

# OAKBROOK COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY REPORT, 2017



Presented by  
Ready.Set.READ!  
and  
United Way of  
Berks County



# LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

United Way of Berks County is proud to work side-by-side with community leaders, from all walks of life, to identify and support activities and programs that make us stronger. Together, we are working to provide activities that help our children succeed in school. Key to our children's success is a financially stable and healthy family. United Way believes for our community to be the best it can be, our resources need to be focused on: Education, Income (Financial Stability), Health and Safety Net Services.

Early grade reading success is a critical component of learning and a leading indicator of future academic and educational success. We know, based on 2016 state test results, 43% of Berks County third graders are not reading at a proficient level. That means that over 2,000 children in our urban, rural and suburban schools are four times more likely to drop out of school and that increases to 13 times if living in poverty. As a result, they are less likely to develop skills essential for contributing to the 21st Century economy. With all of this in mind, Ready.Set.READ! (RSR) was launched in November 2012 as a community-wide initiative. RSR is managed by United Way and brings together schools, businesses, organizations and individuals to improve early grade reading success. The ten-year collaborative is focused on changing the odds for success by increasing the number of children entering the fourth grade reading on grade level.

In 2016, Ready.Set.READ! partnered with the Oakbrook Housing Community, a large and stable neighborhood, home to over 850 children; nearly 500 in the age range of birth to 9. There are some Oakbrook children participating in RSR programming at Millmont Elementary School. Our goal is to work with the residents and leaders of Oakbrook to increase RSR activities to many more children based on their needs. A Community Needs Survey was developed to hear first-hand what the Oakbrook Residents identify as barriers and/or needs related to their success. The information gathered and highlighted in this report, as well as additional input from Oakbrook residents, will help shape future services for their families and children.



Tammy White  
President



Dr. Yamil Sanchez Rivera  
Senior VP, Community Impact

Cover Photos:

Top Left Photo (L - R): Amy Paulino, Cassandra Liciaga, Carlixta De La Rosa, Michelle Wunder, Brad Hall, Nilda Rivera

Bottom Right Photo (L - R): Wanda Santo-Martinez, Jennifer Brito, Cynthia Huls, Daniel Brito, Dan Wiekrykas, Darby Wiekrykas

# THE SURVEY: PURPOSE & METHOD

The 45 question anonymous survey was designed by a collaborative team represented by **Berks Community Health Center, Berks County Workforce Development Board, Berks Teens Matter, Co-County Wellness, Literacy Council of Reading-Berks, Olivet Boys' and Girls' Club, Penn State Berks, Reading Health Systems, Reading Housing Authority, Reading Public Library, and United Way.** Survey respondents could share name, address and/or telephone number, if interested in being part of a follow-up focus group or if a partner agency could contact.

The survey, completed by the Head of Household, was in four high-level categories:

- **Demographics** – Questions included highest level of education completed and primary language spoken in the home.
- **Child Focused** – Respondents were asked about the overall number of children and ages as well as literacy and activity questions.
- **Food, Safety and Health** – In addition to neighborhood safety question, respondents were asked to complete a two question standardized screener about their access to food, and ability to purchase food as needed.
- **Transportation, Community & Technology** – Respondents were asked to share information related to their community network connectedness, as well as internet access and library usage.



*Julia Becker, Mirelys Perez, Beth Simcik, Margie Fortunet*

## SURVEY SNAPSHOT

The 10-12 minute survey was conducted door-to-door by trained, bi-lingual teams, consisting of 12 Oakbrook resident volunteers, 18 community volunteers and 9 staff members representing Berks Community Health Center and United Way. The surveys were conducted over a 14-day period, with a total investment of over 200 individual volunteer hours.

Results were recorded electronically. The teams knocked, at least once, on 521 doors in the community and had 201 (39%) residents participate in the survey.

# THE REPORT

We are grateful to the collaborative effort resulting in this report of existing conditions. The core goals of the survey center on summarizing the count of household responses to many questions, as well as presenting a graphical summary. The report aims to contextualize the data results by looking, where possible, at local and national data and information.

This report is the first step to identifying and understanding opportunities, threats and needs of Oakbrook residents. Our hope is to create a springboard and space to provide collective guidance for impact initiatives in Oakbrook. Over 75% of those surveyed indicated that they would be amenable to a partner organization contacting them about the family's identified needs.

This baseline measure is possible only with a diverse and committed team. We appreciate the Oakbrook resident's trust and time in sharing personal information.

**Special thanks to our community volunteers and agency partners in supporting the community. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with you.**

- Berks Community Health Center
- Berks County Workforce Development Board
- Berks Teens Matter
- Centro Hispano Daniel Torres
- Co-County Wellness Services
- Emerging Leaders United
- Kenhorst 7th Day Adventist
- Literacy Council of Reading-Berks
- Maternal and Family Health Services, Inc.
- Millmont Elementary School
- Oakbrook Residents
- Olivet Boys and Girls Club of Reading and Berks County
- Reading Health System
- Reading Housing Authority
- Reading Public Library
- Reading Recreation Commission



*Barbara Hall and Joe Becker talk with an Oakbrook resident.*

***“Residents were very helpful and interested in the survey. They were happy to be asked about their needs and concerns. Many, especially the younger residents, were interested also in becoming involved in ways to address those issues, perhaps becoming part of a community forum or task group.”***

***Barbara & Brad Hall  
Community Survey Volunteers***

# Area Demographics

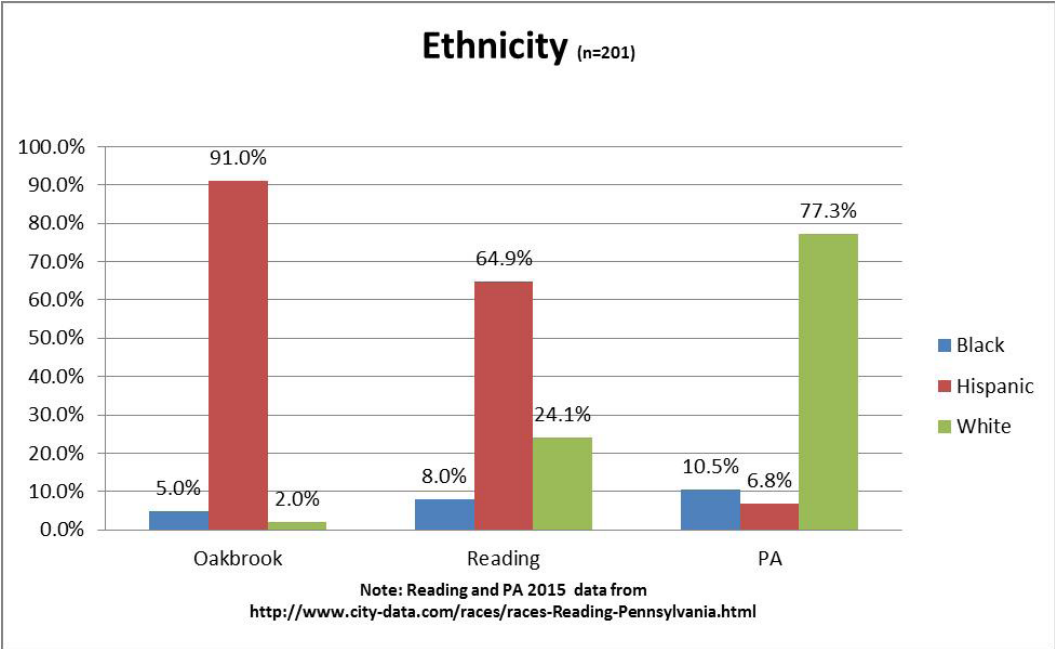
**DEMOGRAPHICS** (data relating to a population, including but not limited to age, income, ethnicity and used for designing and assessing programs and investment to have the best impact for distinct communities)

## THE SURVEY: BY THE NUMBERS

- 201 Head of Household residents participated in the survey. They did have an option to skip questions.
- 89% of respondents were female
- 61% noted Spanish as their primary language in the home

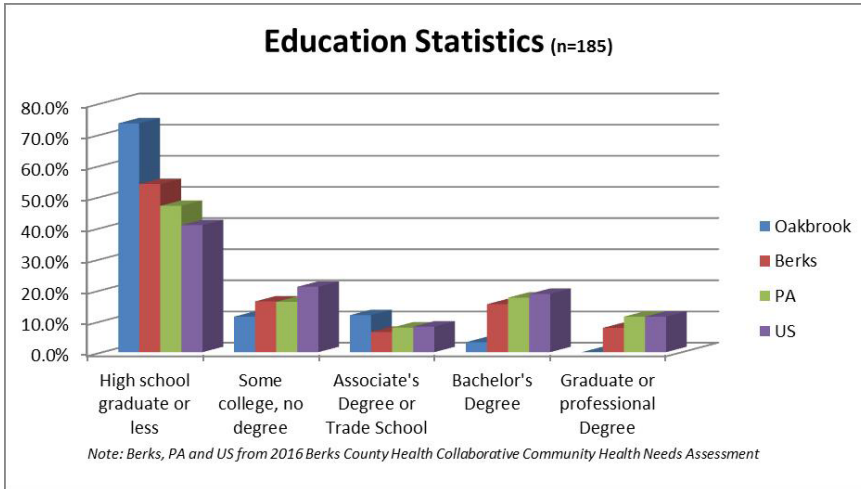
*Note: The 2016 Berks County Health Collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment noted nearly 18% of Berks County residents speak a language other than English in the home.*

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD AGE DISTRIBUTION	
18 to 24	3%
25 to 34	28%
35 to 44	25%
45 to 54	20%
55 to 64	10%
65 +	14%



# EDUCATION STATISTICS

- 31% of the Head of Household respondents have not attained their High School Diploma or GED; however 25 of the 57 are interested in attaining their GED.
- A second question was asked to determine if all other adults have their GED or High School Diploma. Of the 169 responses, 41% responded yes and an additional 51 (30%) responded *no, but that there is interest in attaining their GED*.

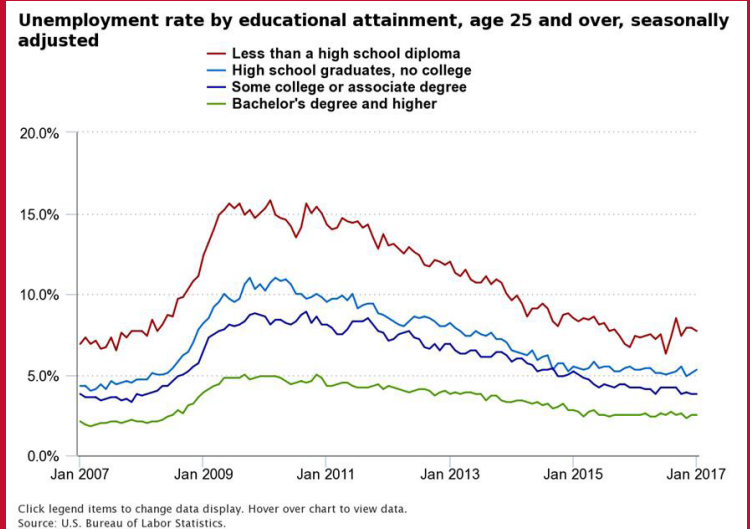
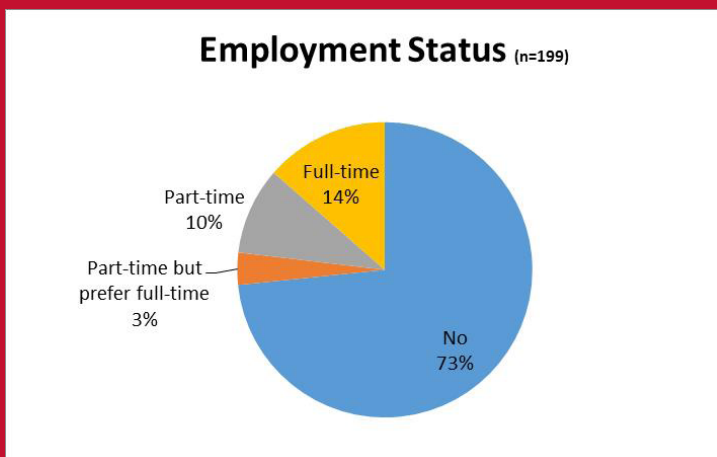


**A 2009 Northeastern University study monetarily quantified what not having a high school diploma looks like.**

- Americans without a high school diploma have considerably lower earning power and job opportunities in today's workforce. From a 2009 Northeastern University report, over a working lifetime from ages 18-64, high school dropouts are estimated to earn \$400,000 less than those that graduated from high school.
- By contrast, adults with high school diplomas contribute major fiscal benefits to the country over their lifetime. The combined lifetime fiscal benefits—including the payment of payroll, federal, and state income taxes—could amount to more than \$250,000 per graduated student. Such a public fiscal benefit more than outweighs the estimated cost of enrolling a student who has dropped out. Northeastern University - Center for Labor Market Studies and, "Left behind in America : the nation's dropout crisis" (2009). Center for Labor Market Studies Publications. Paper 21

# EMPLOYMENT STATUS

While county and state unemployment rates continue to track low this year, currently 73% of the 199 respondents reported that they are currently not employed or have been in the last 6 months.



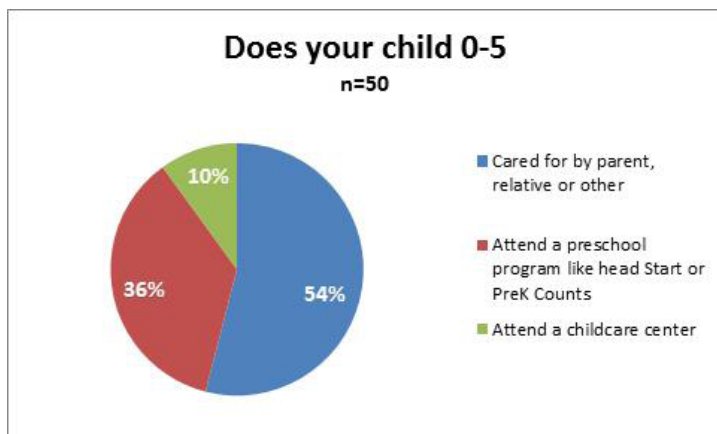
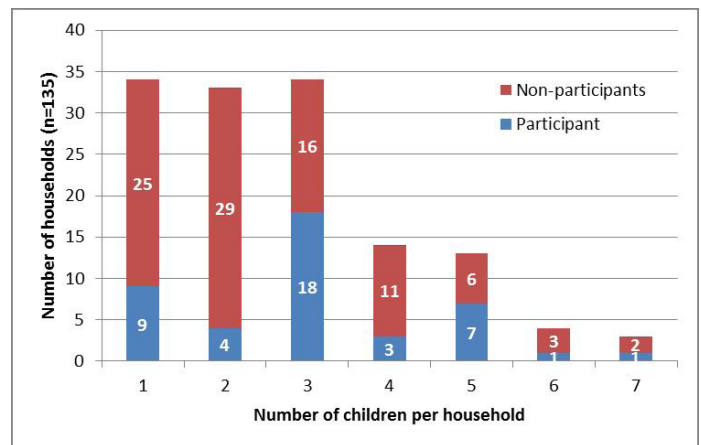


# CHILD FOCUSED INFORMATION

- 67% of the 201 households reported having children under the age of 18 in the home.
- The 135 households that responded have a total of 368 children, with the majority under the age of 9.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Expenditures on Children by Families, 2015 Report, married-couple families with before-tax income less than \$59,200 had annual child-rearing expenses ranging from \$9,330 to \$9,980 (depending on age of the child). Child-rearing expenses of single-parent households were about the same as those of married-couple households in the same income group. The two largest expenses are housing (33%) and food (20%) for a child in the lowest income group.

In addition to asking how many children are in the house, head of household was asked if the child is a member of Olivet Boys' & Girls' Club or if he/she participates in youth programming at the YMCA, Reading Rec, Youth Connect, etc.



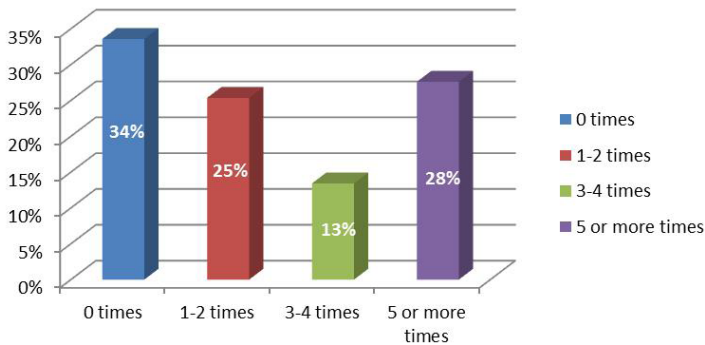
According to The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) one way to help children reach their potential and succeed is through quality early care and education. Such opportunities are especially important for children affected by risk factors, such as living in a low-income household or having a mother with less than a high school education. When these children have access to quality early care and education before age five, they can often make up for setbacks in their lives, enabling them to enter kindergarten on par with their peers.

Children who are encouraged and supported through high-quality early care and education demonstrate significant progress in acquiring early learning skills, which can save money in special education and remediation costs. These children are also more likely to graduate from high school, to attend postsecondary education or quality job training programs, and be valuable members of the workforce. The benefits of quality early care and education to children and families translate into a more competitive workforce and greater tax base, while reducing public expenses in special education costs, public assistance, and crime control.

*EXCERPT FROM: Office of Child Development and Early Learning Program Reach and Risk Assessment State Fiscal Year 2015-16 April 2017*

# CHILD FOCUSED INFORMATION

**In the past week how many times did you read to/with your children? (n=134)**



While 34% of respondents reported that they had not read to their children during the last week, 28% said that the family reads together 5 or more times.

Ready.Set.READ!'s Raising A Reader program, which is designed to help families build and maintain reading routines in their home, is in 5 Reading School District elementary schools, including Millmont. After participating in the program, there was a 37% increase in the number of parents/guardians who reported that they now looked at books 5 or more times per week with their child and a corresponding 78% reduction in those that didn't look at books at all with their child.

18% of the respondents said that their child participated in a Ready.Set.READ! program, yet 64% are unfamiliar with the community initiative.

A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.

Black and Hispanic children who are not reading proficiently in third grade are twice as likely as similar white children not to graduate from high school (about 25 vs. 13%). New research continues to quantify and reinforce the correlations that Early Warning drew between poverty, failure to read proficiently and failure to graduate from high school.

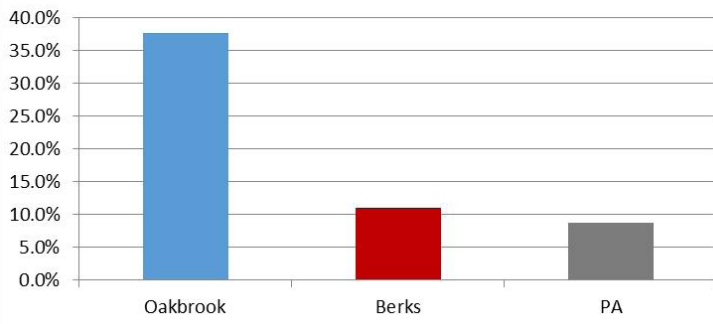
*Note: Based on Reading School District's 2017, 3rd Grade English Language Art PSSA scores, 72% of students are reading below proficient.*

Research shows that children who hear and are exposed to more and richer language are given the best chances to succeed academically and develop better language skills (Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013).

Sharing books and reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills, it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory (Bardige, 2009).



**% of Children (0-5) Served by Early Intervention**



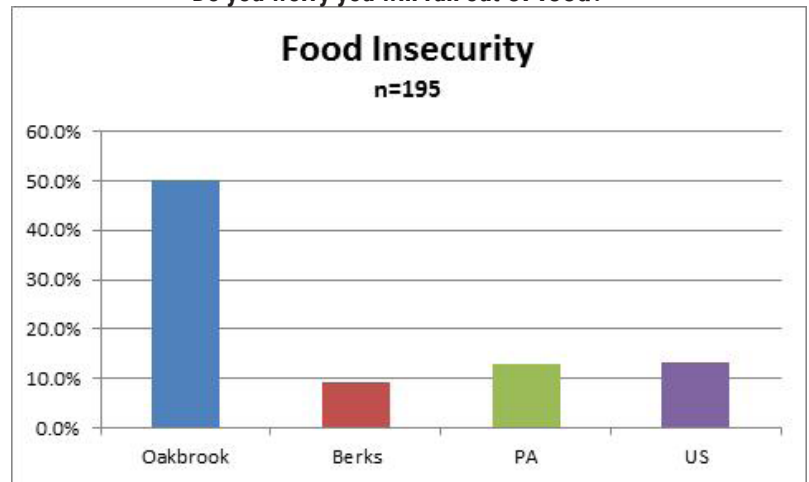
69 households reported having children under the age of 5, and 26 of those (38%) children are receiving intervention services (i.e. speech or physical therapy).



# FOOD ISSUES

**From 186 reporting families, 25% are receiving WIC. Over 88% are receiving food stamps compared to 15% of Berks County residents.**

Do you worry you will run out of food?

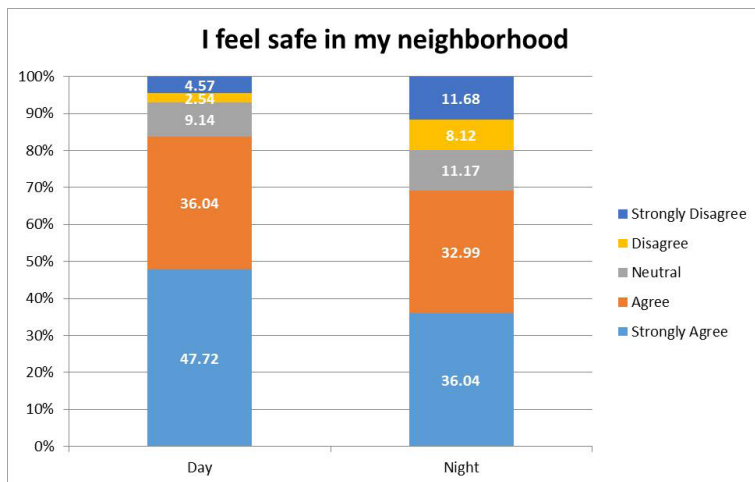


Food insecurity refers to USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time and it may mean that a household needs to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

In 2015, 45 million people lived in food-insecure households in the United States and faced hunger. Although Berks County has a much lower food insecurity rate compared to the state and the nation, over 39% of Oakbrook survey respondents said, "Yes, my household ran out of money to buy food" while 50% worried about running out of food before getting money to buy more.

<http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2015/overall/pennsylvania/county/berks>

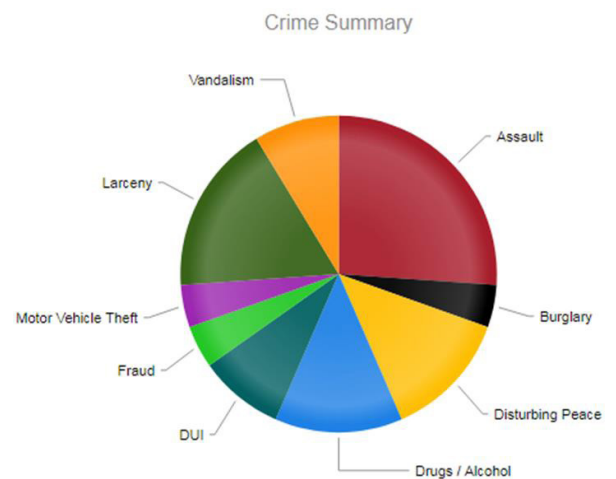
# SAFETY ISSUES



**Most of the 197 families indicated that they feel less safe at night.**

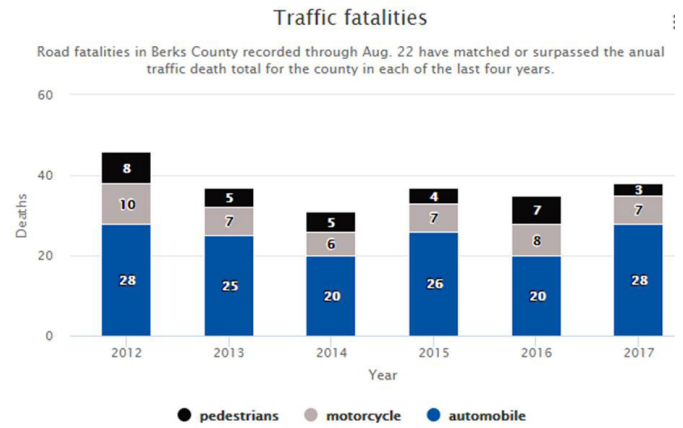
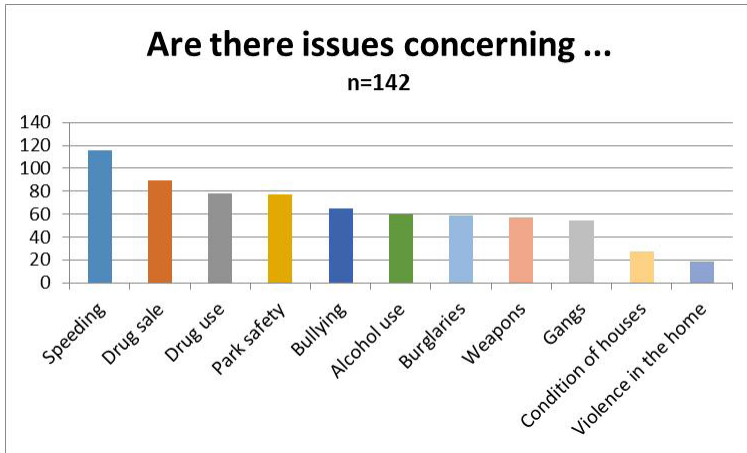
**Residents were asked to note if there are concerns with 11 different safety issues. 142 respondents cited a total of 700 concerns across those 11 issues with the most widely being: 1) Speeding, 2) Drug sales, 3) Drug use, and 4) Park Safety**

**Crime summary for Oakbrook and surrounding ½ mile area for the month of June 2017 shows the reported 23 crime incidents.**



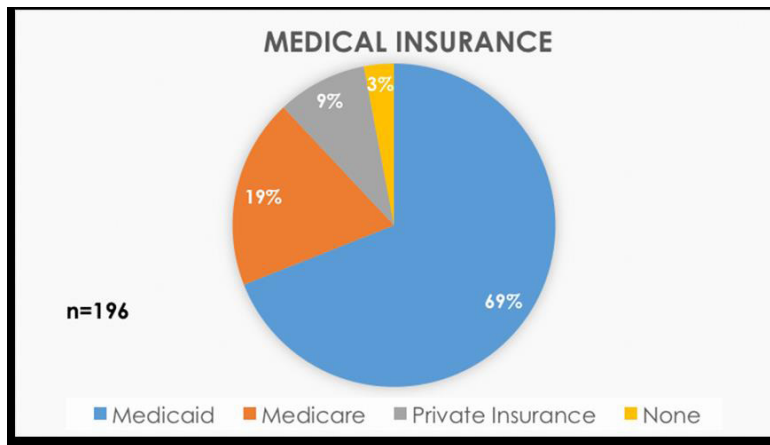
**ReadingPA.gov and crimemapping.com provides current detailed data imported from participating law enforcement agencies.**

# SAFETY ISSUES



*While speeding ticket data is not readily available, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation offers a crash analysis report, and 2016 saw a 12% increase of reported crashes over the 2015 858 incidents. The August 24 edition of the Reading Eagle shared the alarming increase in 2017 traffic fatalities.*

## HEALTH ISSUES



According to the 2016 Berks County Health Collaborative Report, almost 10% of Berks County residents do not have health insurance, which is higher than the 3% reported by the 196 Oakbrook Residents who responded.

What is different is approximately 20% of US adults between 18-64 have public insurance while Oakbrook residents reported 69% are receiving Medicaid.

### Health Care Location Use:

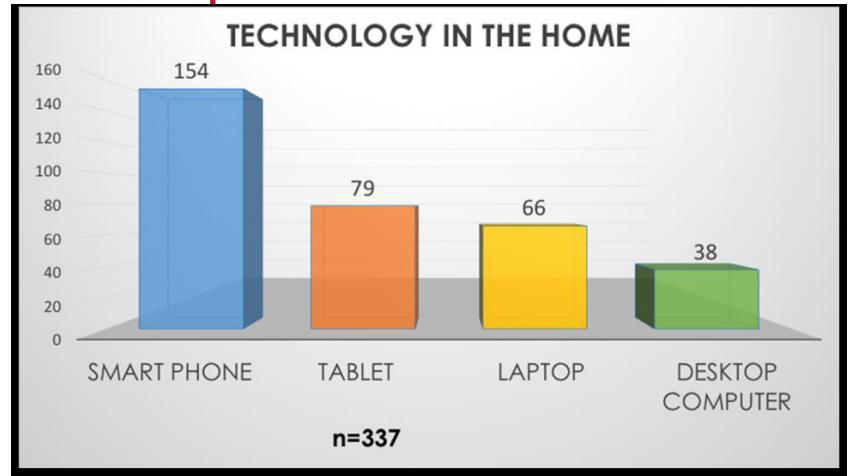
- 94% of the 194 residents responded that they go to the same doctor's office for all healthcare needs.
- 116 of 161 residents reported going to the ER at least once in the past 6 months and to Urgent Care 41 times.
- 97% of 196 residents are familiar with the Berks Community Health Center - 39% have used it within the last 12 months for an adult and 21% have used the center for a child.

# TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNITY

Residents were asked about internet access in the home. 81% of the 196 respondents said that they have a smart phone. 33% of households, where there are children, reported having a tablet, laptop or desktop.

The Reading Public Library and the Mifflin Community Library are located within 2.5 miles of Oakbrook. The library can be another social connectedness and programming connection point in a community.

35% of respondents reported that they use the Reading Public Library and 10% use the Mifflin Community Library to borrow items, participate in programming and/or use the computer. The number one reason cited for not using the library is that it is too far.



***"I've been involved with United Way for many years and this was a different type of volunteer experience.***

***I learned more specific survey techniques and more about my neighbors and the Oakbrook residents. Spending four hours with people, you learn about them and their families."***

*Julia Becker – ELU Volunteer*



*Margie Fortunet, Julia Becker, Mirelys Perez, Beth Simcik*

# SENSE OF COMMUNITY



Yamil Sanchez Rivera, Carmen Cotto and daughter, Mary Jimenez

*Almost 65% of 196 Oakbrook residents said, "Yes, I feel connected to other members" and 57% want to be involved in the decisions of their community.*

*An overwhelming majority raised their hand to say, "yes a partner organization can contact me and I would be willing to be a part of a follow-up focus group"*



*"I like being part of the community. When I have nothing specific to do, I want to volunteer."*

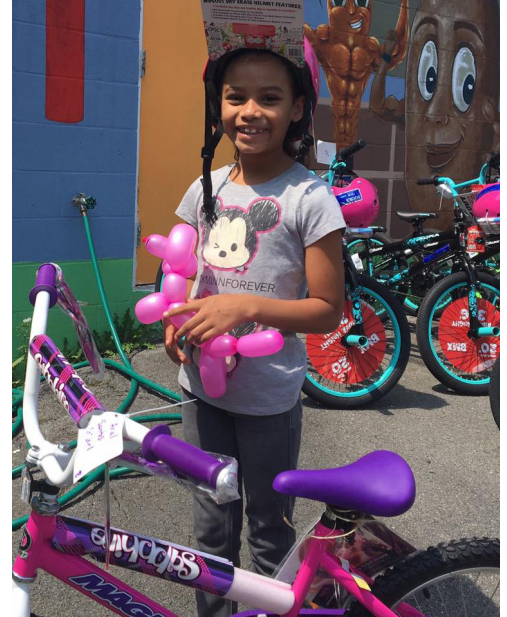
Marilyn Then – Oakbrook Resident Volunteer

# OAKBROOK HAPPENINGS: Summer Learning

The Oakbrook Summer Reading Program, **BOOKS FOR BIKES**, a collaborative initiative, addressed summer learning loss, which is a significant cause of academic achievement gaps between lower and high income students.

Ready.Set.READ!, managed by United Way of Berks County, partnered with the Berks Community Health Center, Customers Bank, the Reading School District and the Reading Housing Authority (RHA) to provide literacy activities to children, ages 2 - 12, in the Oakbrook Housing neighborhood. This program design met the needs of low-income children by engaging them in literacy related activities on a daily basis around the neighborhood's Summer Food Service Program, which is supported by the RHA and the school district. Literacy activities, including reading books, writing stories, vocabulary building, word recognition, and learning games, were offered. Several Oakbrook parent and community volunteers provided support. Programming was offered 5 days per week for 10 weeks.

On average, more than 40 children attended and participated in the weekday program, with over 30 youth successfully completing the program based on attendance and earning a free bike and helmet courtesy of Customers Bank. The goal is to continue the summer reading program, with the potential to include additional neighborhoods.



## BOOKS FOR BIKES BY THE NUMBERS...

**163 children initially enrolled in the summer reading program who attended at least once, with an average daily attendance of more than 40 kids.**

**Customers Bank offered an incentive for kids to earn the free bike and helmet, with over 30 kids earning new wheels and helmets.**



## NEXT STEPS

We are thankful and greatly appreciate all the information and input provided by the Oakbrook residents via the Neighborhood Survey. The input from residents will provide direction for our collective next steps as we work across sectors to address issues identified.

Following the sharing of the report and the Data Walk, where we will begin discussing the aggregate findings, United Way of Berks County will serve as a convener of the various stakeholders (residents, non-profit service providers, funders, government representatives, educational institutions, businesses and community volunteers) to:

- Further discuss and analyze the data collected from the Neighborhood Survey
- Identify and prioritize action items that rise to the top from the data and the discussion
- Identify desired outcomes
- Identify and/or create ways to address the key issues prioritized in order to reach the desired outcomes
- Coordinate efforts by providers to best align interventions
- Collect, analyze, and share data related to the collective efforts
- Maintain a continuous stream of communication related to the progress and results of the collective effort

At the core of these next steps, residents are recognized as being a critical component in order to have sustained success. Stakeholders will be invited to serve on the Oakbrook Collective Impact Council, which will be co-lead by a resident.



Amy Paulino, Shawn Barczynski, Darby Wiekrykas, Marisela Fuster, Cassandra Liciaga, Ada Rios

***“ I wanted to participate in the survey because I felt I needed to get the word out to the residents that services are available to them. The process made me feel better about myself and feel safer in the Oakbrook community. ”***

**Cassandra Liciaga – Oakbrook Resident**



Jennifer Tinsman, Yelitza Malave, Margarita Garcia, Nadine Smet-Weiss, Tammy White



Jackie Nawa and Marilyn Then

For additional information please contact Jennifer Tinsman, Ready.Set.READ! Program and Data Manager at [jennifert@uwberks.org](mailto:jennifert@uwberks.org) or 610-685-4576



This report is presented by Ready.Set.READ!  
and United Way of Berks County

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