Salute to Foundation for Community Health

Ten years ago, the health and well-being of the people in our area received a welcome gift: the creation of the Foundation for Community Health (FCH) in Sharon, Conn. From the very start, when FCH’s board and executive director, Nancy Heaton, began to analyze the needs here and how they could have the greatest impact, they made some very wise choices, including to focus on a few critical areas, and to help organizations network among themselves to build strength.

The North East Community Center’s (NECC) programs, and thus our constituents, have been the beneficiary of the foundation’s vision from the very beginning.

First of all FCH recognized that one issue overarched almost all others in preventing people from getting good health care: the lack of public transportation. Not only have they supported our Care Car and other transportation programs in northeast Dutchess and Northwest Connecticut with grant funding, they have been out in front in creating innovative new solutions to the problem.

Our Dial A Ride bus happened because FCH Director of Communications and Special Programs Gertrude O’Sullivan convened government transportation officials, nonprofit organizations and the customers who needed rides, and helped us all work together to develop a new project and gain the needed funding to launch it. As a result, the Northeast Dutchess Transit program, a collaboration between NECC and Dutchess County, gave over 1,400 rides in its first year, 2012.

Gertrude also led the way to NECC establishing its Summer Food Service Program. FCH wasn’t able to fund it, but she helped us find the needed grant and obtain approvals so the program could happen. Also launching in 2012, the program served over 2,600 breakfasts and lunches to needy children in Millerton and Amenia in its first summer.

Thousands of people in our area are enjoying better physical and mental health as a result of the foundation’s work. Dozens of organizations are working more effectively as a result of FCH’s guidance and support.

I salute the Foundation for Community Health on its 10th anniversary!

Jenny Hansell
Executive Director
North East Community Center
Millerton