

# Heart of Williamsport

## 2017 Year End Report



PHC | Pennsylvania  
Humanities  
Council

— Community —  
Heart & Soul



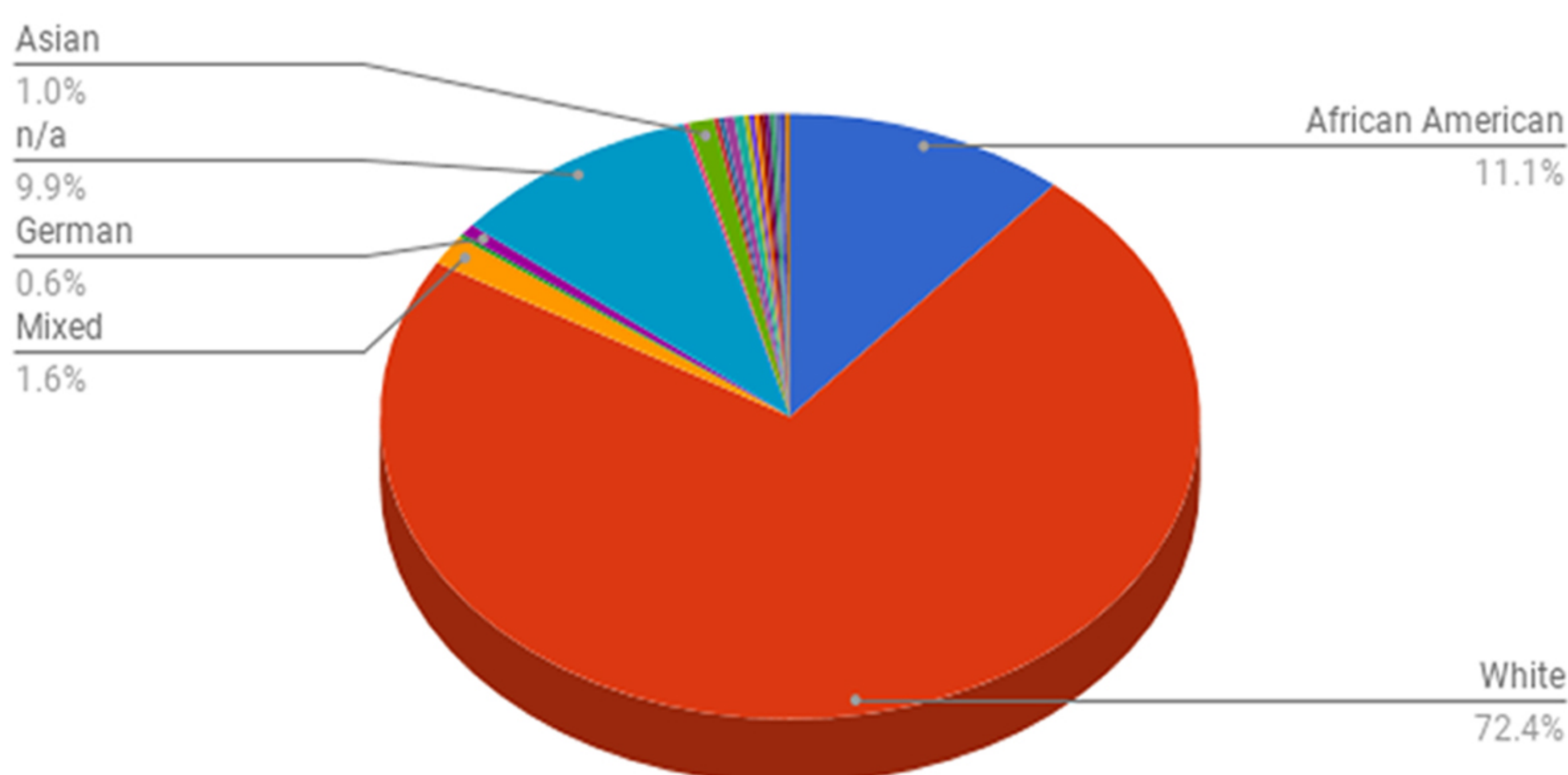
Susquehanna  
Greenway  
  
PARTNERSHIP

# Report & Findings

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership (SGP) began collaborating with PHC in 2016 to bring the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart and Soul to Williamsport; this has engaged many partners and volunteers, and energized our city in new ways.

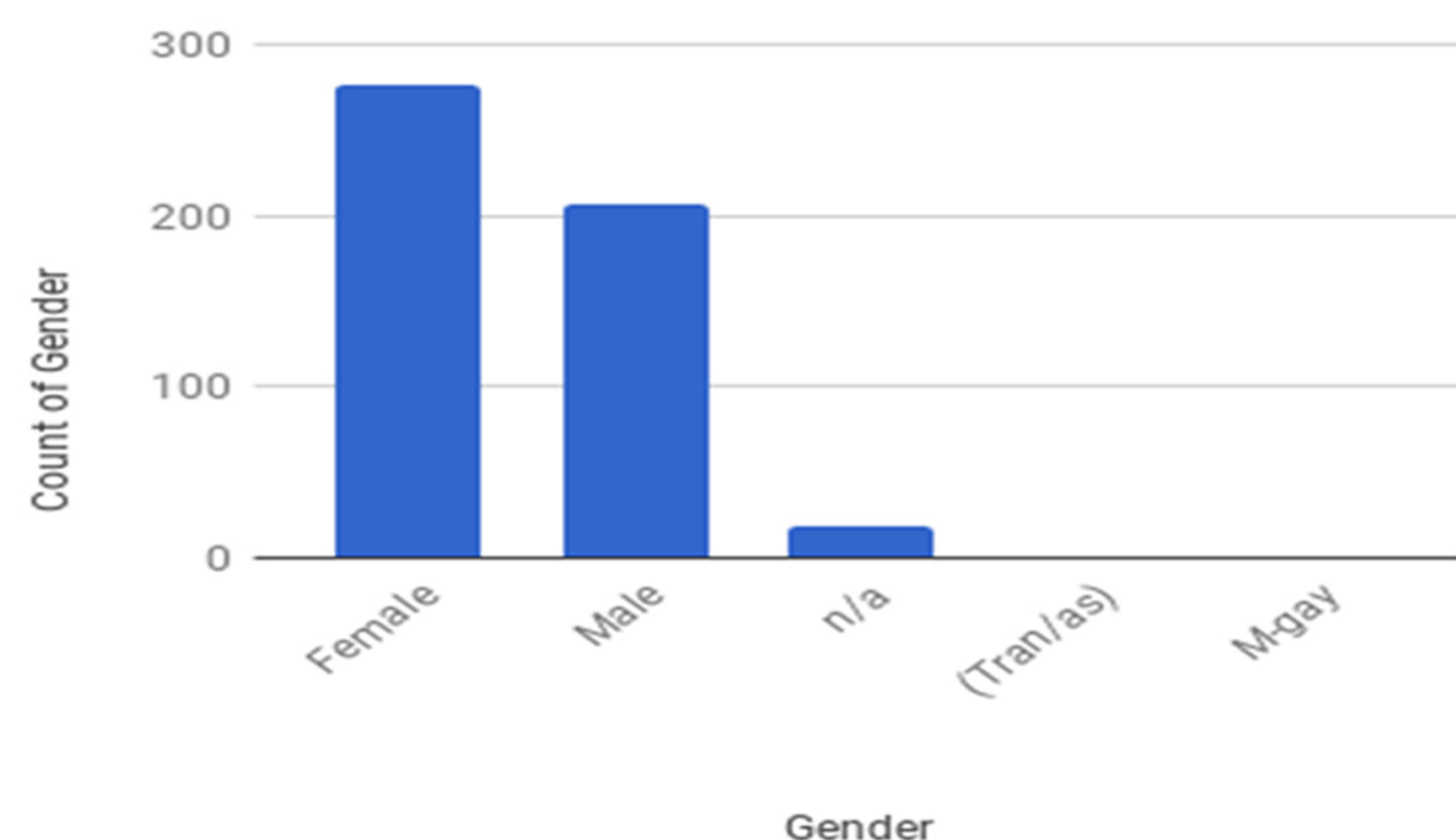


Count of Ethnicity

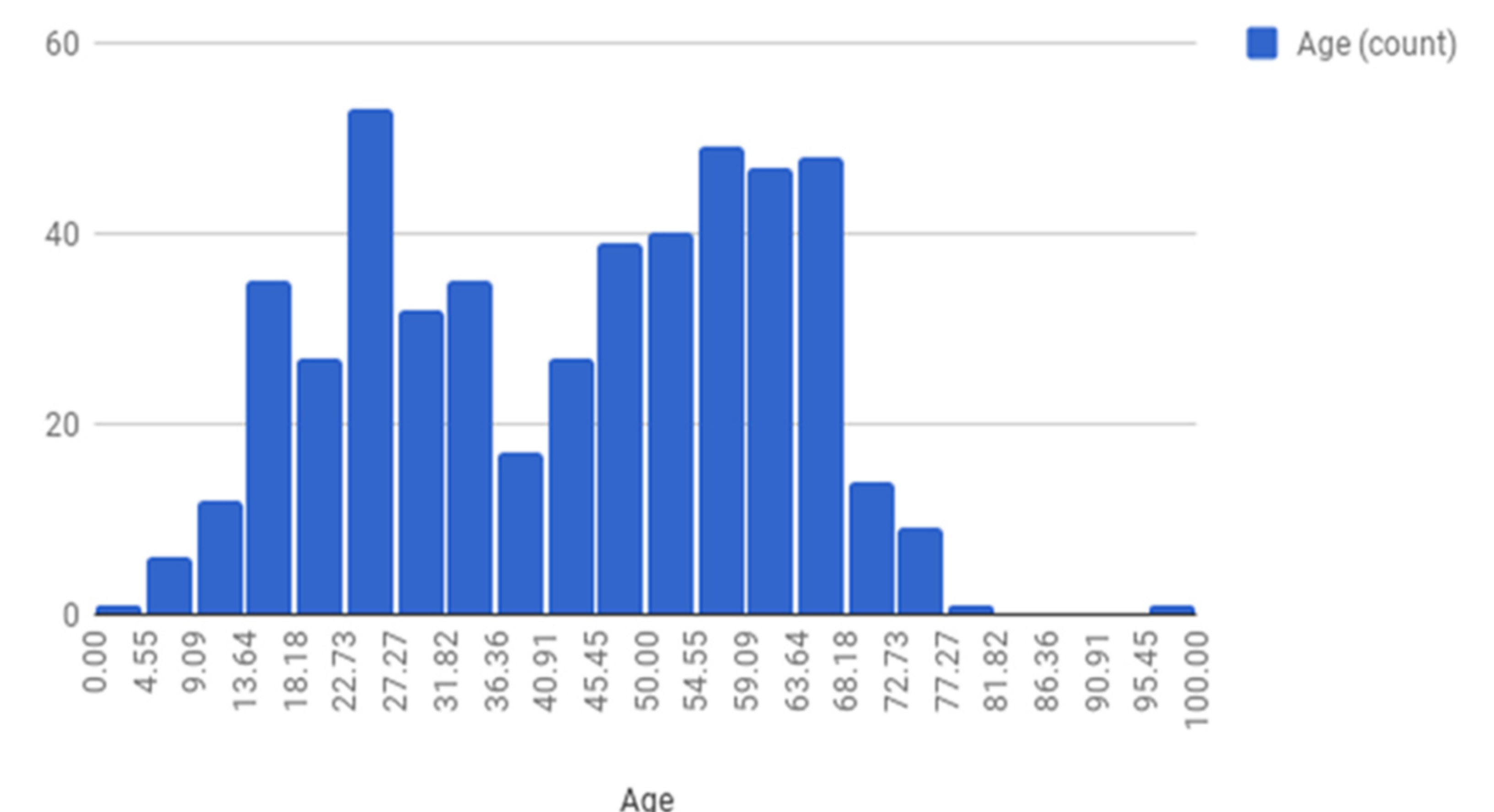


In 2016 we studied our demographics and developed a strategy for engaging a wide range of people, including those who are not often heard. Using Heart and Soul we collected over 900 survey responses (attending events in neighborhoods and downtown), hosting a round table forum, and recording 80 personal 'Williamsport stories'. We gathered citizens to listen to these stories, and talk about what people said they value. This information was recorded in a database and organized according to themes that emerged.

Count of Gender



Histogram of Age



# What's New In 2017

We started 2017 with additional story circles and story listening groups. Volunteers gathered in small groups to hear each other's stories and reach consensus about what people said they value and noting ideas they have for change.



In March we had 59 people attend our launch party to share and celebrate our accomplishments and to communicate the next steps and opportunities for people to get involved in the project.

In April we hosted a community summit, where 49 community members reviewed the data collected from interviews, surveys, and story circles; this included over 1300 data points which were pre-sorted into themes. Residents worked together to identify what people said they value, and drafted Heart and Soul Statements to express what people value most about Williamsport.



Over the summer these statements were further refined by the leadership team and are posted on our website: [HeartOfWilliamsport.org](http://HeartOfWilliamsport.org) where feedback is still being collected. We also shared these via our Facebook page and at a round table discussion (36 attending), and eight community focus groups (total of 129 attending) – asking people to share feedback for improvement. With these groups we identified how our values have changed over time, and where these values show up in Williamsport - including organizations, events, activities, places and people.



# Heart and Soul Themes and Values

## Arts, Culture, Heritage

*We celebrate the arts through cultural events and activities capturing the spirit of the community and providing opportunities for socializing, expressing creativity, and supporting local businesses which revitalize our city and enrich our lives.*

*We treasure our rich history and culture reflected in the styles and quality of our architecture, Little League Baseball, and our lumber heritage, that we preserve for the next generation instilling pride in our community.*



## Diverse Community

*We value the diversity of Williamsport and its people by recognizing the many arts, entertainment, dining, employment, and worship opportunities maintained within the quaint, small-town community that practices kindness, acceptance, respect, and inclusion.*



## Beautiful Natural Environment

*We admire our scenic views and beautiful natural surroundings; this tranquil environment enhances our quality of life and provides outdoor activities that utilize our mountains, forests, rivers, trails, and parks.*



## Educational Assets, Activities, and Events

*We appreciate the numerous educational opportunities and programs provided by our schools, colleges, libraries, churches, and organizations, which offer mentoring and learning activities and promote a sense of community pride.*



# Heart and Soul Themes and Values

## Health, Safety, Welfare

*We value our clean and friendly city that has a quality health care system, extensive social services, generous philanthropists and responsive government that provide a great environment to raise a family, allowing our residents to feel safe and peaceful.*



## Urban Amenities and Recreation

*We appreciate our center city with connections and public transportation to a wide variety of destinations, including businesses, restaurants, bars, specialty shops, theater, sports and recreation, creating a distinctive urban/rural atmosphere where people live, work and play.*



## Small-Town Feel

*We treasure the character and friendliness of our small-town and its compassionate people that provide opportunities for involvement and connection to the lives of others.*

*We appreciate the scale of our town because of its easy access to local shops, restaurants, attractions, destinations, and the natural environment - all within walking distance.*



## Opportunities and Economic Growth

*We value the momentum of positive change and entrepreneurial spirit that is creating an abundance of privately-owned small businesses that revitalize our city, downtown and neighborhoods.*

*We appreciate strong economic growth, diverse job opportunities, and a low-cost of living that makes a high quality of life affordable to more people, encouraging young people to stay here.*



# Second Street Community Garden

Last February we went to an Our Towns meeting to share citizen's concerns about neighborhood decline. Citizens shared with us that they do not know their neighbors because there are no places for neighbors to gather and socialize, and there is frequent turnover of residents because there are more renters than homeowners. Another concern was closing grocery stores, forcing many people without vehicles to travel over a mile to get food.

The idea for creating a community garden emerged, and from our neighborhood outreach we knew of the perfect location – the corner of Second and Locust Streets – a Neighborhood Strategic Area (NSA) Section 8 housing area. The NSA, the Beloved Community Council, Our Towns and SGP's Heart of Williamsport met with the property managers and residents - asking if this would be something they would want.

Within 5 months a community garden has been built with seven raised beds that were communally constructed, filled, and planted. The area is fenced - allowing parents to tend the garden with their children, and there is a picnic table where neighbors can gather. There is a shed filled with tools, and FreshFoodLyco, a project of the Lycoming County Conservation District, will assist these residents to plan and plant their gardens, with discussions about how to share work tasks and the crops.

This brought together 6 organizations, numerous businesses that donated, and neighborhood residents - to create a space that has helped to transform life on this block. Residents are working together, and those with gardening experience are mentoring others; relationships are developing and that is strengthening the neighborhood.



# **What's Next...and How You Can Get Involved**

***In 2018 we will be collecting more ideas for projects and creating a community action plan. We will share these idea at a community summit and develop strategies for transforming ideas into real activities.***

- ***Please visit [HeartOfWilliamsport.org](http://HeartOfWilliamsport.org) to review the draft Heart and Soul Statements and provide feedback; share these statements with friends and organizations so they can comment also.***
- ***Attend upcoming Williamsport Wednesdays to share your ideas for action.***

***- Conversations will focus on:***

- February 21st: Arts, Culture, Heritage & Small-town Feel***
- March 7th: Urban Amenities & Beautiful, Natural Environment***
- March 21st: Educational Assets; Activities, Events & Health, Safety, Welfare***
- April 4th: Opportunities and Economic Growth & Diverse Community***

***Park Place, 800 West Fourth Street (Rear Entrance)  
5:30 - 7:00 PM - with Pizza & salad provided at 5:15 PM***

- ***"From the Heart of Williamsport" FREE movie celebrating what we love about where we live.***

***Premiere: Community Arts Center, 220 West Fourth Street.***

***Feb. 9th movie premiere at 6pm (doors open 5pm)***

***Additional screenings at the Pajama Factory 1307 Park Avenue***

***March 18th screening at 2pm (doors open 1pm)***

***March 19th screening at 7pm (doors open 6pm)***



***Contact us at [HeartOfWilliamsport@gmail.com](mailto:HeartOfWilliamsport@gmail.com) with your ideas and interests!***

# The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership



The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the Susquehanna Greenway, which is a network of conserved lands, trails, and communities that run along the Susquehanna River within Pennsylvania. We work toward our mission through the implementation of our three program areas: Trails (both land and water), River Towns, and Education & Outreach.

The Heart of Williamsport initiative is a project within the Partnership's River Towns program area. The River Towns program works within communities throughout the Susquehanna Greenway to envision, prioritize, and implement community-led projects that reconnect residents back to the Susquehanna River, create trails and river accesses, and interpret the community's natural and cultural assets. To learn more, visit our website: [www.susquehannagreenwaypartnership.org](http://www.susquehannagreenwaypartnership.org)

## Heart of Williamsport is a Collaborative Project



The Pennsylvania Humanities Council is the Federal-State Partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, working in partnership with the Orton Family Foundation to bring Community Heart and Soul to Pennsylvania. Supplemental funding was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Penn Strategies, Lycoming Arts, and the City of Williamsport.



We are also grateful to our local project partners who provide continued collaboration and support: Beloved Community Council, the City of Williamsport, Hands on Heritage, Lycoming Arts, Lycoming College, Lycoming County Planning, Our Towns, the Sun Gazette, and the citizens of Williamsport.

Volunteers from across the community and our core leadership team contributed hundreds of hours for story collecting, sharing and listening, data extraction and organization, and Heart and Soul statement development. Without volunteer support from our community this on-going project would not be possible. We thank you all for honoring us all by sharing your time and your stories.

**We the people, are the Heart of Williamsport.**



[HeartOfWilliamsport.org](http://HeartOfWilliamsport.org)

Each of us has a role to play in making sure that Williamsport is a great place to live. We challenge you to think about your role and get involved. We would love to have you as a volunteer! For more information contact us at [HeartOfWilliamsport@gmail.com](mailto:HeartOfWilliamsport@gmail.com)

