



# Community Health Equity and Engagement Roundtables (CHEERs): Sherman Indian High School

OCTOBER 27, 2023  
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA



Children's Health Fund

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Sanofi US



## Community Health Equity and Engagement Roundtable (CHEER)

Presented by Children's Health Fund in partnership with Sherman Indian High School

October 27, 2023

Riverside, CA



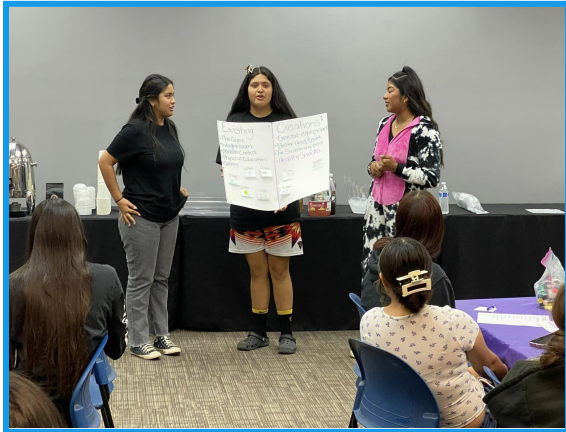
### SUMMARY

Children's Health Fund (CHF) partnered with Sherman Indian High School to host a Community Health Equity and Engagement Roundtable (CHEER) on October 27, 2023 at the school's residential campus in Riverside, California. CHEERs convene communities to better understand the challenges and successes that impact children's health and to strategize community-driven solutions. Our CHEERs model celebrates successes, identifies gaps, builds community consensus, and promotes actionable solutions to improve the health of children and youth where they live, learn, and play. The CHEERs are made possible by the generous support and sponsorship of Sanofi US.

Thirty-three students representing Indigenous tribal communities from across the country participated in a day of collaborative problem-solving to develop a novel school-based initiative to promote healthy lifestyles and combat obesity and diabetes. Sherman Indian High School (SIHS) is an off-reservation boarding school for Native American students who represent over 76 federally recognized tribes from across the United States. Sixty-eight percent of students come from reservations, while the remaining 24% of students are from urban or suburban communities. The school is operated by the federal Bureau of Indian Education and students attend tuition-free. Once a place for forced assimilation into white society, students now come to SIHS to connect with their Indigenous cultures and traditions. The majority of teachers and staff are Native American, allowing for a culturally-relevant curriculum and a school community where students can embrace their unique cultures. Traditional practices are incorporated into every aspect of daily life at SIHS, including the

school's health clinic, sports, celebrations, art, foods, residential life, and approaches to teaching and learning.

Sherman Indian High School chose to frame CHEER discussion and problem-solving around the promotion of healthy lifestyles as a proactive measure against the prevalent issues of obesity and diabetes within the student body. The event commenced with an informative



presentation by guest speakers from Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health on the causes and prevention of diabetes. Students were then split into breakout groups for a school mapping exercise that challenged participants to visually depict their school's existing programs and resources as they pertain to healthy lifestyles. The exercise also prompted students to identify gaps or opportunities for improvement, setting the stage for the project brainstorm. Students referenced key takeaways from the presentation and mapping exercise as they were guided through a project-planning model to develop

unique school-based initiatives. The culmination of these project development exercises resulted in five distinct initiatives that were presented to the audience comprising teachers, staff, and students.

## PROJECT PROPOSALS

### Field Day and Snack Bar Program

- "Field Day" twice a month to create opportunities for fun, competitive, and cultural forms of physical activity
- Snack bar program to offer healthy foods that students can access through new "Sherman Bucks" school currency, earned through merit-based accomplishments

### Fitness and Health Club

- School club where students can learn about healthy lifestyles and bring awareness to opportunities for improvement on campus
- An opportunity to create new health-focused programming that is meaningful to the students and responsive to their own interests.

### Promoting Health and Wellness for Students

- Nutrition education program that empowers students to prioritize their well-being and make healthy choices
- School-sponsored movement and nutrition activities

### Softball Field Improvements

- Softball field repairs, including field leveling, dugout shade, new fencing, and field lights.
- Revitalized softball program as a fun form of exercise

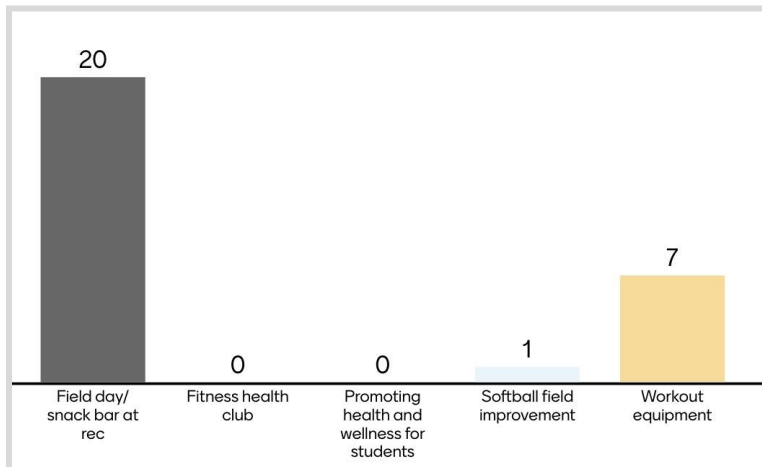
### Workout Equipment and Weight Room Revamp

- New workout equipment in dorms and weight room, including weights of varying size, treadmills, and barbells
- New dorm weight room will utilize empty basement to create a more accessible and comfortable environment



### SELECTED INITIATIVE

Following the project pitches, students voted for the one proposed initiative that they valued the most. The Field Day/Snack Bar Program was a clear winner, receiving 71% of votes. This two-pronged initiative combines engaging and culturally relevant physical activity programming with an innovative nutrition initiative that harnesses existing school resources.



### Field Day

Students designed the Field Day program to promote exercise through bimonthly tournaments consisting of traditional games representing students' cultures, as well as sports,

such as basketball, volleyball, and baseball/softball. The Field Days will be held at the beginning and end of the month and students will receive incentives for their participation and prizes for winners. Another goal of this initiative is to encourage students to spend more time outdoors, engaging with peers instead of sitting inside on their phones.



Students envisioned this project to be a school-wide event that will engage students, teachers, and staff in fun and competitive physical activity. The students will coordinate with the school's fitness instructor to design an event itinerary in advance of each Field Day. The seed funding will be used to purchase incentives and prizes, as well as replace any damaged sports equipment.

### **Snack Bar and Sherman Bucks**

The second component of the proposed project entails reviving the snack bar at the "Rec" and implementing a merit-based incentive program. Students explained that the school utilizes a food rationing program to encourage healthy portion sizes. However, students were once able to access snacks through a communal snack bar that is no longer in use. The proposed snack bar revitalization will allow students to access healthy snacks of their choosing from a selection of options with an emphasis on traditional Native foods, representing the myriad of Indigenous cultures within the student body. The goal of this initiative is to combat diabetes and encourage healthy lifestyles by promoting independent choice and selection. Students proposed that some snacks may be homemade by students involved in the Culinary Pathways program.



Students will harness the expertise of Rec staff and health and culinary teachers to organize an operating structure. Existing resources include the infrastructure from the old snack bar in the Rec. The seed funding will be used to purchase more food storage and refrigeration, as well as snacks and ingredients.

Students also proposed that the school introduce "Sherman Bucks," a school-wide currency that can be used to purchase snack bar items.

Sherman Bucks will be rewarded based on merit from academic, leadership, or sports performance. This presents an opportunity to utilize Sherman Bucks as prizes/incentives for the Field Days.

## Evaluation Methods

Students determined that the Field Day and Snack Bar Program will be evaluated through the use of quarterly surveys to elicit student feedback and inform future activities and snack selection. Surveys will gauge the popularity of each Field Day activity and allow for suggestions for improvement. Students will obtain qualitative data for the Snack Bar initiative in the form of open response surveys that will provide an opportunity for students to request traditional foods from their home communities and cultures.

## Communications Plan

Flyers are the current method of communication for school updates, news, and events, but students find these to be ineffective. Students brainstormed four communications strategies to make students aware of the key details and generate excitement for the new program:

1. Announce Field Day and Snack Bar Program during morning announcements on the PA system
2. Integrate the program announcement into a school assembly
3. Produce a YouTube video announcement utilizing the new school YouTube channel
4. Social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Children's Health Fund awarded Sherman Indian High School with \$10,000 to initiate the planning and execution of the Field Day and Snack Bar Program. The staff and students will utilize CHEER summary and guidance materials provided by Children's Health Fund to develop a comprehensive implementation plan. Children's Health Fund will extend support as needed to ensure the successful realization of the program, with a shared goal of partial execution by Spring 2024 . By centering youth voices, the CHEER empowered students to take ownership of their own health and wellness to generate novel programming attuned to the unique cultures, needs, and priorities of Sherman Indian High School students. Children's Health Fund is grateful for Sanofi's commitment to community-driven solutions and continued sponsorship of Community Health Equity and Engagement Roundtables (CHEERs).

