC 10 & 11

https://news.microsoft.com/en-in/features/windows-10-pa- rental-controls-feature/

TWITCH

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/parents-ulti- mate-guide-to-twitch

YOUTUBE

https://support.google.com/youtubekids/an- swer/6172308?hl=en

IOS

https://support.apple.com

ANDROID

https://dataprot.net/guides/parental-controls-on-android/

A LIMITED LIST OF TOP TRENDING GAMES OF 2023

Fortnite

Lost Ark

Other Games to watch for:

- Elden Ring
- Call Of Duty
- Gran Turismo
- Uncharted
- Grand Theft Auto
- Red Dead Redemption
- Skyrim
- Dungeon Fighter
- Among Us (Phone)
- World of Warcraft

League of Legends

Counter Strike

Crossfire

Dota 2

Roblox
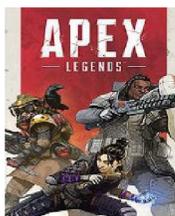
Apex Legends

Minecraft

PUBG

LHE
Legacy Health Endowment

English

GLOSSARY

OF VIDEO GAME TERMINOLOGY
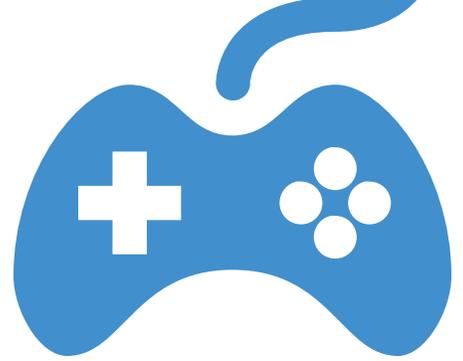
1337
Extremely skilled.

143
I love you.

1174
Nude club or meet in person.

ADN
Any day now.

ADR
Address.

AFK
Away from Keyboard. This means you are not playing for some time.

AIMBOT
Type of hack where a software tool automatically aims a weapon at opponents, usually their heads. It should not be confused with aim-assist on consoles.

AIM-ASSIST
In first-person shooter games, the system helps players shoot moving targets when using a controller on a PC.

ASL
Age/sex/location. It can also stand for advance squad leader.

BOTS
Short for Robot. This is a player controlled by a computer. Often bots are used to fill games and make it feel more alive.

CAMPER
A person who hides in a corner to get easy kills by surprising others. It involves no tactics and is frowned upon in fast-paced games like Overwatch.

CD9 – CODE 93
"Adult Alert" or parents are nearby.

EASTER EGG
A hidden video game feature. They are normally unlocked through certain ways tasks are completed, specific buttons chosen, and from access to secret game areas. They may come in the form of text, images, special scenes, and more.

FARMING
When repetitive actions are done to gain experience, points, or in-game currency.

FPS
First person shooter. This genre involves a point of view that a person would see in real life.

FWB
Friends with benefits.

GHOSTING
Form of cheating where players are provided information they should not know. For example, a dead player might let others know the locations of the opposing team.

GRINDING
Repetitive actions performed in a game to earn a reward. Take the example of a highly expensive car in Gran Turismo. You can play the same races over and over again to accumulate the money needed to buy that car.

LHE
Legacy Health Endowment

English

GLOSSARY

OF VIDEO GAME TERMINOLOGY
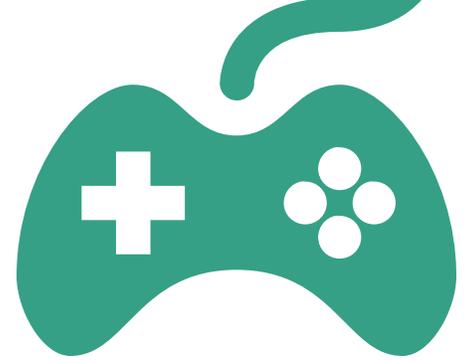
GNOC
Get naked on camera.

HACKER
A person who cheats in a game to gain an unfair advantage over others.

KPC
Keeping parents clueless.

MIRL
Meet in real life.

MOS
Mom over shoulder.

NERF
When a game developer makes a particular item or character less powerful. This may be done because they think it is too good, leading to unfair advantages.

NOOB
Slang for newbie and used to describe a person who is new to the game or who doesn't know how to play.

NO SCOPE
In games, sniper rifles are made such that you need to use their in-built optics to shoot properly. If you kill someone without looking through the scope, it is termed as no scoping.

P911
Parent alert.

PAW
Parents are watching.

PAL
Parents are listening.

PING
While playing an online game, your computer exchanges information with the server to which you are connected. The time it takes for the cycle of sending and receiving data is called ping. It is measured in milliseconds. A high ping could lead to problems like rubberbanding.

PIR
Parent in room.

POS
Parent over shoulder or piece of sh**.

RAGE QUIT
When a player is not able to perform well and ends up quitting the game in anger.

REZ
Short for resurrection. The term is used frequently in PUBG while reviving a fallen teammate; you are "rezzing" them.

RUBBERBANDING
When your character or vehicle is continuously moving back to previous spaces due to lag in the Internet connection.

TROLL
A person whose main motive is to act in a way that offends other players.

WYRN
What's your real name?

English

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Mission

To improve the health and healthcare of all residents residing within Stanislaus and Merced Counties (19 specific cities and zip codes) under Legacy Health Endowment's (LHE) jurisdiction, by increasing access to various healthcare services and educating people about healthy lifestyle decisions. Our objective is to dramatically improve the quality of life within the Greater LHE Community by bringing together resources, expertise, vision and the belief we can – and will – make a difference.