

**Annual Report Full Text Format
Southcoast Hospitals Group
363 Highland Ave.
Fall River, MA 02720
Serving the region of Southeastern Massachusetts
Fiscal Year 2002**

Section I

Community Benefits Mission Statement

Southcoast Hospitals Group, including Charlton Memorial Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Tobey Hospital, are committed to serving the healthcare needs of the South Coast region.

www.southcoast.org/services/mission.html

In recognition of Southcoast's commitment to improving the health status of the communities we serve, the Board of Trustees of Southcoast Hospitals Group has established a Community Benefits Committee to assist in the process of:

- identifying the unmet health needs of the community by working in collaboration with the relevant community health networks established by the Department of Public Health and other community representatives and providers;
- prioritizing the identified health needs, utilizing criteria inclusive of the severity of the problem, the availability of alternative resources to address the issue, the benefit to be derived, and the potential of collaboration with others to address the need;
- identifying which needs can most effectively be met through the resources of Southcoast Hospitals Group, and its affiliated corporations, particularly the needs of the uninsured and the medically underserved needing enhanced access to care;
- providing educational resources to educate the community regarding health promotion and wellness. Educational initiatives shall incorporate recognition of the cultural aspects of accessing the healthcare system;
- recommending to the Southcoast Hospital Group Board of Trustees the adoption of meaningful programs and services to address specifically unmet needs and to improve the health of the community.

The Southcoast Hospitals Group community benefit mission statement was approved and adopted by the SHG Board of Trustees on Sept. 11, 1996.

Section II

Internal Oversight and Management

The Southcoast Community Benefits Program is under the overall direction of a trustee level Community Benefits Committee that meets regularly and authorizes and reviews activities and expenditures related to community benefits. This committee reports to the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees.

Two advisory groups, comprised largely of community members along with some hospital staff, plan and carry out activities related to Southcoast's two major community benefits initiatives: cardiovascular health and youth risk behaviors.

Management responsibility for the community benefits program rests with Southcoast's Vice President for Hospital System Integration.

A number of Southcoast staff at all levels participates regularly in our two community advisory groups. There are also regular updates and presentations on community benefits activities to management staff through Management Operations Councils at all three hospital sites. Presentations on community benefit activities are also periodically made to all levels of

employees at Employee Forum sessions held approximately six times a year at all three hospitals. Information is also presented through articles in our internal hospitals publication, "Coastlines" and in a community newsletter, "Your Health Matters."

Section III

Community Health Needs Assessment

Southcoast Hospitals Group commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of the South Coast region by a nationally known health care research firm, Professional Research Consultants Inc. This firm has conducted similar studies throughout the country. The survey, completed in 1997, consisted of telephone interviews of over 2350 residents throughout the South Coast, focus groups with a variety of community representatives and a review of Department of Public Health and other data.

The survey examined health habits and risk factors including: modifiable health risks; disease prevention habits; and access to health care. The resulting report also incorporated regional health morbidity and mortality statistics from various sources such as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and compared regional data to Healthy People 2000 goals.

The survey identified six key concerns in the South Coast region:

1. Cardiovascular Disease

The death rate for cardiovascular disease in the South Coast (152.1 per 100,000 deaths) was considerably higher than both the state and national averages and much higher than the Healthy 2000 people goal of 100 per 100,000. Our survey found that unhealthy lifestyle habits play a likely role in this. The survey found:

- 24.8 percent have high blood pressure
- 24.4 percent have high cholesterol levels
- 29.1 percent are overweight
- 28.8 percent had no leisure time/physical activity during the month studied
- 23.6 percent were current smokers

As with the cardiovascular disease death rate, many of these rates were higher than both state and national averages.

2. Cancer deaths

Although cancer death rates in our region were second only to heart disease, these rates were comparable to or even slightly lower than state and national averages. The survey also found that Southcoast residents take advantage of local cancer screening programs, such as mammography and prostate screenings, at a rate higher than both the state and national averages. These screenings are widely available at low and no cost, particularly to those without health insurance or who are underinsured.

3. Mental Health

South Coast residents reported problems with mental health issues at a rate slightly higher than the Massachusetts and national averages. This was particularly true of residents living at the poverty level. The population living below the poverty level (11.6 percent) was considerably higher than the state average of 8.9 percent. Per capita income was below the state level and the regional unemployment rate was four percent higher.

4. Family planning, prenatal care and child development services.

The South Coast as region has a high rate of teen pregnancy (12.9 percent of all live births) as compared with the state rate (7.3 percent) and the national rate (10 percent.) There also was a higher rate of women not receiving prenatal care in the important first trimester; 14.6 percent verses 11 percent statewide. The infant mortality rate, at 6.4 percent, was also slightly higher than the state rate of 5.1 percent although it is lower than both the national rates and the Healthy

People 2000 guidelines.

5. Access to primary medical care

Close to 10 percent of residents in the region reported lack of health insurance coverage, although the rate was slightly higher in the cities of Fall River and New Bedford. There are also fewer primary care physicians per population in our region. This was true for all primary care specialties, which include internal medicine, OB/GYN, Pediatrics and Family Practice.

6. Violence

The overall crime rate in the South Coast is higher than the state, particularly for crimes such as rape, aggravated assault and burglary. A higher percentage of South Coast residents report being the victim of violent crime within the five years prior to the survey.

Our survey results were presented to and analyzed by three community benefits advisory groups, which consisted of close to 100 representatives from throughout the region. The groups included representation from healthcare providers, social service providers, educators, the faith community, law enforcement, government officials and consumers. The groups decided to focus efforts on two areas: cardiovascular disease and youth risk behaviors. Members felt that youth risk behaviors encompassed several health priorities identified by the needs assessment, including teen pregnancy, violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse.

The health needs assessment also includes two sets of focus groups that were conducted to assimilate the opinions, culture and beliefs reflective of all segments of our community. General focus groups were held to present our survey results and obtain feedback from various segments of our communities in developing priorities.

Then targeted focus groups were held with representatives of the two identified priorities of cardiovascular disease and youth risk behaviors. Discussions were held with various stakeholders and “at-risk” populations including cardiac patients, caregivers, and youth groups including groups of pregnant and parenting teens. Our community benefits task forces used information obtained from focus groups to further define the priority health issues and help develop subsequent strategic and action plans.

Our strategic planning process was facilitated by a consultant from Premier Health Care, who had lead similar discussions and planning at hospitals throughout the United States.

Section IV

Key Collaborations and Partnerships

In addition to wide inclusion on our health advisory committees, Southcoast staff collaborates extensively with a number of community groups, addressing such issues as health access, cardiovascular health, and drug use among youth. In developing and implementing the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, Southcoast collaborated with healthcare providers, social service providers, educators, the faith community, law enforcement, government officials and consumers.

Groups include:

- Greater New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition (Greater New Bedford CHNA)
- Greater New Bedford Health Access Committee
- Domestic Violence Committee of the New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition
- Partners for a Healthier Community (Greater Fall River CHNA)
- Wareham Community Services Collaborative

- Wareham School Health Advisory Council
- Martha Briggs Educational Club
- NAACP
- New Bedford Historical Society
- Westerly Associates
- Women of the Village
- United Way of Greater New Bedford
- United Way of Greater Fall River
- Regional Tobacco Control programs
- PACE-Head Start
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health- Division of Prevention
- Wareham Council on Aging
- Fall River Council on Aging
- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center
- CVS Health Connection
- Mended Hearts
- University of Massachusetts Extension Program
- Fall River Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Health First Family Health Center, Fall River
- Positive Attitude Against Chemical Addiction (covering Greater New Bedford and Wareham)
- New Bedford Child and Family Services
- Portuguese Youth Cultural Organization
- CFC Family Planning Organization
- Greater Fall River Family Services Association
- Greater New Bedford Women's Center
- Project IMPACT (Greater New Bedford and Wareham)
- Massachusetts Prevention Center
- Greater New Bedford YMCA
- YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts
- Greater New Bedford Youth on the Move
- Greater New Bedford Prevention Partnership

Section V

Community Benefits Plan

Southcoast's Community Benefits Strategic Action Plan, first formulated in 1998 as a result of our extensive needs assessment phase (see section III), focuses on three regional priority health issues.

These include:

- Reduction of the high rate of cardiovascular disease in our region.
- Reduction in the incidence of youth risk behaviors such as teen violence and drug abuse.
- Access to health care

Our initiatives focus on both the general Southcoast population and specific populations such as ethnic and other minorities and low income residents in our region, under, or uninsured, those without access to care, those at risk for heart disease and "at risk" youth.

A key strategic vision in all of our action plans is to collaborate and whenever possible, build upon and strengthen existing community resources that are addressing these problems, rather than create parallel new programs. We have been able to successfully accomplish this in all areas.

Goals and Action Plans

1. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Southcoast devotes considerable resources to improving access to primary health care in our region, providing outreach services to both educate residents on the availability of no and low-cost health insurance programs, and whenever possible, help families enroll in these programs.

www.southcoast.org/free/

Another key initiative in improving health care access is use of our Southcoast Mobile Health Van, which travels on almost a daily basis throughout the region bringing health screenings, education and other services to residents who do not have ready access to health care.

www.southcoast.org/services/mobile.html

The van staff is trained in assisting people to access regular primary health care, through counseling about various health insurance programs and low and no-cost health services. Whenever possible, van staff follow-up with patients, to determine if they have been able to access other needed health services.

In addition to our outreach efforts, we actively participate in regional health access committees, including the MediCall program in Greater Fall River and the Health Access Committee of the Greater New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition. As part of the second committee, we provided extensive support for an existing outreach program in the New Bedford public schools and began a program in the Wareham schools that was modeled on New Bedford's successful program. As a result of these two programs, over 200 residents in New Bedford and Wareham were enrolled in Mass Health, the Children's Medical Security Plan and other related health insurance programs.

(For a detailed description of current activities and future goals, see Section VI, Access to Health Care)

2 CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Our Cardiovascular Health Task Force developed a regional education and incentive program focused on changing many of the unhealthy lifestyle behaviors in our region that contribute to the high rate of heart disease. The program was developed in collaboration with other local groups involved in heart disease treatment and prevention, including the American Heart Association and local cardiac support groups such as "Mended Hearts." The goals of the program are to create lifestyle changes in diet and exercise, by offering education and discount incentives at local merchants. All materials are available in Portuguese and Spanish as well as English. Other cardiac activities include hospital-based cardiac education and support groups and regular programs for the general public and school children.

www.southcoast.org/changeofheart/

During this past year, Southcoast Hospitals Group developed a Cardiac Prevention Program for primary and secondary prevention. The goal of this program is to coordinate approaches to reducing the health and economic burden of cardiovascular disease.

Youth Risk Behaviors

The strategic vision of our Youth Risk Behaviors Committee has been to catalogue services and attempt to increase collaboration among the wide range of regional youth services providers. We

have wide representation on this committee on a monthly basis, including representatives from school districts, law enforcement, human services providers and very often, teens themselves.

The committee completed a survey of over 1000 local teens in 1999 to determine opportunities for increasing communication about issues that concern teens. As a result, the committee sponsored a regional Youth Summit, with over 150 teens, at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, in 2000. Teens again had the opportunity at the summit to give their visions about issues that concern them most.

All of this resulted in development of a regional, free information teen phone line, which was inaugurated in 2002. This effort is a true collaboration of regional agencies, with Southcoast building upon the efforts of two existing teen information lines that served just one of our communities. (See Section VI, Youth Risk Behaviors) It is a good example of our strategic vision to enhance and expand existing local services whenever possible.

VI. Progress Report: Activity During Reporting Year

A. Major Programs and Initiatives

1. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Access to healthcare, as documented by the Community Needs Assessment, is a concern in the region. Southcoast has a long-standing commitment to improving the access through services such as free care and insurance eligibility outreach, the Medical Mobile Van, support to the local Community Health Centers and contributions to the MediCall program.

Free Care and Insurance Eligibility Outreach

Expanded insurance eligibility at the state level and significant outreach and enrollment efforts by Southcoast have helped many members of the community to gain access to health insurance. The need remains great however.

The Patient Financial Services Department efforts resulted in the completion of 5694 Free Care Applications, 1778 Masshealth Applications and 57 Prescription Advantage Applications. Department-based resources remained available to seniors with Senior HMO plan questions and concerns. In addition, educational efforts with seniors took place regarding the open enrollment and tier coverage changes in the Prescription Advantage Program. In an effort to continue to support community-based outreach efforts; additional initiatives were made specifically by a part-time outreach worker.

Activities included:

- participation in the annual Headstart and Family Resource Informational Fair
- an educational presentation to elders regarding Medicare Savings Programs, Pharmacy Programs, Masshealth and SSI
- an educational presentation to Southcoast Hospitals Group respiratory support group members regarding Medicare Disability, Medicare Savings Programs, Pharmacy Programs, Masshealth and SSI
- education and training of two Health Access Mini-Grant Workers for the New Bedford School System
- ongoing support and guidance throughout the school year to the Health Access Workers

Plans for the upcoming year include a multimedia outreach program to area schoolchildren and their families, offering information and assistance in accessing low or no coast health insurance. This initiative is in partnership with the Office of the Mayor of New Bedford.

Medical Mobile Van

The Southcoast Medical Mobile Van served over 4,153 residents in Southeastern Massachusetts in 2002.

www.southcoast.org/services/mobile.html

In existence since 1993, the purpose of the van is to provide free health screenings, education and some clinical services to a broad-based population, with the goal of improving the health status of residents – particularly those without access to regular, ongoing health care. The intent of this service is to break down barriers to health care. The van is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and provides free health screenings and education in a number of highly visible and accessible sites through the region offering services including blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol, colorectal and vision screenings, pregnancy testing and extensive health education. Tetanus Diphtheria (Td), Pneumococcal vaccine and Flu vaccine are also offered.

The van serves an ethnically diverse population including Portuguese, Brazilian, Hispanic, and Cambodian immigrants. The van works closely with cultural organizations, churches and other community groups to conduct outreach to these populations, and to develop culturally sensitive programs. The New Bedford Neighborhood College initiative together with the Medical Mobile Van continues to meet with success. The College provides English as a second language and continuing education programs to a diverse group of immigrants, a population with significant risk factors for a variety of serious diseases as well as educational, cultural and other barriers to accessing routine primary health care. The van works with Hayden McFadden School in New Bedford in conjunction with Mass Migrant Program for Families, which offers workshops to Hispanic and Cape Verdean populations that are very successfully attended. The van also provides services at the Adult Learning Center and the Immigrants Assistance Center in New Bedford, which service a variety of immigrant populations. In Fall River, the Mobile Van works in conjunction with the Cambodian Center and PYCO (Portuguese Youth Cultural Organization) and the Bristol Community College adult program.

The van offers a Teen Program at several high schools in the South Coast region, providing adolescents with a range of health screenings and health information. Local family planning agencies provide counseling on STD and pregnancy prevention. This information and education to teens has resulted in improved follow up rates and reduced rates of repeat pregnancy tests. Van staff work with teachers to reach students with health education material and health screenings. The van currently visits six area high schools: Diman Vocational High School in Fall River, Somerset High School, Westport High School, Old Colony Vocational High School in Rochester, Apponoquet High School and Wareham High School.

The Southcoast sponsored Community Health Needs Assessment, as well as the recently released Massachusetts Department of Public Health Behavioral Risk Factors Survey data show area rates at or better than the state average for cholesterol testing and blood pressure screening. The Mobile Van's outreach services have contributed to these positive screening rates. All services are free of charge and are fully supported by Southcoast.

MediCall Program

The MediCall Program continues to provide medical access to the underserved population in greater Fall River who are unable to arrange a health care appointment due to reasons such as lack of health insurance, financial hardship, language barrier, transportation difficulty or difficulty in making appointments. Staff evaluates patients based on financial eligibility criteria and coordinates referrals to over 175 local physicians who have volunteered to accept free care patients in their offices. In 2002, MediCall arranged 771 patient appointments to physicians' offices for free care services. They assisted 561 community members in completing Mass Health applications and assisted over 4628 clients through telephone intervention and multiple outreach efforts. MediCall staff participated in outreach programs sponsored by DPH, the CHNA's Health Care Access initiative and local minority organizations and health fairs. Southcoast is a major funder of the MediCall program.

Cambodian Outreach

The Cambodian Outreach worker has been actively involved in assisting the Southcoast System to outreach to this growing population, through the translation of documents for patients as well as providing community education. This individual also serves as liaison with the Cambodian community. Through attendance at the Cambodian Mental Health Service Coalition and the Domestic Violence Coalition, the Cambodian Outreach Worker brings attention and resolution to unmet needs in the Cambodian community. Outreach also continues through the Southcoast Medical Mobile Van and Community Health Fairs, The Cambodian Outreach Worker provided 372 encounters equivalent to 585 hours of interpreting, translating and outreach services to the Cambodian community.

Outreach includes participation in efforts to provide health services to the Cambodian population through the Southcoast Mobile Health Van.

2. CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Change of Heart

Given the prevalence of risk factors for cardiovascular disease and the Southcoast region's death rate from heart disease which exceed state and national norms, Southcoast continues a campaign to prevent heart disease and encourage early treatment of existing heart disease.

The *Cardiovascular Health Task Force* (CVHTF) was formed in response to the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan. This task force identified three objectives: a resource guide focusing on prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease, a publicity campaign to promote a heart healthy lifestyle and advocacy of heart health. The CVHTF created *Change of Heart*, a partnership among the Hospital, local health and human service providers, the American Heart Association, local participating businesses and Mended Hearts (a support group for heart attack survivors). *Change of Heart* promotes heart healthy lifestyles, and provides specific resources and strategies to reduce cardiac risk factors through two program components.

www.southcoast.org/changeofheart/

Start with One Step is a resource guide for a healthier heart. *Start with One Step* identifies five key areas that can impact heart health – smoking, exercise, diet, stress and family risk factors – and shows consumers how to target these risk factors by making small lifestyle changes one step at a time. The guide was developed by the CVHTF based on models of adult learning theory and change behavior.

HealthPass is a free wallet card offering discounts on heart healthy goods and services at over 30 participating local businesses across our region, including restaurants, sporting goods stores, health clubs and other vendors. Originally created by the Fall River CHNA Healthy Lifestyles subcommittee, the HealthPass program was adopted and expanded across the South Coast region by this Task Force. The **HealthPass** program helps consumers identify risk factors. By completing and returning a heart risk factor quiz, participants receive the **HealthPass** discount card, an answer sheet and explanation about heart risk factors, tip cards addressing their specific heart health, and periodic giveaways to promote heart health.

The *Change of Heart* campaign was launched in February, 2000 during Heart Month. U.S. Congressman Barney Frank and Massachusetts Department of Public Health Commissioner Howard Koh spoke at the kick off event, praising the program and Southcoast's response to the high incidence of cardiac morbidity and mortality in our region.

Program material has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese and is available on the Medical Mobile Van. *Change of Heart* information is distributed at health fairs and other locations around the region including the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, HealthFirst Family Care Center in Fall River, PACE-Head Start, CVS Health Connection, Senior Health Fair, Southeastern MA Business Expo, regional Diabetes Health Fairs, Stop & Shop, Wareham Lodge of Elks Diabetes Health Fair, the third annual Cardiopulmonary Conference, the Bourne Scallop Festival, Portuguese Health Fair, Swansea Mall Health Fair, Visiting Nurse Association and at various Southcoast Hospital sites and other providers across the region.

Thousands of copies of *Start with One Step* information and the **HealthPass Quiz** have been distributed throughout the community, at various hospital sites, health and human service agencies, physicians' offices and participating HealthPass businesses.

In order to measure the impact of *Change of Heart*, an outcomes database of **HealthPass Quiz** responses was developed. A scoring and weighting methodology was created for the **HealthPass Quiz**. This database will allow comparison of initial and follow up **HealthPass** survey responses, and data analysis to better understand respondents' cardiac risk factors. **HealthPass Quiz** responses are scanned directly into the database for quick, accurate data gathering. This database currently has 600 responses to date. The CVHTF has begun analyzing reports to determine where to focus future efforts.

Southcoast sponsors a toll-free *Change of Heart* telephone line for interested community members to call and learn more about the program or request materials to be sent to them. The *Change of Heart* website www.southcoast.org/changeofheart/ offers program material online along with links to regional and national resources for heart disease and cardiovascular health education.

Future goals include a satisfaction survey of business participants, regular follow up of **HealthPass** respondents, and adding an electronic response option for the **HealthPass Quiz** at the website.

Cardiac Prevention Program

During this past year, Southcoast Hospitals Group developed a Cardiac Prevention Program for primary and secondary prevention. The goal of this program is to coordinate approaches to reducing the health and economic burden of cardiovascular disease. The primary prevention process provides individualized screening for risk factors, which includes a questionnaire and cholesterol screening. This information is entered into a database, and tracking follow up will be conducted by a designated nurse, dietitian, and pharmacist. The prevention efforts focus on promoting education, lifestyle changes and risk factor modification. These efforts will be coordinated with the Southcoast Mobile Health Van and health fairs conducted in specific underserved, underinsured areas in the communities served by Southcoast. For FY 03, the goal will be to provide screening to 2500 individuals. The data will be gathered and tracked for participants to follow up in six months. Two Health Fairs, conducted in March and September have provided education and screenings to over 150 men and women who participated. During this past year efforts have been focused on the Primary Prevention Program. Once the data base is established, staff will concentrate on providing education and support in lifestyle changes for patients who have cardiac disease. Efforts continue with the Change of Heart Program as well as the Medical Mobile Van

3. YOUTH RISK BEHAVIORS

On an ongoing basis, Southcoast provides a variety of programs and services aimed at preschool through high school aged children to promote healthy behaviors and risk reduction. Historically high rates of teen pregnancy and other risk behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, and relationship and gang violence, caused Southcoast to focus on reduction of youth risk behavior. As a result of the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, the **Youth Risk Behaviors Task Force (YRBTF)** was formed and identified 3 objectives: youth programming, youth resource directory and communication of a positive message.

The YRBTF synthesized information from a variety of area teens. Information compiled from a Southcoast sponsored survey of over 1000 middle and high school students across the greater Fall River, New Bedford, and Wareham region showed what kind of health and related information teens need and where they go to find it. Over 150 teens also spoke out at the Southcoast sponsored Youth Summit 2000 about the types of resources they would like to see in the region. With their input, the YRBTF developed the concept of TEEN LINK, a toll free, regional information telephone line.

The Youth Risk Behaviors Committee this year launched Teen Link, a truly collaborative effort, that combines and builds on two local services for teens. These include:

- HealthLink, a 24 hour per day automated help line service with over 600 automated educational messages, sponsored by the New Bedford Prevention Partnership;
- Teen Talk Line, a peer volunteer talk line, operated weekday evenings sponsored by the YWCA of Greater New Bedford.

Both of these programs were looking for ways to increase call volume and expand beyond their local area and representatives have been part of the Southcoast Youth Risk Behaviors Committee. The Southcoast sponsored Teen Link offers one direct toll free line to access either of these services and greatly expand their reach across the region. Teen Link also offers a recorded menu of substance free youth events in the region as well as an opportunity to learn more about (and perhaps join) local youth organizations. This menu is regularly updated by teen volunteers from the New Bedford, Fall River and Wareham areas.

Teen Link has been promoted through television and radio ads, public service announcements, school websites, posters in schools, youth organizations, and free giveaways with the TeenLink phone number. In the first six months of operation, call volume doubled for the existing HealthLink line and also increased for the TeenTalk Line. Southcoast plans further publicity efforts to encourage teens to utilize this regional resource.

Goals for 2003 include releasing the fifth in a series of videos produced by the Southcoast Community Benefits program addressing youth issues. This newest video will address school violence, and, in keeping with the tone of past videos, will star local teens speaking out on this issue and its affect on them. The video is funded by Southcoast Hospitals Group and produced locally by Fire City Productions of Fall River and will be made available free of charge to schools, libraries, youth organizations and other health and human service providers across the region.

Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy Prevention

The *RAPP* (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy Prevention) program is in its seventh year. Created in response to the region's teen pregnancy and birth rates exceeding state rates, RAPP's ultimate goal is to provide adolescents with important education by presenting objective, accurate and up-to-date information, facilitating discussion on issues of reproductive health and sexuality, engaging youth in creating and fostering positive attitudinal and behavioral changes through peer

leadership and civic involvement and promoting parent/child dialogue on these issues. The RAPP program is a 14 hour abstinence-based, comprehensive education program targeted at high school youth. The program has grown significantly from its inception in 1996, from 425 students to over 3000 participants this year. RAPP offers programming at junior high schools, high schools, after school programs, alternative learning centers for out-of-school youth, a group home for troubled adolescent girls and a local correctional facility.

www.southcoast.org/rapp/

The sixth annual RAPP Peer Leadership Program was conducted and there are currently 17 peer leaders representing five area high schools. MAPP (Males Are Part of the Puzzle) includes four male focused initiatives: MAPP curriculum, MAPP Camp, Basic Training for Young Dads (including the Incarcerated Fathers Program) and the Annual Male Awareness Conference. The South Coast region is ethnically and socially diverse. RAPP participants, including peer leaders and MAPP youth representatives, reflect this diversity. RAPP participants' ethnic, racial and social background information is obtained and results are tabulated and retained by the Mass. Dept of Public Health.

All RAPP activities, classroom learning, staff, faculty and peer leader training, community outreach, health fairs, speaking engagements and conferences are offered at no cost to participating schools and community groups. The RAPP program is totally funded through grants and by Southcoast Hospitals Group.

Emergency Outreach

Our Emergency Department staff continue their commitment to prevention of youth risk behaviors. *Life, Death, Drugs, Treatment* is a play that teaches school children about the dangers of substance abuse and how to access the Emergency Medical System. Emergency Nurses CARE (ENCARE) targets youth from middle through high school as well as church youth groups and community groups to educate about alcohol, drugs, peer pressure and seat belt usage.

4. WELLNESS, EDUCATION, PREVENTION, SCREENINGS

Southcoast Hospitals Group has a long standing tradition of community education, prevention and screening activities. Thousands of area residents are reached by these free services every year.

Cancer awareness and screenings, a priority identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment, occur throughout the year. www.southcoast.org/art/links.html Southcoast is the recipient of the Department of Public Health Women's Health Initiative grant. This grant attempts to screen and identify cancers in an uninsured population without access to care. In cooperation with the New Bedford YWCA, this initiative targets racial, cultural and ethnic minorities and the under/uninsured.

Free PSA blood tests for detection of prostate cancer were provided to over 180 men. Screenings targeted African American and Portuguese American men using communications that were both language and culturally friendly. The free screenings attracted record numbers of men from these targeted groups. Screenings were held in the New Bedford and Fall River communities and on the Mobile Health Van.

Skin cancer screening was offered free of charge to over 150 individuals.

Southcoast again participated in numerous health fairs across the region, including a Portuguese Health Fair, a Senior Citizen Health Fair and health fairs on-site at industry.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

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