

Brief Description of Healthy Hancock

1. Healthy Hancock, Short Community Description

Hancock County is made up of 36 towns and unorganized territories with a land area of approximately 1,500 square miles and an estimated population of 53,660. The population is concentrated along the coast with most economic activity occurring in five service centers, Bucksport, Ellsworth, Blue Hill, Southwest Harbor and Bar Harbor. The northern interior of the county is primarily made up of industrial forest land with extremely sparse population. Hancock County's population has been growing approximately 1% per year (more than twice the state rate of growth), largely due to the influx of retirees to the coastal towns. Lower cost land and housing in the interior is attracting young families away from high cost coastal communities, and school enrollments are declining in many parts of the county. The county's two largest employers are International Paper and Jackson Laboratory, a genetics research facility. With about 3,000,000 visitors per year to Acadia National Park, tourism generates a large number of seasonal jobs and is part of a general trend toward a service economy.

2. Healthy Hancock, Short History

Healthy Hancock (HH) is a federation of community health coalitions, schools, hospitals and other organizations working together to promote health in the Hancock County region. The early roots of Healthy Hancock began when the PATCH (Planned Approach to Community Health) programs at Maine Coast Memorial Hospital and Mount Desert Island Hospital came together to jointly plan and implement health promotion activities. In the mid 1990's they were joined by Blue Hill Memorial Hospital's Health Education Center, and the three hospitals collaborated on projects including tobacco programs and the Healthy Eating series of dinners and restaurant incentives. At the same time other groups including the Hancock County Planning Commission, Healthy Island project, Schoodic Area Futures, and Peninsula Area Team for Health were supporting other regional collaborations, sharing ideas, and building relationships across the county. Members of the Bucksport Community Health Advisory Council and Downeast Health Services were also meeting to discuss a way to pull together healthy community coalitions to explore opportunities to work together and encourage development of new coalitions. In 1999, all of these groups joined together. When the Healthy Maine Partnerships RFP was issued, the partners knew that by working together they could accomplish more. They wrote into their separate grant applications language that formalized the "Hancock County Coalition for Community Health." Their powerful vision provided a foundation for the next five years of collaborative public health planning, research, advocacy and programming, among three Healthy Maine Partnerships, other healthy community coalitions, hospitals, schools and organizations serving their local communities and, through HH, collaborating across the county. Healthy Hancock has no explicit staff – staff of member organizations share the responsibilities of rotating co-chair positions and committee work.

3. Healthy Hancock Participants

As a federation of community-based coalitions and organizations, Healthy Hancock has no staff of its own. Rotating co-chair positions and committee work are shared among staff of the member organizations. Healthy Hancock participants come from a diverse

range of backgrounds including social work, nursing, public health, exercise physiology, community planning, substance abuse treatment and prevention, management of hospital patient care systems, education (experiential and classroom), and community organizing. Healthy Hancock participants find their work “*dynamic,*” “*challenging,*” and “*creative,*” citing the importance of “*authentic community involvement*” in their work to create systemic changes to support individual and community health, now and in the future.