

The Networker

A quarterly publication of the Maine Network of Healthy Communities

Fall 2002

Issue 1

Welcome to The Networker, the quarterly newsletter of the Maine Network of Healthy Communities. With this first issue, we mark another milestone in our organizational status as the only membership organization in Maine representing the interests of local community health coalitions throughout the state. Future issues of The Networker will provide information on the MNHC Mentoring Program, member coalition activities, legislative and public health initiatives in Maine, funding opportunities, and more.

Bingham Program to Fund the MNHC Community Health Share Project

On October 15, MNHC received notification that the Bingham Program will fund the *MNHC Community Health Share Project*. This 2-year project will allow MNHC to develop and utilize a web-based application for reporting and sharing healthy community coalition/PATCH activities, projects, interventions and outcomes.

Healthy community coalitions and PATCH sites are faced with a daunting task when asked to evaluate their projects and activities and to describe the successes of their coalitions. There is a confusing array of models to evaluate project activities, and there are many possible indicators to measure project outcomes. The *MNHC Community Health Share Project* seeks to provide clarity and uniformity to this situation.

Components of the project include:

- Working with an evaluation consultant to identify the appropriate evaluation model and computer shareware.
- Identifying standardized database elements; developing a reporting system; and developing a “user friendly” database.
- Training MNHC members in the use of the system.
- Maintaining this web based tool for reporting, tracking and evaluating community based health activities.

Key partners will be involved in the planning and development of the database through (1) fact finding about current coalitions and their evaluation and monitoring efforts; (2) discussions with those coalitions to understand their experiences and needs; (3) discussions with Bureau of Health staff to determine their interest in the information sharing capacity of the shareware tool and to ensure that the outcomes designed by MNHC are in line with BOH evaluation tools as well; and (4) discussions with Bingham Program staff to determine their needs, to ensure that the end result is a valuable resource to funders. In conjunction with the development of this web based tool, MNHC will develop its website. *(Continued on page 2.)*

Benefits of the MNHC Community Health Share Project include:

- Increasing effective, efficient information sharing among MNHC members.
- Identification of a common vocabulary and definition of terms for use by all members.
- The ability MNHC members will have to demonstrate measurable project results to their constituencies, to other MNHC members, to the Bureau of Health, to potential funders, and to legislators.
- The ability MNHC will have to track members' project initiatives and provide useful overall community health information to members, potential members, funders, Bureau of Health staff, legislators, and the general public.
- The on-line access that Healthy Community/PATCH sites participating in the MNHC Mentoring Program will have to MNHC members' information, thereby facilitating information sharing and knowledge transfer from experienced coalitions to newer coalitions.
- The access funders (or potential funders), including the Bingham Program, will have to on-line reports, etc.



Emergency Preparedness at the Grass Roots Level: A Model Developed in Winthrop, Maine

By Gladys Richardson, Healthy Futures

After the events of September 11, the citizens of Winthrop (population 6232) recognized a need to plan beyond preparedness for natural disasters and emergencies such as major ice storms, forest fires, and hurricanes. We needed to address international terrorism and bio-terrorism. In doing so, we were jolted into acknowledging that feelings of terror seep into the lives of our citizens in many ways such as domestic violence in homes and random acts of violence in schools, the workplace, and community. Few parents escape a brush with feelings of terror related to their child's health and safety.

To address these issues, Healthy Futures, a Healthy Communities Coalition, identified three levels of Emergency Preparedness: Traditional Local Government Infrastructure, a Healthy Futures Coalition of First Responders, and Neighborhood Networks.

Level One: Traditional Local Government Infrastructure, respected and functioning well in our town, include the Police Department, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Technicians, the Water and Sewer Utilities, Town Manager, and the Public Schools. Within each of their own systems, officials of these organizations work with county, state and national officials to meet current recommendations and requirements for emergency preparedness.

Level Two: A Healthy Futures Local "First Responders" group was convened to bring the "systems" together to collaborate in identifying assets and needs, and in strengthening our ability as a community to be prepared for and respond to emergencies

and disasters, including terrorism. This network includes not only the local government infrastructure, but also physicians, representatives of the local churches and business guild, and a pharmacist, postmaster, local funeral director, and major grocery store manager.

Level Three: Healthy Futures Natural Neighborhoods Networks are in the early stages of development to build “community” within our own neighborhoods and to be prepared to respond to local emergencies and disasters. Based on the Concord, Massachusetts model, our goals are 1) for neighbors to feel secure and connected, to have a sense of belonging, and to have fun, for example at neighborhood get-togethers; and 2) to keep a Maine tradition strong: in case of a natural or man-made emergency or disaster, to be prepared and able to reach all town residents, from the last home on a dead-end road to an apartment at the top of the stairs, so that each household will have rapid access to timely information, appropriate care, and follow-up assistance as needed.

For more information, contact Gladys Richardson, Coordinator, Healthy Futures/Communities for Children. Her address is 15 Old Western Ave. Winthrop, Maine 04364. She can be reached at 207-377-2427 or by email: gladysr@ctel.net.

Upcoming Events

The Maine Public Health Association’s 18th Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, November 4, 2002 from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Marriott at Sable Oaks in South Portland. The theme of the meeting is Public Health Lessons: State and Community Perspectives. Hugh Tilson, senior fellow at the Maine Center for Public Health, will be the keynote speaker.

Morning and afternoon sessions will be devoted to The Future of Public Health and The Ten Essential Public Health Services. Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Learn about the findings and implications of the new Institute of Medicine public health report.
- Learn about the ten essential public health services, including examples of state and local initiatives.
- Learn about the major components of *Healthy Maine 2010*.
- Network with other public health professionals and program attendees.

For more information, go the MCPH website at www.mcph.org or call Sue-ann Sanford at Medical Care Development, 622-7566 x 232.



Check it out! MNHC has a public listserv that allows you to network on line with MNHC members, community coalition members throughout the state, Bureau of Health Staff, and other people interested in comprehensive community health in Maine. To join the listserv, go to www.yahoogroups.com , type in mainenetworkofhealthycommunities and follow instructions to join.

While you’re there, why not check out the *MNHC 2002 Annual Report*? Just type in MNHC Annual Report in the Archive Box and click on the July email that includes the *MNHC 2002 Annual Report* as an attachment.



Maine Network of Healthy Communities

MNHC Membership Requirements

Member organizations of MNHC will:

1. Have a stated mission to develop community-based coalitions for the purpose of establishing a participatory community health planning process. Network member coalitions will assess the overall functioning of the community's health and social support systems and organize community assets to improve the health and quality of life of local residents. (Note: MNHC members do not become members of the MNHC Corporation, which has no members.)

Network members focus their efforts on comprehensive community health and define health broadly. Members define health using one of the following inclusive definitions:

"A healthy city (community) is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments, and expanding those community resources which enable people to support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing themselves to their maximum potential."

--from Trevor Hancock and Len Duhl

"Health is more than the absence of disease. It is an optimum state of well being: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. Health is wholeness. It includes a sense of belonging to community and experiencing control over one's circumstances and fate."

--from Healthy People in Healthy Communities' Dialogue Guide

2. Have a coalition board comprised of membership representing a variety of community sectors, such as health, economics, environment, education, church, and social services. Membership should be inclusive and representative of the socio/economic sectors of the community.
3. Incorporate the views of community sectors with assessment, planning and implementation activities to develop long-term solutions to complex and interrelated issues.

4. Build relationships with other communities across the state. Work with other coalitions to develop coordinated regional and statewide public health strategies.
5. Designate a member of their local coalition as an official voting member of the Board of Directors MNHC, who will attend all Board of Directors meetings or send an alternate.
6. Designate a member of their local coalition to serve on a workgroup or subcommittee of MNHC.

New Membership Process

1. The addition of new members is a collaborative process, shared by all existing MNHC members. Each MNHC member must meet all the criteria and must fully understand the reason for the criteria. When a community coalition requests to become a member and completes the MNHC New Member Application Form, existing MNHC members and members of the MNHC Executive Committee will review the applicant's mission, organizational structure, and membership to determine if it meets the above stated criteria 1- 4. The MNHC Board will vote to accept or deny membership. The Board will make every effort to expedite its decision regarding new membership. The President of the Board may call a special meeting of the Board, or the Board may meet via conference call or email communication.

If the coalition meets criteria 1-4, the new coalition will be given the MNHC Membership Document, to complete and to be filed with the NMHC President. If the coalition does not meet the criteria, the MNHC President will inform the coalition of the criteria that need to be met. Existing MNHC members are encouraged to coach and advise potential new members in order to expand the MNHC membership.

The new coalition will be informed of the next MNHC Board meeting by the MNHC President and asked to send the designated representative to the meeting. Executive Committee members or existing MNHC members will be asked to volunteer to serve as a mentor and MNHC orientation guide for each new member. The orientation process will be collaborative and informal.

Who we are.....

The Maine Network of Healthy Communities is a statewide network of community coalitions working to enhance physical, social, emotional, environmental and economic health in Maine.

- We actively promote public policy changes that will improve the health and well-being of Maine's people and communities. We educate, communicate, inspire unity, and act as a catalyst for positive change.
- We work with organizations that collect data to determine what data should be collected, to ensure that needed data is collected, and to make sure that the data collected is a true measure of healthy and quality of life changes in Maine.
- We work to develop training and capacity building opportunities in order to strengthen healthy community coalitions at the local level across the state.
- We communicate the importance of working collaboratively and effectively toward a better public health system.

MNHC is actively seeking to increase its membership and to establish formal partnerships with other organizations interested in improving public health. Our members are available to answer questions and to make presentations. For more information about us, contact Susan Crippen, MNHC President at susancrippen@ghi.net. Written inquiries may be sent to Susan at North Country Healthy Communities, PO Box 127, Greenville, Maine 04441.

MNHC Board of Directors

Susan Crippen, President North Country Healthy Communities (Moosehead Region)	Patricia Duguay, Vice President River Valley Healthy Community Coalition (Rumford)
Leah Binder, Secretary/Treasurer Healthy Community Coalition, Greater Franklin County	Mary Jane Bush, Bucksport Community Health Advisory Committee
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Audrey York, Vital Pathways (Houlton)	Andrew Kane, Greater Waterville PATCH
Gladys Richardson, Healthy Futures (Winthrop)	Kim Hutchinson, Healthy Island Project/Stonington-Deer Isle
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