

NORTH ADAMS REGIONAL HOSPITAL

North Adams Regional Hospital is a subsidiary of Northern Berkshire Healthcare, located in Berkshire County in the northwestern corner of Massachusetts. The health system, in addition to the hospital, includes a long term care facility, a home health care/hospice organization, a retirement community and the REACH Community Health Foundation. The latter, established in 1998, is the health education arm of Northern Berkshire Healthcare and thus oversees the Community Benefits Program for North Adams Regional Hospital. The mission of both REACH and North Adams Regional Hospital is to improve the health of the Northern Berkshire community through education, outreach, advocacy and treatment, in partnership with community members and organizations.

REACH is governed by an independent Board of Directors. As required by the by-laws, a member of the Board of Directors of Northern Berkshire Healthcare serves as the chair of the REACH Board of Directors. REACH is managed by a president, who is also the CEO/President of both the health system and North Adams Regional Hospital.

The health system serves a particularly needy rural population. To assess community needs many sources of data are reviewed. These include North Adams Regional Hospital discharge data, data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a youth survey conducted by the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, data from the Northern Berkshire United Way Navigation project and the Children's Health Profile compiled by the REACH Community Health Foundation. Cardiovascular related conditions continue to be the leading cause of death and disability; thus emphasis is placed on fitness, nutrition and smoking. Several REACH programs also target early identification of various types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon and skin cancers.

REACH targets all residents of Northern Berkshire County with a particular emphasis on the uninsured and underinsured. Primary prevention and early detection are at the core of its community initiatives. Each of REACH's numerous programs is based on assessment of community need and includes specific process and outcome measures.

The Northern Berkshire community is known for its collaborative approach in working on various problems. To serve our target population REACH and North Adams Regional Hospital often collaborate with the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, Ecu-Health Care, Childcare of the Berkshires, the Williamstown Medical Associates and other medical groups, the Horizon Advisory Board, the North Star Advisory Board, Elder Services of Berkshire County, the Oral Health Advisory Committee and the Navigation Committee of the Northern Berkshire United Way.

Northern Berkshire Healthcare/North Adams Regional Hospital provides financial support for the core administrative functions of the REACH Community Health Foundation; this support allows REACH to maximize its capacity to develop, implement and evaluate the numerous programs and interventions that it provides in the community.

GET FIT is a program that promotes physical fitness and good nutrition as a way to address obesity and lower rates of preventable diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. It serves all age groups via various community and school programs. During the past year GET FIT saw 196 school-age children participate in the *Marathon Challenge* that encouraged children to walk or run a marathon over a period of weeks. They were also encouraged to eat a minimum of 5 fruits and vegetables daily. In addition 43 families participated in *Families Making Changes*, a series that emphasizes behavior change rather than actual weight loss. The *Spring Tune-Up* attracted 735 adults that kept track of their daily walking activity via use of a pedometer; they also tallied and reported the number of fruits and vegetables eaten daily. Another 200 adults and children participated in a *Community Gardens Program* that is held in selected schools and neighborhoods.

The Northern Berkshires has a very high smoking rate, especially among women of the childbearing years. North Adams Regional Hospital this past year was awarded a grant by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to address this problem. Thus the *QuitLinks* program was recently initiated; it is targeting both pregnant smokers and women that are in their childbearing years. In addition, a community tobacco cessation program, *Quitters Are Winners*, assisted 33 smokers in quitting or reducing their dependence on tobacco. REACH also collaborated with an area high school in a program entitled *Clear the Air* that promoted the development of print and television ads that counteracted the promotion of smoking among young people.

The *Men's Health Partnership* has been funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for the past 6 years. The goal of the program is to provide screening, education and referral for uninsured and underinsured men. Screenings are included for prostate cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and high cholesterol levels. Lifestyle factors including smoking, dietary patterns, and exercise are also assessed. Blood work, as well as digital rectal examinations, are done according to age guidelines stipulated by the program. During the past year the program referred 46 of its 88 attendees for follow-up care with their primary care physicians. Of these, 9 men were referred for possible prostate cancer; 2 for possible diabetes. Those who do not have primary care physicians are referred to Ecu-Health Care, an area resource that assists Northern Berkshire residents with accessing health care for which they may be eligible.

The *Healthy Smiles* program currently focuses on sealant applications in area schools. The program targets children who either have no dental insurance or coverage provided by MassHealth. In the past, support from the Oral Health Foundation enabled our organization to both provide oral health education in the schools and to prepare for the establishment of a self-supporting sealant program. Support from the Oral Health Foundation enabled the purchase of a portable dental chair, as well as the purchase of other equipment necessary for carrying out the project. The screening examinations are provided by area dentists; sealants are applied by a dental hygienist. Dental sealants were applied to 485 teeth over the past few months. Dental health is increasingly being recognized as a component of cardiovascular health so this program is also related to our efforts to combat cardiovascular disease.

The *Breast Health Program*, which is funded by both the Susan B. Komen Foundation and several smaller gifts and grants, promotes early detection of breast cancer and provides outreach, education and support for Northern Berkshire women. A major focus of the program is to provide care navigation to women that have been diagnosed with breast cancer; last year navigation services were provided to 22 women.

Yet other programs offered by the REACH Community Health Foundation are the North Star program and the Horizon program.

Every three years, the *North Star Program* publishes the Children's Health Profile, a compilation of statistics pertaining to the physical and emotional health of children of the Northern Berkshires. A voting process follows the distribution of the booklet. Thus a problem is identified that will be addressed by REACH in concert with area organizations. The smoking problem, and the current program that is addressing it, is an example of an identified issue and the resulting intervention. In addition, North Star annually updates and distributes *The Physician's Resource Guide to Children's Mental Health Practitioners in the Northern Berkshires*, a publication that it compiled several years ago.

The *Horizon Program* is guided by a volunteer advisory committee whose major goal is the education of caregivers of the elderly and disabled. Funding from Elder Services of Berkshire County, the Berkshire Life Charitable Foundation and the First Congregational Church of Williamstown have enabled the program to establish a lending library now based at the Milne Public Library in Williamstown. The collection consists of over 90 books and videos that address various aspects of caregiving and management of the health conditions that affect those in their care. Periodically a video that addresses a caregiving topic is aired on the local public access television station. An educational workshop was attended by 31 area caregivers this past year. Caregiver awards annually recognize the unsung heroes and heroines that tirelessly care for loved ones.

In addition to the aforementioned programming, REACH, on behalf of the health system, sponsors an annual skin cancer screening and also periodic car seat safety checks. The past year saw a colon cancer initiative in collaboration with the American Cancer Society that included physician education, community outreach via newspaper articles and advertising, and distribution of patient educational literature to physicians' offices. It also included the awarding of a monetary prize, via a drawing that included all who had a colonoscopy or one of the other choices for detecting colon cancer, as a result of this campaign. REACH also participates in many community health fairs and other events that heighten awareness about various preventive measures and opportunities for early detection.