Amizade and Williamson Health and Wellness Center/Healthy in the Hills Initiative | CBR Fellows Proposal

1. **Site:** Williamson, WV (Central Appalachia)

2. **Description of partner:**
   Amizade has been partnering in Williamson, WV since 2011. Williamson is a small town in the middle of the “Billion Dollar Coal Fields” on the border of Kentucky and West Virginia of less than 3,000 people. Its infrastructure was built for 3 times that amount of people, and due to depopulation with the decline of the coal industry there are now severe issues surrounding poverty and poor health in the region. Amizade's has been partnering with the staff behind the creation of the Williamson Health & Wellness Center since the beginning. The Center is dedicated to building a culture of health through holistic community and clinical interventions in order to stimulate a thriving local economy centered around wellness for the entire population in the area.

3. **Social issue:**
   The issue that the Healthy in the Hills (HITH) Passport is chiefly aimed at impacting the overwhelming prevalence of lifestyle-affected chronic disease in Southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky. According to “The State of Diabetes” 2015 report and the RWJF County Health Rankings, Mingo County alone has an adult diabetes rate of 13% (5% above the national average), an adult obesity rate of 41% (3% above the national average), and ranks 54th out of West Virginia’s 55 counties when it comes to overall health outcomes. Deeply-rooted behavioral change has been shown to have an impact on the constellation of negative health outcomes that lead to the current failed state of community health in our area.

4. **Impact of project on community:**
   The HITH Passport project is designed to create a positive reinforcement feedback loop at the community level when it comes to participation in local activities, events, and projects that focus on holistic well-being. The HITH Passport, a hard copy document or smartphone app that tracks individual participation at events, will serve as a tool for tracking health over time. The passport will act as a central listing for all well-being opportunities in the community. These same opportunities will be worth points based on set criteria. Therefore, the various incentives offered will be tied to participation in said opportunities via point accumulation. The goal of our project is to create 9,000 healthier lives in our service area via behavior modification and education - the HITH Passport is envisioned to be the primary motivator and measurement tool for us to reach that goal.
5. **Research project description:**
   In terms of the research being conducted through this program, we're attempting to address two main questions:
   
   (1) As we track basic health information (Weight, BMI, Blood Pressure, Glucose & A1C Levels) through the intake and quarterly reporting from Passport participants, we're looking to see if participation in large-scale community well-being programs creates meaningful changes in these core measurements of health. In addition to correlating activity participation and selection to changes in key health measurements, we'll also hope to conduct interviews with participants to identify secondary and tertiary behavior changes that might serve as intermediary steps between the participation and observed health measurement changes.
   
   (2) We'll be looking to determine how we can improve existing opportunities being offered, expand the selection of opportunities being offered in useful ways, and provide useful analytics to our partner organizations.

6. **Methodology:**
   We hope to be able to answer the above-described questions through the following protocol. WHWC, through the Healthy in the Hills initiative, will produce and distribute an "activity list" of all well-being opportunities in our area. Each opportunity will be assigned a point value. Users will be offered either a paper passport in which they can collect points from participation in these opportunities, or they can collect points via a HITH Passport smartphone app. When the user signs up for their passport, and when they cash in their points quarterly for incentives, we plan to collect the basic health measurements mentioned above. We will then correlate their activity data from their collected points, our activity guide log, and the basic health measurements to reach conclusions regarding the above-described research project questions.

7. **Student Profile:**
   Ideally, the student will have a background in data collection, statistical analysis, information technology, or public health. In addition, we would hope that the student would have good interpersonal and communication skills so that they could effectively assist with additional qualitative data collection from partners and users and general project management tasks.