Ask anyone from Riley Hill Faith Partners for Healthy Communities (RHFP) how wholeness is realized, and they will tell you that strong faith, a kind heart and a healthy body are key. The RHFP collaborative was formed on the heels of a health initiative led by partners, Riley Hill Family Life Center (RHFLC) and Riley Hill Baptist Church (RHBC). Riley Hill is located outside the incorporated area of Wendell and does not have access to safe public areas to be active. The health initiative began with the installation of a walking trail, playground and basketball court located at the church, accessible to all members of the community.

The church offered walking programs and promoted community walk and play days throughout the year. In addition to providing supports for more physical activity, they focused on existing practices within the church that would help promote health. Church members now enjoy healthy foods options during potlucks, meetings, and events, thanks to adopting a healthy foods policy. As members wait for the service to start on Sunday mornings, they can read health-related messages that are inserted into their bulletin.

While support and participation from the church was strong, the health initiative coordinators were dissatisfied with the level of community participation. Health initiative leaders believed that working together with other churches to reach the larger community would not only expand the reach of their health initiative, but would also leverage new resources and strengthen partnerships. As a result of this vision, a multi-church collaborative, the RHFP, was formed. RHFP participants meet monthly and strive to bridge the issues of faith and health together for the citizens of Wendell and surrounding areas of Zebulon and Knightdale. The collaborative is excited about the accomplishments of RHBC and RHFLC, and are looking for ways they can adopt similar health initiatives in their respective churches as well as provide events and resources to improve the health and quality of life of the greater community.
“...there have not been any places for me to take my kids to play outdoors that was convenient for the whole family. Now I can walk and the boys can play [basket]ball and the girls enjoy the swings. There was nothing around here for a long time after the community park closed. Its nice to have a place to go as a family to be outdoors.

Now I see the connection to health. My kids see me changing my behavior and now want to do healthier things too.”

- Mother in the Wednesday Walking group.