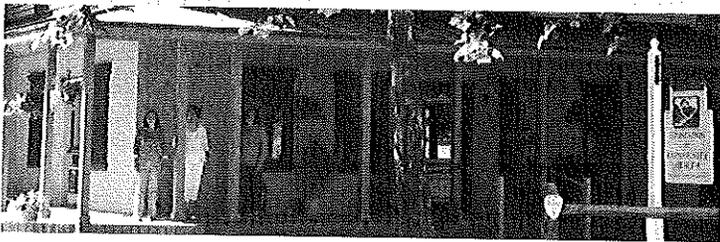


HEALTH & WELLNESS

The Foundation for Community Health



By Marietta Whittlesey

The Foundation for Community Health (FCH) which is approaching its tenth anniversary was started in 2003 with assets from the sale and conversion of the former nonprofit Sharon Hospital. From its headquarters on Sharon Valley Road on the New York-Connecticut border, the foundation serves northeastern Dutchess and southern Columbia county and northwestern Connecticut. The FCH

The mission of FCH is to maintain and improve the physical and mental health of those residing in the area historically served by Sharon Hospital, with an emphasis on serving the

most vulnerable, including undocumented workers and their families. As noted by Gertrude O'Sullivan, director of communications and special programs for FCH, "We have an emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and collaboration."

In addition to assisting regional health and human service agencies in their funding of community-based projects and programs, FCH also "looks for gaps that affect our community's ability to access services," says Ms. O'Sullivan. Out of this needs assessment came the newly established Northeast Dutchess Transit Service to help address the lack of transportation in northeastern Dutchess

County. Sometimes, rather than funding projects directly, FCH brings issues to the attention of government officials, healthcare providers, or other stakeholders and then helps devise solutions. For example the 2012 Summer Food Program being run in conjunction with the North East Community Center in Millerton, which will offer free, healthful lunches to children every day this summer.

Another important—and often neglected—issue concerns oral health. Since 2005 the FCH has funded numerous oral health services. In 2005 the foundation, in conjunction with the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, screened third-graders in most of the schools in its New York-Connecticut catchment area. A recent analysis of this program in Connecticut shows a 94 percent improvement in the oral health of participating children. This number means that 94 percent of the children who had cavities at the time of initial screening had no cavities after two years in the program.

The Foundation for Community Health has played an important role in the effort to reduce the drug and alcohol use that is rampant among youth in the catchment area. They funded

a study on prevention and early intervention with the Council on Addition Prevention & Education of Dutchess County (CAPE) as well as the Housatonic Youth Service bureau, headquartered at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village.

Many residents have been able to cover their prescription drug costs largely through the assistance of the foundation's Health Prescription Assistance Fund, which is available to New York and Connecticut residents whose incomes are too high to qualify them for Medicaid. The income eligibility cap is \$69,150 per year for a family of four and \$33,510 for an individual, with maximum assistance capped at \$250 per month.

Other important programs funded or partly assisted by FCH include: Bilingual mental health support; Educational presentations, such as the poverty law seminar, and dinner meetings for local healthcare professionals; and a study of healthcare service provision to immigrants, with an emphasis on early cancer detection and care

If you would like to learn more about the Foundation for Community Health, visit its Web page at www.fchealth.org or call (800) 695-7210.