

Community Benefits Report to the Attorney General

FISCAL YEAR 2009



SOUTHCOAST
HOSPITALS GROUP

Charlton ■ St. Luke's ■ Tobey

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Southcoast Hospitals Group

363 Highland Avenue
Fall River, MA 02720
Serving the region of Southeastern Massachusetts

www.southcoast.org

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SECTION I: Mission Statement

Southcoast Hospitals Group, which includes Charlton Memorial Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Tobey Hospital, is committed to serving the health care 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 Massachusetts 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.
- Collaborating with local health providers, human services agencies, advocacy groups and others to develop cooperative plans and programs to address pressing community health needs.
- Providing educational resources to educate the community regarding health promotion and wellness, particularly to address health issues that disproportionately affect the South Coast. Educational initiatives shall incorporate recognition of the cultural and demographic aspects of accessing the health care system.
- Recommending to the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees the adoption of meaningful programs and services to address specifically unmet needs and to improve the health of the community.

SECTION II: Internal Oversight & Management of Community Benefits

The Southcoast Community Benefits Program is under the overall direction of a trustee-level Community Benefits Committee that meets regularly to review and authorize activities and expenditures related to community benefits. This committee reports to the Southcoast Hospitals Group Board of Trustees. The committee includes representatives from the various communities served by Southcoast Hospitals as well as members with expertise in matters concerning the health and welfare of the community.

Advisory groups, comprised of community members and hospital staff, plan and carry out activities related to Southcoast's two major community benefits initiatives: Cardiovascular health and youth risk behaviors. Also, a number of Southcoast staff participate regularly in collaborative groups, including CHNAs in Fall River and New Bedford, the Wareham Community Services Collaborative, a regional Worksite Wellness Collaborative, a Health Access Task force in Greater New Bedford and a regional collaborative addressing cultural disparities. Southcoast also plays a major role in several regional task forces that address high rates of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and high rates of smoking in our region.

Community benefits activities by Southcoast staff are organized through an internal Community Benefits Task Force that meets monthly to plan and coordinate programs and activities. This team consists of representatives from departments that regularly engage in outreach in the community, including our Southcoast Health Van, social services, stroke outreach, Patient Financial Services, Cardiac Prevention, smoking cessation, diabetes and other patient education, teen pregnancy outreach and others.

Senior management responsibility for the Community Benefits Program rests with Southcoast's Vice President of Marketing & Public Affairs, who co-chairs the trustee-level Community Benefits Committee. The Marketing & Community Relations Coordinator, who reports to the VP of Marketing & Public Affairs, manages Southcoast's day-to-day community benefits activities and leads the internal Community Benefits Task Force.

There are also regular updates and presentations on community benefits activities to Southcoast leadership through Directors and Managers/Supervisors meetings at all three hospital sites. Presentations on community benefit activities are also periodically made to all levels of employees at Employee Forum sessions that are held quarterly at all three hospitals. Information is also presented through articles in our internal hospital publication, *Coastlines*, in a community newsletter, *Your Health Matters*, and in our monthly public electronic newsletter, *Southcoast eNews*.

<www.southcoast.org/news/pubs.html>

Full texts of all of our annual Community Benefits Reports are posted and archived for public view on Southcoast's Website.

<www.southcoast.org/news/benefits/>

SECTION III: Community Health Needs Assessment

Southcoast this year completed a major Community Health Needs Assessment that covers the entire South Coast region. We worked with Market Street Research, a firm in Northampton, Mass., that regularly does these assessments for hospitals and also works with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on a number of research projects.

The assessment consisted of a retrospective review of Department of Public Health and other national and regional health and demographic data, along with interviews of key leaders in our communities and a series of three focus groups, including several that targeted underserved members in our communities.

Southcoast first completed a comprehensive regional health needs assessment in 1998 and this assessment has been revised and updated regularly.

Highlights of our most recent community health needs assessment include:

The South Coast has significant demographic issues that impact residents' health, particularly in the two major urban communities in the region, Fall River and New Bedford. Residents in these communities generally have lower incomes, a lower educational level and higher unemployment than both the state and the region.

Residents also have worse health indicators in a number of areas, particularly maternal/child health issues and chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma. These seem to be related to risk factors such as an extremely high rate of obesity and a high smoking rate.

The premature mortality rate for the region is significantly higher than the state as a whole (332.3 per 100,000 residents versus 317). Fall River and New Bedford are much higher than the regional rate (443.2 and 441.3 respectively). New Bedford has one of the highest rates of premature mortality in the state.

The majority of key informant interviews and focus group participants expressed the opinion that health issues in the region are directly related to socio-economic issues and that health disparities exist among residents who experience poverty, lack of education and cultural differences.

1. Demographics:

The demographics of the South Coast region are also a challenge. The region has an extremely high percentage of residents who never completed high school, unemployment rates that are significantly above the state average and lower median incomes in Fall River and New Bedford.

	Fall River	New Bedford	Massachusetts
Education: Did not finish high school	33.9%	35.9%	12%
Unemployment (August 2009)	11.7%	11.9%	8.9%
Median Income	\$34,300	\$32,500	\$62,000

New Bedford has a higher percentage of Hispanic residents than the state. The percentage of minority residents (Hispanic, African-American and Asian) is projected to grow in the next decade. A significant number of residents in our region are undocumented immigrants.

2. Health Status Indicators:

The 2009 Community Health Needs Assessment also looked at chronic disease and risk factors.

Heart disease:

The South Coast has a significantly higher rate of heart disease than the state average (26 percent versus 24 percent). The South Coast also has a significantly higher death rate from heart disease (195 per 100,000 discharges versus 185 for the state). These rates skyrocket in Fall River and New Bedford (217.5 in Fall River and 230.2 in New Bedford). New Bedford has the highest death rate from heart disease in the region.

Heart disease rates have declined over the past decade, although, as indicated by the above statistics, this is still one of the region's major health problems.

Diabetes:

The hospital discharge rate for diabetes for the South Coast region is higher than the state average (140.4 per 100,000 discharges versus 132.5). The death rate from diabetes is significantly higher in Fall River (26.3) and New Bedford (23.8) compared to 18.4 for the state.

Cancer:

The death rate for cancer in our region is predicted to surpass heart disease in the next decade, although this is consistent with state and national trends as well.

Most cancer rates in the region are comparable with state rates with the exception of **lung cancer**. The incidence rate for invasive lung cancer is 77.5 per 100,000 population versus 72 for the state. The mortality rate for lung cancer is comparable to the state.

	Fall River	New Bedford	Wareham	Massachusetts
Cancer incidence/males	117.3	104.9	110.2	85.0
Cancer incidence/females	54.1	58.2	82.8	65.3
<i>Per 100,000 population</i>				

Asthma:

Asthma rates on the South Coast are slightly higher than the state (11 percent versus 10 percent). However, hospital discharge rates for asthma are significantly higher (161 per 100,000 discharges versus 140), suggesting that asthma patients are not able to manage their disease well. This rate is second only to the Boston region. The asthma ER visit rate is also very high (1,175.9 per 100,000 versus 1,006 for the state).

Rates for asthma related ER visits are higher in the larger cities — particularly in Fall River where the rate skyrockets to 3,636.6 per 1000 discharges. In New Bedford the rate is 1,647.5, which is also very high. Asthma visits for children in the Southeast region is lower than the state average, although Fall River again has a very high rate of pediatric asthma ER visits (1,476 versus 1,130 for the state).

3. Risk Factors Contributing to Chronic Disease:

Obesity/Exercise/Diet:

About three in five adults in the region as a whole is overweight, which is comparable to the state as a whole. About one in four adults is obese on the South Coast, one in two adults participate in regular

physical activity and one in four have five or more servings of fruits and vegetables. The Southeast region of the state has a higher rate of obesity than any other region.

Fall River and New Bedford have significantly higher percentages of overweight and obese adults — 25.6 and 26.5 percent respectively verses 20.7 percent for the state. Hispanic residents report a higher rate of obesity (27 percent).

Obesity rates have risen significantly in the region over the past decade — 16.8 percent in 1995 verses 23.7 percent in 2005.

Smoking:

One in five adults in the region currently smoke, which is slightly higher than the rate for the state. The Southeast region has the second highest rate of smoking in the state.

Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham have significantly higher rates of smoking, with 34.8 percent in Fall River and 26.4 percent in New Bedford.

4. Other Health Status Indicators:

Substance Abuse:

The Southeast region has a higher rate of opioid-related Emergency Room visits and fatal overdoses than the state as a whole (195.7 per 100,000 visits verses 181.1).

Maternal Child Health:

Maternal child health statistics are consistently worse than the state average in all three major communities (Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham) with New Bedford having some of the worst indicators in the entire state.

- Rates of smoking during pregnancy are high.
- New Bedford has one of the highest rates of infant mortality of any large city in the state.
- Teen pregnancy rates are high. Fall River and New Bedford have some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the state (49.5 and 58.9 per 1,000 births respectively verses 21.7 for the state as a whole).
- Hispanic residents report the highest teen birth rate.
- Rate of low birth weight infants is high, particularly in New Bedford and Fall River.
- Women rely more on publicly-funded prenatal care and in New Bedford the rate of “adequate prenatal care” is much lower than the state average.

Smoking during pregnancy is also a significant problem. Wareham, Fall River, Taunton and New Bedford have the highest rates of smoking during pregnancy in the entire state, with Wareham ranked No. 1.

Percentage of mothers who smoke during pregnancy	
Wareham	19.7%
Fall River	18.4%
Taunton	17.1%
New Bedford	16.1%

Access to Care:

Violence

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

The city of New Bedford has a much higher firearms-related death rate than the state (8.0 deaths per 100,000 population versus 3.2 deaths). Rates for the region as a whole — and for the city of Fall River — are similar to the state.

SECTION IV: Key Collaborations & 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 chronic disease prevention and violence and drug use among youth.

In developing and implementing our annual Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, Southcoast collaborates regularly with health care providers, social service providers, educators, the faith community, law enforcement, government officials and consumers.

Collaborative groups include:

- American Heart Association.
- American Cancer Society.
- Catholic Social Services.
- CFC Family Planning Organization.
- Greater New Bedford Domestic Violence Committee.
- Fall River Council on Aging.
- Fall River Diabetes Association.
- Fall River Health Department.
- Fall River School Department.
- Greater Fall River Family Services Association.
- Greater New Bedford Community Health Center.
- Greater New Bedford COAST (Greater New Bedford CHNA 26).
- Greater New Bedford Health Access Committee.
- Greater New Bedford Prevention Partnership.
- Greater New Bedford Women's Center.
- Greater New Bedford Youth on the Move.
- Health Access Collaborative.
- HealthFirst Family Care Center, Fall River.
- Immigrants Assistance Center, New Bedford.
- Junior Achievement.
- Martha Briggs Educational Club.
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
- Mended Hearts.
- NAACP.
- New Bedford Child & Family Services.
- New Bedford Council on Aging.
- New Bedford Historical Society.
- New Bedford Police Department.

New Bedford School Department.
New Bedford Board of Health.
PACE-Head Start.
Partners for a Healthier Community (Greater Fall River CHNA 25).
Portuguese Youth Cultural Organization.
Positive Attitude Against Chemical Addiction (covering Greater New Bedford and Wareham).
Regional Tobacco Control programs.
SER-Jobs for Progress Inc.
Stanley Street Treatment & Resource Center (SSTAR) / MediCall Program.
United Way of Greater Fall River.
United Way of Greater New Bedford.
University of Massachusetts Extension Program.
Wareham Board of Health.
Wareham Community Services Collaborative.
Wareham Council on Aging.
Wareham School Department.
YMCA Southcoast (including Fall River, New Bedford, Wareham, Dartmouth and Mattapoisett).
YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts.

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), is updated annually.

Our action plan has focused on three regional priority health issues.

- Reduction of the high rate of cardiovascular disease in our region, as well as other chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma.
- Reduction in the incidence of youth risk behaviors such as teen violence and drug abuse.
- Improving access to health care.

Information from our most recent community health needs assessment, along with collaborative planning with community partners, has resulted in expanding these initiatives to address risk factors that contribute not only to the high rate of chronic disease in our region. Our planning and collaboration will place new emphasis on reducing the prevalence of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and the region's high rate of smoking.

These efforts this past year have resulted in formation of a regional coalition to address these issues.

Our initiatives often target specific populations on the South Coast, such as ethnic and other minorities and low-income residents, under- or uninsured, those without access to care, those at risk for heart disease and "at risk" youth.

During the upcoming year, we will be part of a collaborative effort to address health disparities through regional forums that will seek input from residents who have difficulty accessing health care, or whose socio-economic status makes them more at risk for poor health. We intend to use input from these forums to develop action plans and programs that address health disparities on an ongoing basis.

GOALS & ACTION PLANS

Cardiovascular Health

Southcoast's Cardiac Prevention Program, in its eighth year of outreach, now has more than 9,000 individuals entered into its database for promoting its goals for primary and secondary prevention of heart disease. This program provides individualized screening for risk factors, which includes a questionnaire and cholesterol screening.

The information is entered into a database. A designated nurse and dietitian conduct tracking follow up. The prevention efforts focus on promoting education, lifestyle changes and risk factor modification. These efforts were coordinated in a number of different ways, working with the Southcoast Health Van, local churches, businesses and other organizations and outreach efforts with local schools. Efforts are made to target specific underserved and underinsured areas in the communities served by Southcoast.

<www.southcoast.org/heart/prevention.html>

Southcoast also engaged in educating the community on stroke, which has a high incidence in our region. A Stroke Outreach team educates the community about recognition of the signs and symptoms of stroke and also how to prevent this disabling disease.

<www.southcoast.org/stroke/>

Youth Risk Behaviors

The strategic vision of our Youth Risk Behaviors program has been to catalogue services and attempt to increase collaboration among the wide range of regional youth services providers. Southcoast annually supports two major youth summits, one in New Bedford and one in Fall River, which both bring together young people and a number of agencies who provide support.

Our work to address youth risk behaviors also includes the Southcoast RAPP (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting & Prevention), which provides education and other services for area youth with a focus on pregnancy prevention and violence reduction.

<www.southcoast.org/rapp/>

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.

This took on added importance in 2008 with the rollout of Massachusetts' new universal health insurance plans, Commonwealth Care and Commonwealth Choice and continued to grow in importance in 2009 as more residents sought out assistance with health insurance.

<www.southcoast.org/insurance/>

<www.southcoast.org/insurance/commonwealthcare.html>

Another key initiative in improving health care access is use of our Southcoast 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. Although cardiovascular risk factors are a problem in our region, screenings for cholesterol and blood pressure are higher than the state average.

<www.southcoast.org/van/>

The multilingual staff of the Southcoast Health Van 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.

Chronic disease risk factors

Southcoast recognizes that the high rate of chronic disease in our region — including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma and others — are symptoms of both socio-economic issues and risk factors, such as high rates of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and high smoking rates. During the past year, Southcoast took a leadership role in a number of community coalitions that are beginning to address these issues through a comprehensive and regional approach.

They include ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation & Environmental change), a regional program that addresses high rates of obesity, smoking and lack of exercise, Mass in Motion, a DPH-sponsored program to encourage more physical activity and healthier nutrition, and the Southcoast Worksite Wellness Collaborative.

SECTION VI: Progress Report: Activity During Reporting Year

Major Programs & Initiatives

1. Cardiovascular Health

Our Cardiovascular Health Task Force (CVHTF) was formed in response to the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan. Past efforts included 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 Cardiovascular Health Task Force's current focus is on the Cardiac Prevention Program, established in July 2002 with an emphasis on primary and secondary prevention of heart disease.

Our program is staffed with a comprehensive health team that includes:

- A full-time registered nurse trained in risk factor assessments including lipids, tobacco abuse, hypertension, diabetes, stress, obesity and obtaining family history.
- A full-time registered dietician who performs cholesterol and lipid screening as well as dietary instruction.

Our Cardiac Prevention team this year has performed more than **9,136 procedures** and enrolled more than **4,463 individuals**. These residents include both adults and teens who were all entered into a

database that will be used to help analyze and promote primary and secondary prevention of heart disease on the South Coast.

<www.southcoast.org/heart/prevention.html>

Our program provides individualized screening for risk factors, which includes a questionnaire and cholesterol screening. Prevention efforts focus on education, lifestyle changes and risk factor modification. The primary prevention process provides individualized screening for risk factors, including completion of a health risk assessment and administration of several free tests such as cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure screenings. The questionnaire is designed to gauge various risk factors for heart disease; such as family history, self-reported medical conditions and lifestyle habits such as lack of regular exercise and smoking.

There is also an educational component, as participants receive the results of their tests, along with suggestions and individual education on how to develop healthier lifestyle habits. Staff follow up with subsequent testing and interviewing to determine success with risk factor modification, including lowering of blood pressure, cholesterol and other risk factors.

Our efforts are coordinated in a number of different ways, working with the local churches, businesses, Councils on Aging and other organizations. We also target outreach efforts with local schools to reach teen and pre-teen populations, who also provide information and education on heart disease to their parents. Efforts are made to target specific underserved and underinsured areas in the communities served by Southcoast.

This year the program continued to provide screenings and education to an expanding number of middle schools in Fall River, Old Rochester Regional Middle School, Dighton Rehoboth Middle School, Holy Family/Holy Name in New Bedford Keith Middle School in New Bedford, and Wareham Middle School. A follow up with the Keith students included an opportunity to take part in an after school cooking class the emphasized healthy choices and good nutrition. Each class provided an opportunity for the students to cook healthy meals and bring homes sample for their families to share.



Participants were also reached through churches including the Khmer Buddhist Temple and Santo Christo Church, St. John's and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, St. Vincent's Home, Whalers Cove Assisted Living, Tabor Mills Assisted Living, Heritage Assisted Living, and Councils on Aging in the greater New Bedford/Fall River Wareham areas. The program also provided screenings and education for students at Bristol Community College, Doolan Housing in Fall River and Village Court Housing in Mattapoisett.

We have an expanding role in promoting worksite wellness in the region and reach area residents through local industries such as Alberox Manufacturing, Joseph Aboud Clothing, Five Star manufacturing and local Macy's Department Stores. At some of these businesses, our program has become part of their employee wellness activities. The Cardiac Prevention Team also collaborates with the Visiting Nurse Association of Southeastern Massachusetts to screen and educate members of the Fall River Police Department. We have also screened members of the Somerset Fire and Police departments, Somerset Water Department, the Department of Public Works and employees at Somerset Town Hall. We have also screened members of the Fall River Fire/Emergency Medical Services Departments, Fall River City Hall, the Swansea Fire and Police Departments, DPW, Swansea Town Hall and Town Hall Annex.

Our program works in collaborative practice with the City of Fall River’s Wellness Program, “Healthy Cities Fall River.” We provided health screenings at the annual “Fall River Fitness Challenge,” which enrolled more than 600 residents in a community-wide weight loss and exercise program. Collectively, those enrolled in the program lost over 5,000 pounds.

< www.gfrpartners.com/frfitnesschallenge.html>

Our program also supported the Red Dress Conference sponsored by the Greater New Bedford YWCA. This annual conference provided education on women and heart disease. Our team spoke to over 300 women about heart disease and associated risk factors.

The Cardiac Prevention Program is led by Donna Querim, RN, MS, JD, who also served as President of the American Heart Association’s South Coast Regional Board, represented Southcoast as a member of the Fall River Medical Reserve Corp and was a member of the Fall River Healthy Cities. She published an article, “Know Your Numbers,” in the *Fall River Herald News* as a further outreach to the community.

This past year, Querim was named as Partner Coach with YMCA Southcoast for the regional ACHIEVE program, which is a collaborative effort to reduce levels of obesity and high smoking rates and increase physical activity.

Our outreach team also includes Amanda Szot, RD, who has been actively involved in mentoring six dietetic interns each year as part of our program. Szot also represents Southcoast in the Community Garden Coalition as well as the Food Book Club, which is associated with the Fall River Health City initiative.

Querim and Szot each made presentations to community leaders and the South Coast state legislative delegation on creating a healthy environment and making intelligent food choices during a region-wide Legislative Day conference in the fall.

Below is a study done on a population at a local manufacturer that demonstrates the positive effects of screenings and education provided by the Cardiac Prevention Program.

Blood Pressure	Total	Initial Systolic	Initial Diastolic	Current Systolic	Current Diastolic
Female	322	126	78	119	74
Male	379	134	80	125	78
Cholesterol		Initial	Current		
Female	335	205	188		
Male	378	212	192		

Stroke education outreach

A Stroke Outreach team was organized in 2007 to provide education to the community on both stroke prevention and recognition of the signs and symptoms of stroke.

<www.southcoast.org/stroke/>

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in cities and towns on the South Coast, and research showed that patients were waiting a number of hours after the onset of symptoms, which often eliminated treatment options such as administration of the clot-busting drug, TPA.

The team consists of nurses, outreach workers and marketing/community relations staff. The team is lead by Southcoast’s Stroke Coordinator.

In 2009, the team took part in more than 175 health education events in the community, including Southcoast Health Van visits to malls, shopping centers and other community settings, health fairs and events at local churches and other civic organizations. The team also provided lectures in Fall River and New Bedford that were attended by 90 people. Education was also provided to local Emergency Medical Services groups.



The outreach team developed several educational materials based on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s FAST campaign, which is designed to help people recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke and act FAST. Materials included a refrigerator magnet with the signs and symptoms, and a wallet card that also allows residents to record and track their blood pressure. These materials were translated into both Portuguese and Spanish. To date, during the past several years, over 10,000 cards and magnets have been distributed.

The South Coast has a significant African-American and Cape Verdean population who suffer from stroke at a rate higher than the rest of the population. This past year, the team collaborated with the American Heart Association to promote the Power to End Stroke campaign, targeting members of the African American Community. This was accomplished through community events, such as a gospel festival and Cape Verdean festival.

We have also contacted key members of the African-American community who have agreed to serve on cardiovascular task force in the upcoming year. The goal of the task force will be to develop a grassroots campaign that enlists members of the African-American communities in Greater New Bedford and Wareham, based on the American Heart Association’s Power to End Stroke model.

2. Youth Risk Behaviors

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 efforts to reduce youth risk behaviors. As a result of the Community Benefit Strategic Action Plan, the Youth Risk Behaviors Task Force (YRBTF) was formed and identified three objectives: youth programming, a youth resource directory and communication of a positive message.

In our ongoing effort to partner with other youth services providers, Southcoast continued to provide financial support to Junior Achievement to help develop an after-school collaboration in the Wareham area for adolescents to spend time as managers of their own student company. The Wareham area does not have as many after school opportunities for this at-risk age group and this program is intended to offer an option for youth.

The Youth Risk Behaviors Committee this year also supported several youth initiatives in the community including Youth Summits in New Bedford and Fall River and drug prevention and anti-violence efforts in New Bedford and a public education program that targets alcohol abuse and its effect on area families. We also supported youth programming in Fall River through the city’s community recreation and development department, which targets promoting healthy lifestyles among the city’s youth.

RAPPP

The RAPPP (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting & Prevention) program is in its 13th year.

www.southcoast.org/rapp/

Created in response to the region's teen pregnancy and birth rates, RAPPP's goals include:

- Providing 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.
- Promoting parent/child dialogue on these issues.

Since its inception RAPPP and its related programs have served more than 70,000 young people, their parents and other community members through programming, education, youth development and mentoring. During this past year, RAPPP programs reached more than 7,463 people in the Greater Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham communities.

MAPP focuses on educating young men and fathers about parenting issues and pregnancy prevention through a variety of educational activities and events.

RAPPP participants, including peer leaders and MAPP youth representatives, reflect the diversity of our region. RAPPP participants' ethnic, racial and social background information is obtained and results are tabulated and retained by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

All RAPPP 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 RAPPP program is totally funded through grants and by Southcoast Hospitals Group.

The RAPPP program is led by Lucinda Guilbeault, LPN, who has been with the program since its inception.

RAPPP in local schools

RAPPP participated in a study conducted by nursing students at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, which analyzed the impact of the classroom program on the knowledge and attitudes of middle school students toward sexual behaviors. Nursing students interviewed middle school students before and after they attended the RAPPP program as part of the health curriculum at their schools. Some key findings in the post-program survey included:

- 43 percent more students stated that sexual abstinence is the only sure way to prevent unwanted pregnancies.
- 24 percent more students agreed that it is best for young teens to postpone and/or wait to have sex until they are at least 18 years old.
- 33 percent more students agreed that teens should have equal rights and responsibilities for love and sexual relationships.
- 20 percent more students said they would not let themselves be influenced by peer or partner pressure to engage in sexual activities.
- 20 percent more students said they use or plan to use birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

The RAPPP program is a 14-hour abstinence-based, comprehensive education program targeted at high school youth. This year, the program served over a thousand junior and senior high school students at area schools, including Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, Fairhaven High School, and Wareham High School, Friends Academy and Nativity Preparatory School in New Bedford. This past year, the RAPPP classroom program reached over 2,400 students.

RAPPP staff also present “Making Proud Choices”, which is a more lengthy, science-based curriculum used locally in several alternative schools, a charter school and also with students in the health careers program at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School. These students are studying to be the health educators of the future and benefit from the program both as teens and as peer leaders who can impart the information to fellow students. The University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth surveyed participating students and findings indicated that students gained increased knowledge related to both the concepts of sexual health and sexual decision making.

The RAPPP Program also reached over 1,500 students with a “Selected Topics” program at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational High School. RAPPP staff were active participants in the New Bedford Public Schools Superintendent’s Roundtable and in the Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School’s Health Advisory Board.

This year, we changed our annual male conference to a school-based assembly program, which featured a program with a nationally known youth speaker, **Jeff Yalden** (see photo to right). We were able to triple the number of teens served, with the assemblies reaching more than 1,100 students in a number of local high schools.



RAPPP staff provided training for 112 community members as part of its “Healthy Youth Initiative,” which we began last year. This program is based on a national model created by the nonprofit Search Institute, currently being implemented in high-risk communities across the country. Our local program is being sponsored by RAPPP and aims to create a stronger community for our young adults by emphasizing positive developmental assets, which are experiences and qualities that have a positive influence on teen’s development, including self-esteem, encouragement, decision making, conflict resolution and setting future goals. Our regional program focuses on reinforcing young people’s assets consistently throughout all of the organizations that interact with the city’s adolescents — this includes at home, schools, through municipal organizations and youth outreach workers. RAPPP staff also reached more than 500 people through an educational table for National Condom Day.

RAPPP staff conducted a two-day conference and strategic planning session with its community partners about programming for gay and lesbian teens. Partners include all of the local schools involved in RAPPP, along with local Boys and Girls Clubs and the Girl Scouts organization. This session also involved joint strategic planning for youth programming in our region.

RAPPP staff were also involved in a number of community coalitions including:

- The Greater New Bedford Health and Human Services Coalition.
- Healthy Families New Bedford Collaborative.

- Healthy Families Fall River Collaborative.
- The Children’s Trust Fund Fathers & Families Network.

We have established and conducted our own Youth Risk Assessment and Implementation Task Force as part of a DPH grant as well as taken part in the New Bedford ACTS coalition. The community is strongly represented in our RAPP Program Steering Committee made up of business leaders, educators, private citizens and youth from the Greater New Bedford. Beyond the local community, we continue to work as affiliates with the National Fatherhood Initiative.

The RAPP Program and its peer liaison program also present several outreach booths to the community at conferences and other public venues. Topics featured in these outreach efforts included condom use, sexually transmitted infections, national teen pregnancy prevention month, prostate cancer awareness, violence prevention, AIDS awareness and National Men’s Health Week.

Commitment to Literacy

The RAPP Program has distributed more than 3,000 books to children in the South Coast area, at the YMCA/Camp Douglas, New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School child care class, Peace Works New Bedford, United Front and other sites and to expectant and new fathers and mothers as part of our commitment to literacy and life-long learning. This is accomplished in cooperation with the National Book Bank of America.

MAPP programming

RAPP staff offers bi-monthly community trainings for new and expectant fathers. Included in this fatherhood programming is:

- “Basic Training” for new dads (community based).
- “Basic Training” for incarcerated fathers, along with parenting workshops for these dads.
- “Basic Training for Young Dads” (teen new or expectant fathers aged 13 to 21).

In addition, fathers’ support groups are run on a regular basis, both in the community and at the Bristol County House of Correction, which targets parents who are particularly at risk. RAPP staff reached over 832 people — both dads and moms — at parenting workshops for incarcerated parents this past year.

Heart of Fatherhood Essay Contest and Awards

The “Heart of Fatherhood” award is presented to individuals that exemplify family values and serve as role models at home and in their communities.

Family Resource Center

RAPP Family Education Youth Resource Center provides a lending library and resource for area parents, youth and professionals. The center offers information on all aspects of parenting, along with information on youth risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, smoking and reproductive health issues.

RAPP Peer Liaisons

RAPP Peer Liaisons include youth who are highly trained to offer information and advice on topics that include reproductive health, communication and decision-making. There are currently five trained RAPP Peer Liaisons (three boys and two girls) who act as a resource to their peers in social

circles and at school, at the RAPP Resource Center and as co-educators in junior high school programming. Additionally, these Peer Liaisons take part in community outreach, youth development activities, and play a crucial role on the RAPP Steering Committee. Some of the activities conducted by the Peer Liaisons include:

- RAPP TV: A cable access show targeting youth in the Southcoast area, designed, researched, videotaped and produced entirely by RAPP Peer Liaisons. RAPP TV airs every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. on NBTV95.
- RAPP Youth Council, which is funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance. RAPP Peer Liaisons lead a group of 15 youth from the Greater New Bedford area that have been commissioned to assess community needs, perform community service and fund 10 to 15 mini grants ranging in size from \$500 to \$1,500.

The RAPP Program received \$156,000 per year in a multi-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, along with grants from corporations and private donations to continue the work so desperately needed by the youth and parents of the South Coast area.

Emergency Department Outreach

Our Emergency Department staff continues 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.

3. Access to Health Care

Community Outreach:

In this difficult economic climate, Southcoast Patient Financial Services Department in 2009 greatly expanded the number of area residents it served. Our staff provided assistance to thousands of area residents through efforts to enroll people in health insurance programs and also assist in the re-enrollment process.

This past year Patient Financial Services staff partnered with several local agencies that provide direct services to low-income and other residents who have difficulty accessing health care. In some cases, Southcoast staff were present at these agencies on a weekly basis. The agencies included Towne House in Fall River, a substance abuse and mental health rehabilitation facility, and Seven Hills Behavioral Health in New Bedford. In 2010 we will expand this service to the House of Hope, a homeless shelter in New Bedford.

Our staff also continues to collaborate with Boston Medical Center (BMC) HealthNet to participate in outreach enrollment activities. BMC HealthNet is the largest provider of MassHealth and Commonwealth Care managed care programs in our region.

Department manager Cindy Francis remains a member of the Massachusetts Hospital Association's work group that focuses on problem resolution with new state health insurance regulations and policy implementation barriers.

In addition to outreach efforts, Southcoast's Patient Financial Services Department in 2008 assisted in the completion of:

- 3,645 Virtual Gateway applications (5 percent increase over previous year).

- 2,383 manual MassHealth applications (53 percent increase).
- 84 disability applications (150 percent increase).
- 44 SSDI/SSI referrals.
- 126 long-term care applications.
- 590 agency applications (700 percent increase). These included BMSP, EAEDC and prescription programs.

<www.southcoast.org/insurance/>

<www.southcoast.org/insurance/commonwealthcare.html>

Our Patient Financial Services staff continues to search for opportunities to conduct health fairs and provide support to outside agencies that seek our services to meet the needs of the un- and underinsured.

Health Access Collaborative

Southcoast Hospitals Group is a founding member and contributor to Health Access Collaborative, a greater Fall River/New Bedford Collaborative to achieve cultural competency within and among healthcare member organizations and for the clients they serve. Specific goals include cultural competency training, interpreter training, and development of monitoring procedures for interpreter services and cultural competency for member organizations.

In 2009, the collaborative conducted training sessions for medical interpreters and continued to support monthly meetings of a medical interpreters group, which focuses on ongoing training and resource sharing. The group also has success this past year in creating and presenting a range of training materials for local medical interpreters.

The collaborative has been a tremendously successful effort, which will continue to expand across the region.

<www.healthaccesscollaborative.org>

Southcoast Health Van

The Southcoast Health Van continued to play a major role in health outreach in our region, More than 6,000 residents visited the van this past year, benefiting from more than 16,300 health screenings and also donating more than 2,000 pints of blood, which helps to meet the blood donation needs of local patients.

<www.southcoast.org/van/>

This year, the van expanded its screenings to include vascular screenings for early detection of peripheral vascular disease. More than 600 residents took advantage of these screenings held in the spring and fall. Close to 40 percent had results that suggested risk for vascular disease and were referred for further consultation with their physicians.

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 Southcoast Health 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

though the region offering services including blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol, colorectal and vision screening, bone density screenings, pregnancy testing and extensive health education. Tetanus Diphtheria (Td), Pneumococcal Vaccine and Flu vaccine are also offered. The van's blood collection services help assure a regional blood supplies

The van also offers a range of cancer screenings and education on cancer prevention, including distribution of colorectal cancer screening kits. There is a low rate of recommended colorectal screening in our region, due to cultural and health access barriers. Kits distributed on the van are processed free of charge at the Southcoast Hospitals lab and provide a basic level of screening that is accessible to all residents. Residents with positive results are contacted by hospital staff and assistance is provided in arranging appropriate medical treatment.

The Southcoast Health Van also distributes Stroke Awareness kits, in conjunction with the FAST campaign by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This campaign is designed to help residents recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke and act FAST in obtaining treatment. The van targeted African American residents, who have a high incidence of stroke, at several community events. In addition to English, materials are also distributed in Portuguese and Spanish.

The Southcoast Health Van serves an ethnically diverse population including Portuguese, Brazilian, Hispanic and Cambodian immigrants. Health Van staff also work closely with cultural organizations, churches and other community groups such as soup kitchens, to conduct outreach to diverse populations in order to develop culturally sensitive programs.

Other initiatives on the van include the ESL Program (English as a Second Language) in New Bedford and Taunton, which serves a diverse group of immigrants, a population with significant risk factors for a variety of diseases as well as educational, cultural and other barriers that limit access to routine primary health care. Van staff also collaborates with the Adult Learning Programs and the Immigrant Assistance Center in New Bedford. Health Van staff has also worked in collaboration with the YWCA Women's Health Program and the local YMCA of New Bedford and Middleboro.

In Fall River, the Health Van works in conjunction with the Cambodian Center, PYCO (Portuguese Youth Center Organization), Bristol Elder Services, and local colleges. During the past year the Van also worked with the Fall River, New Bedford, and Wareham Business Associations to target business communities in the South Coast. The Van also works closely with Catholic Social Services on outreach efforts.

The van also participated in the Healthy Cities Fall River initiative, providing screenings and education as part of the annual Fall River Fitness Challenge.

The Southcoast Health 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 work with van staff to provide counseling on sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and pregnancy prevention and confidential pregnancy testing. This information and education to teens has resulted in improved follow up rates and reduced rates of repeat pregnancy tests. Southcoast Health Van staff work with teachers to reach students with health educational 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 High School in Rochester, Wareham High School, and Apponoquet High School in Lakeville. This year, the van added services at the Alternative High School in Wareham, which primarily serves at-risk teens.

Our work with teens helps address a high teen pregnancy rate in our region. Although this rate has dropped substantially in the past decade, several of our communities — namely Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham — still have some of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state.

In addition to outreach, the Southcoast Health Van continues to promote referral and follow up for regular primary health care services by networking with other service providers and disseminating information to patients. Staff also helps patients negotiate referrals and insurance applications. Patient satisfaction survey results indicated that this health information provided was useful and helpful.

The Southcoast-sponsored Community Health Needs Assessment, as well as the 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 Southcoast Health Van's outreach services have contributed to these positive-screening rates. All services are free of charge and fully supported by Southcoast Hospitals Group.

The Southcoast Health Van is led by Susan Oliveira, RN, and has a full-time staff, including clinical staff and a dedicated driver.

MediCall Program

Southcoast continues to provide support to the MediCall program. MediCall's primary focus and unique mission is to link individuals who are unable to pay for health care with physicians in the community who are willing to provide free care for our underserved population.

The MediCall Program continues to provide medical access to the underserved population in the greater Fall River area, who are unable to arrange health care appointments 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.

MediCall referred 1,300 individuals to primary care physicians and 171 individuals received specialty care in physician's offices. Outreach efforts were provided to 2,706 individuals within our community, 442 individuals were approved for MassHealth, and 980 individuals received "free care" with assistance of the MediCall staff. The program expanded to help uninsured individuals access prescriptions through a prescription coordinator.

To date, 1,665 individuals have received medications through various programs such as the Pharmacy Assistance Program, sample medications from pharmaceutical representatives, and private donations.

Interpreter Services

Southcoast Hospitals Group offers comprehensive interpreting services for a wide range of populations with Portuguese and Spanish being the prevalent languages serviced. Interpreters assist with verbal interpretations for patients and their families who receive inpatient and outpatient care.

The interpreters also provide written translations of educational materials for patients and their families. Sign language interpreters or the Deaf Talk system are utilized for communication with deaf and hearing impaired patients and their families.

In the past year, Southcoast interpreters provided 27,414 encounters, which is a 9.8 percent increase from the previous fiscal year. This translates into 13,331 hours of interpreting services.

<www.southcoast.org/portuguese/>

<www.southcoast.org/spanish/>

<www.southcoast.org/khmer/>

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.

Smoking cessation

Our region has an extremely high rate of lung cancer, with the town of Wareham having the highest lung cancer rate in the state of Massachusetts. Smoking rates are also high, with the entire South Coast region having the second highest rate of smoking of any region in the state. Clearly, smoking prevention and cessation efforts are key to the health of residents living on the South Coast.

Southcoast continued its “Breathe Better” campaign, which severely restricts smoking in the exterior areas of all three Southcoast hospital campuses, as the first step in a process to become entirely smoke-free. No smoking is allowed inside any Southcoast facilities. In conjunction with this campaign, Southcoast increased access to four-week smoking cessation programs that are based on the American Cancer Society’s “Freshstart” program. These programs are held on a quarterly basis and are open to the community at a minimal charge.

<www.southcoast.org/breathebetter>

Southcoast also provides the most referrals to the state’s QuitWorks program, which provides individual, phone-based counseling for residents who are trying to quit smoking.

In 2009 Southcoast was awarded the first “Make Smoking History Award” from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for its extraordinary success in referring people into the QuitWorks program (see photo at right). This program’s success was led by Niki Almeida, RN, and Nancy Medeiros, RN, both Resource Nurses at Charlton Memorial Hospital, who helped spread the program to all three Southcoast Hospitals campuses.



<www.southcoast.org/health/quitworks.html>

Southcoast also continued its **Tar Wars** program, which provides smoking prevention education to elementary school children in Wareham and Fall River schools. To date, more than 3,200 students have participated in Tar Wars, which uses a nationally-modeled curriculum.

Skin Cancer

Southcoast conducts annual skin cancer screenings each spring. This year, a total of 90 residents were screened at our Fall River site and 100 were screened at The Oncology Center in North Dartmouth. A number of suspicious lesions were discovered and these patients were referred for further examination and treatment.

Head/Neck Screenings

Southcoast Hospitals Group and Northeast Ear Nose & Throat Surgeons provided free head and neck cancer screenings to 75 individuals on the Southcoast Health Van in April 2009. The screening, which has been fully-booked each of the past three years it has been held, is in cooperation with the

Yul Brynner Head & Neck Cancer Foundation Inc. in honor of Head and Neck Cancer Awareness week. Oral cancer is a major health problem in the United States. Head and neck cancers are more common in men and in people over age 50. It is estimated that some 45,000 men and women in this country developed head and neck cancers in 2004. Black males have the highest incidence of head and neck cancers, with a survival rate over five years at 33 percent versus 55 percent for whites.

<www.headandneck.org>

Prostate Cancer Screenings

Southcoast provided free prostate cancer screenings at our cancer center in Fall River during the past year. Approximately 75 men took advantage of the screenings, which were held in collaboration with the American Cancer Society.

Health Fairs

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

Regional collaboration on wellness and disease prevention

Our most recent Community Health Needs Assessment indicated significant issues with chronic disease and health risk factors that relate to socio economic and cultural barriers in accessing health care and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This past year, a number of community coalitions were formed to address some of these issues and Southcoast has taken a leadership role in many of these. They include ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation & Environmental change), a regional program that addresses high rates of obesity, smoking and lack of exercise, Mass in Motion, a DPH-sponsored program to encourage more physical activity and healthier nutrition, and the Southcoast Worksite Wellness Collaborative.

SECTION VII: Expenditures During the Reporting Year

In 2009, Southcoast contributed \$14,574,766 in community benefit and community service programs that reached the disadvantaged, underserved and those at-risk, bringing them services they otherwise would not have been able to access. This is a 26.3 percent increase over 2008. Our major initiatives concerning health access, cardiovascular disease and youth risk behavior all had significant impact, with growing programs that reached large numbers of Southcoast residents.

In addition to community benefit expenditures, Southcoast Hospitals Group had a Medicaid shortfall of \$6,567,388, was underpaid by the Health Safety Net by \$1,682,187, had a shortfall in Medicare and Medicare managed care of \$39,353,905 and had losses from essential services (including inpatient psychiatric services, Level II nurseries and inpatient rehabilitation) of \$710,522. Southcoast plays a critical role in providing care to a substantial Medicaid population and is the largest community hospital provider of Medicaid services in the Commonwealth. Southcoast's community benefit and community service programs and Southcoast's net subsidization of unfunded government-sponsored health care totaled \$62,888,768.

Program Type	Estimated Total Expenditures for FY2009	Approved Program Budget for FY2010
Community Benefits Programs	Direct Expenses	\$10,225,994
	Associated Expenses	\$0
	Determination of Need Expenditures	\$62,946
	Employee Volunteerism	\$34,600
	Other Leveraged Resources	\$443,025
Community Service Programs	Direct Expenses	\$185,212
	Associated Expenses	\$0
	Determination of Need Expenditures	\$0
	Employee Volunteerism	\$0
	Other Leveraged Resources	\$0
Net Charity Care*	\$3,845,777	\$4,000,000
Corporate Sponsorships	\$41,000	\$30,000
	Total Expenditures	\$14,838,554
		\$14,504,946
Total Patient Care-Related Expenses for FY2009		\$563,798,237
<p>Comments: In addition to the \$14,574,766 in community benefits and community service, Southcoast Hospitals had a Medicaid shortfall in the amount of \$6,567,388, was underpaid by the Health Safety Net by \$1,682,187, had a shortfall in Medicare and Medicare managed care of \$39,353,905 and had losses from essential community services (including inpatient psychiatric services, Level II nurseries and inpatient rehabilitation) of \$710,522, bringing Southcoast's total community contribution to \$63,152,556 in 2009.</p>		

SECTION VIII: Contact Information

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Public Access to This Report

This report, along with those of other not-for-profit hospitals in Massachusetts, is available online from the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General.

www.mass.gov/?pageID=cagohomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Cago

Southcoast also makes its annual Community Benefits Report available on its own Website, along with an archive of reports from prior years.

www.southcoast.org/news/benefits/ >