

# THE LASTING IMPACTS



insights from past program participants

# Need a little background?

## ➤ **PATCH has been around since 2010.**

We've employed nearly 300 young people from across Wisconsin since we began, and many of our alumni are now well into careers and adulthood. While the program has changed a bit, our focus of working alongside and in true partnership with youth has stayed the same.

## ➤ **We've gotten some cool updates from past PATCHies.**

It's always wonderful to hear from those we've worked with over the years about their successes, struggles, and everything in between. But with so many alumni, we know there's still a lot more to discover.

## ➤ **We wanted to know even more!**

We wanted to know the nitty-gritty — like what impact the program had in the long term and which parts truly made a difference. We were curious!

## ➤ **We brought together a team to help us develop an eval plan.**

We teamed up with a talented dual-degree grad student and our awesome evaluation crew — youth, staff, and consultants — to bring this project to life.

## ➤ **We sent a survey and did some one-on-one chats.**

We began with a survey to explore lasting impacts, then followed up with a series of interviews to gain deeper insights into which specific program elements make the biggest difference.

## ➤ **And, this is just a little bit of what we found out.**

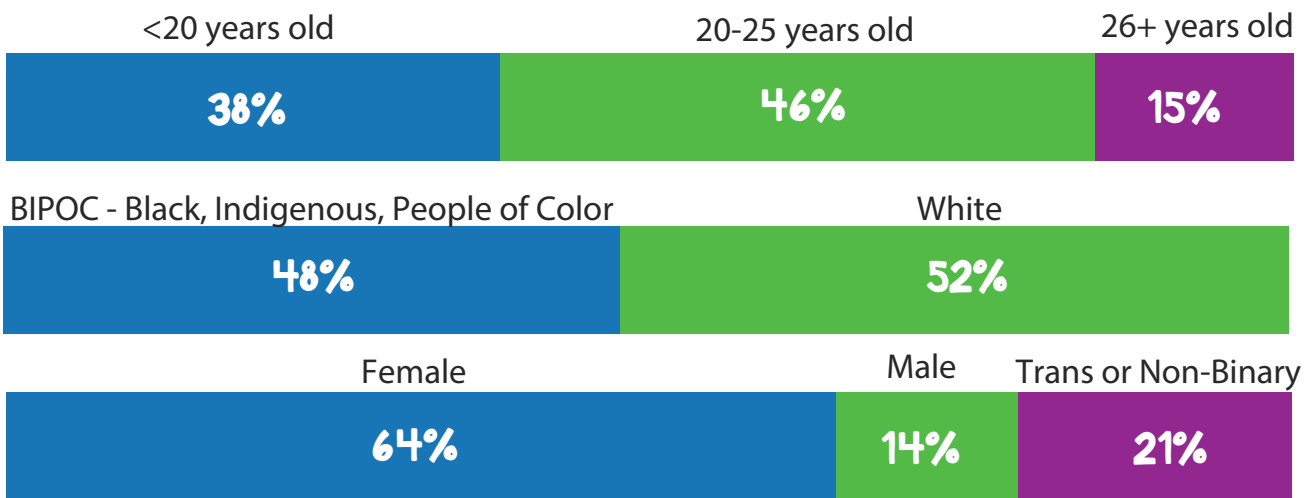
There was a wealth of information. This is just a snippet of it.



# What did the survey say?

➤ We had **104** Wisconsin PATCH alumni complete the survey. Over half of our alumni responses came from those who moved on from PATCH within the past four years, sharing fresh insights into the program's impact.

➤ They represented a variety of identities.



➤ And, over half were in the program for multiple years.



➤ We asked them to reflect on all these different areas:

Health & Wellbeing    Advocacy    HEALTH CARE  
Relationships & Connectedness  
STIGMA    Job Readiness    SELF-WORTH

➤ The verdict: we saw clear, meaningful change in all areas!

# So, what does that mean?

Alumni indicated change in the areas of:

## ADVOCACY

Understanding how decisions impacting young people are made, who's behind them, and how to take action to create positive change in the community

## HEALTH CARE

Understanding the importance of, being confident in, and actually talking to trusted adults about health, visiting a doctor regularly, being honest with health care providers, and taking an active role in health care decisions

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

Understanding the importance of, being confident in, and actually finding reliable health information, speaking up for health needs, getting the right help, setting relationship boundaries, asking for consent, protecting against STIs, managing mental health, making safe choices about substances, and taking care of physical and emotional health

## SELF-WORTH

Believing in oneself, setting goals and dreams, standing up for what one believes, feeling good about who they are, and knowing they can make a difference, all while changing the way they see themselves

## STIGMA

Recognizing the impact of negative beliefs on others and learning to be more open-minded and respectful toward differences

## RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTEDNESS

Having people who make one feel valued, trusted, and supported, and being part of a community where one feels a sense of belonging and can rely on others for advice or help

## JOB READINESS

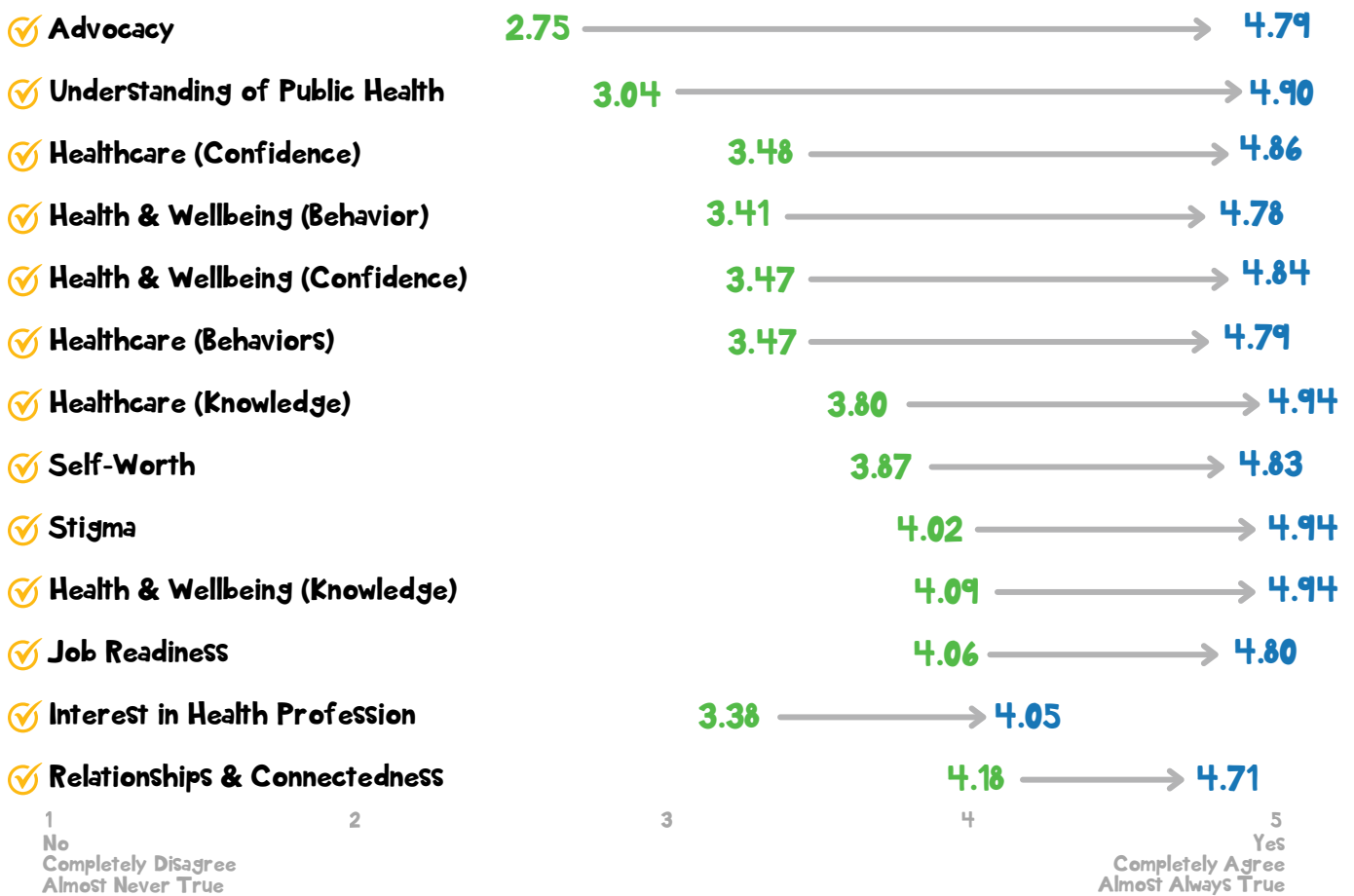
Taking responsibility for one's schedule, showing up on time, being dependable, communicating confidently with adults, and gaining the skills and experience needed for a future job or career

# But, how much change did you see?

For our data-loving people, the numbers were pretty telling.

## Changes from **BEFORE PATCH** → **BECAUSE** of **PATCH**

Average ratings for each area, with ✓ showing where the results were statistically significant



# What were the takeaways!?

## ➤ The areas with the biggest growth align with the work we DO.

We collaborate with young people to improve adolescent health and wellbeing, providing them with the knowledge and support to speak up, build confidence, and advocate for their needs in decisions that impact their health and lives.


- **ADVOCACY**
- **HEALTH CARE**
- **HEALTH & WELLBEING**


## ➤ But, HOW we approach it also made a meaningful impact.


PATCH's youth-driven programs foster strong youth-adult partnerships, empowering a diverse and representative group of young people to grow, make an impact, and drive positive change in their communities.

- **SELF-WORTH**
- **STIGMA**
- **JOB READINESS**
- **RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTEDNESS**

## ➤ A few other things that we noticed:

 Knowledge related to Health & Wellbeing didn't experience as much growth, possibly because topics like health literacy, sexual and reproductive health, and mental and emotional health are already being covered in school health classes. We're just diving deeper!

 We don't necessarily hire youth based on their interest in health professions; instead, we focus more on their experiences and skills. That said, some individuals do end up changing their minds and pursuing careers in health later on!

 While Relationships & Connectedness showed the smallest growth, it was the most mentioned theme in written responses. Participants already had strong networks before joining, and it seems our questions didn't capture the full extent to which participation impacted and expanded those networks. Oops!

# Did they tell you more?

➤ **Yes! SO much more!**

**The numbers are cool and all, but what they said... 😊 !**

PATCH helped me become more confident in my ability to advocate for myself and others.

Through PATCH I discovered that I was not alone. And, if no one is going to talk about such difficult and unpleasing topics, someone has to start the conversation. I was someone who learned how to start those hard conversations.

Leading workshops for health care professionals was an amazing experience. I never would've thought professionals would or could learn from youth in that way. It was an empowering experience to know the impact I could have advocating for myself and fellow youth.

During PATCH I learned how to be myself more. I learned how to back up my beliefs to be able to stand up for myself.

PATCH certainly showed me that it is possible and within my ability to manage my own health care and health care decisions as a young adult.

By FAR the best job. I joined over a decade ago, and yet PATCH is still the best boss, mentorship structure, and culture I have ever experienced in a job. I grew so much without the painful growing pains, but instead a community of support.

PATCH helped me build relationships with people with a wide range of lived experiences in a space that encouraged open and honest sharing about those different experiences.

PATCH was a great opportunity to connect with community resources and build lifelong skills in any field of work.

PATCH made me realize how passionate and interested in adolescent health I am and now I work with it every single day as a nurse. Absolutely PATCH led to this career for me.

The whole PATCH team changed my life when I was 16. I will always be so grateful for the chance they took on me and I will take the values I built and fueled from PATCH with me for the rest of my career, the rest of my life.

PATCH helped me realize that my voice matters and my opinion matters.

I love how involved PATCH gets teenagers!! Adolescence is the hardest years for kids and their bodies and minds are changing so quickly. The amount they learn about themselves through doing PATCH is remarkable and I think really shapes their future. I also admire how PATCH does it in a non-judgmental and non-discriminatory way. Teens often feel judged in every aspect of their lives for the choices they make, and PATCH is somewhere none of that exists. It's beautiful and I still talk about it every day!

**...and these were just a few!  
We had over 100 pages of powerful quotes.**

# So, which aspects of PATCH had the greatest impact on alumni?

Based on the interviews, SIX key themes stood out.

## 1 EDUCATION

PATCH provided valuable opportunities to learn, gain resources, and build connections during training and enrichment. These experiences deepened their understanding of important health topics and gave them the confidence to discuss these issues openly in their personal and professional lives.



## 2 EMPLOYMENT + WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Through paid roles, such as facilitating workshops and consulting, alumni gained essential skills and confidence. These experiences not only built their professional abilities but also connected them with professionals in various fields, opening doors to new career possibilities.



## 3 A SENSE OF COMMUNITY + BELONGING

PATCH helped alumni develop a strong sense of belonging. By embracing their uniqueness and forming meaningful relationships with peers from diverse backgrounds, alumni felt part of a supportive, inclusive community that valued their perspectives.



## 4 YOUTH-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

Alumni felt empowered by the balance of adult leadership and youth input. PATCH provided structure and encouraged them to take on leadership roles, share their expertise, and see the lasting impact of their contributions, fostering a strong sense of ownership.



## 5 FACILITATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Alumni spoke about how PATCH created opportunities for them to connect with professionals and community leaders. These relationships have continued to drive positive change in their communities, providing guidance and fostering collaboration beyond the program.



## 6 YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

A key factor for alumni was the strong youth-adult partnership fostered by PATCH. Alumni emphasized how a trusted program coordinator not only set clear expectations but also nurtured a deeper connection built on respect and accountability. This approach fostered mutual trust and encouraged youth to engage more fully, playing a critical role in their personal development and the overall success of the program.



# What were the takeaways?!

## ➤ **We have purpose and longevity behind what we do.**

Authentic youth engagement requires a significant investment of time, resources, expertise, and capacity. The evaluation affirmed that this investment is worthwhile and essential for long-term success.

## ➤ **We have a clearer understanding of our longer-term impact.**

The evaluation gave us a better picture of how PATCH is making a difference for youth over time.

## ➤ **Our approach to youth engagement is validated.**

The evaluation confirmed that our core principles—youth-driven programming, youth-adult partnerships, and activities focused on education, employment, and empowerment—are at the heart of the program's success.

## ➤ **We are committed to adapting and evolving.**

The evaluation showed us what's working and where we can fine-tune. We'll use these insights to continue evolving PATCH and ensure it stays relevant for the youth we serve.

## ➤ **And above all, we LOVE reconnecting with our alumni!**

It can be tricky since contact information changes so often, but if you're a past PATCHie, we'd love to hear from you. Whether it's through Zoom, email, Instagram, Facebook, or in person, we want to stay connected. Our alumni are now all over the place, and we're always excited to hear updates and find new ways to keep in touch!



**At PATCH, we strive to bring youth voice into important adolescent health conversations while also providing youth the necessary knowledge, resources, support, skills, and opportunities to become HEALTHY, CONNECTED, and THRIVING adults. We are thrilled to see impact of this effort from our incredible alumni!**  
**#TogetherForAdolescentHealth**