

Healthy Living

Y stands for youth programming

by Sheila Grant

Special to The Eastern Gazette

DOVER-FOXCROFT - The Piscataquis Regional YMCA in Dover-Foxcroft offers programming for all ages, but a big focus is on youth programming and services. The majority of the Y's members come from the immediate area, but the facility also has members from throughout Piscataquis and northern Penobscot counties.

"The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards were rolled out several years ago and are being adopted by YMCAs all across the country," said Patrick Myers, the Y's marketing and fund development director. "They set standards for many different aspects of our program to ensure that we are providing the healthiest environment for the children in our care. Basically, it means we keep the kids active, make sure they eat good food, and keep them away from electronic devices and TVs."

"We have youth sports for kids all year round both at the Y and

in the community," Myers said. "We also provide swim lessons all the time to help kids stay safe in the water. We often have programs such as our Children's Theater Workshop, Kid's Yoga, and Superhero Training. We have a small climbing wall available for kids, as well as our volleyball/wallyball/racquetball courts, ping pong table and foosball."

Additionally, Myers said, hiring Kelly Hutchinson as the Y's new childcare coordinator in February has strengthened what the Y has to offer to families. "We're excited to have her, and would love to get the word out about her far and wide," he said.

It is the Y's childcare program that allows busy parents such as Stephanie Hurd to meet their healthy living goals. Hurd and her husband, Ryan, made a bet on New Year's Eve of 2013 to see who could lose the most weight over the next two months.

"Stephanie's competitive nature kicked in and she took the challenge to the fullest," said Myers. Stephanie Hurd lost 90

pounds over eight and a half months, with a goal of losing 100 pounds by the end of that year.

The Y wants to eliminate not only childcare concerns, but financial ones. "Every year we give out nearly \$60,000 in scholarships to people in the community so they can use the YMCA's programs and services," said Myers. "We never turn anyone away because they can't pay. If anyone would like to work towards their health goals, but are worried about the money, please come and talk to us!"

Healthy communities mean healthy kids

Erin Callaway, Healthy Communities project coordinator, was hired a little over a year ago to oversee the collaborative Feel Good Piscataquis! Health Communities project for which the Y has assumed a leadership role. Her job is to bring together organizations around the county to help solve the problem of getting access to healthy food.



Y PRESCHOOL PLAYTIME - Julia, Evan, Effie, and Sophia enjoy outdoor playtime at Y preschool. All of the Y's childcare programming involves keeping kids active and healthy. (Photo courtesy of the YMCA)

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Good nutrition is a focus at the Piscataquis Public Health Council

by Sheila Grant
Special to The Eastern Gazette

DOVER-FOXCROFT - The Piscataquis Public Health Council was established in 2001 to help battle tobacco use and its associated health impacts. The Dover-Foxcroft-based organization serves all of Piscataquis County, as well as 10 Penobscot County communities: Stetson, Exeter, Dexter, Garland, Corinth, Kenduskeag, Bradford, Hudson, Charleston, and LaGrange. And while tobacco use is still a major focus, the PPHC also works to prevent alcohol and substance abuse, promote workplace wellness, link people to personal health services, increase good nutrition, provide innovative solutions to public health related issues, and more. The organization is currently revamping its logo and name to better reflect its expanded programming, and will be known as the Piscataquis Public Health Coalition.

"I support the overall work of the PPHC, work to bring in additional funding and maintain visibility locally, and also at the state level," said Robin Mayo, community partnership director, who serves on multiple boards and committees locally and statewide. Funding is always a challenge, she said, as is reducing the high incidence of preventable chronic diseases.

"But the rewards are great and there is never a dull moment," said Mayo. "Over the years I have seen people win the battle of quitting tobacco, and they are so proud. I've worked with individuals to identify community resources to help them with their

health crisis, and they are so appreciative."

Watching children's eyes light up when they try nutritious new foods, "and discover it actually tastes good," is also a high point, she said. While working to start a garden for children in an early childcare setting, "the kids had a session where they decided what they wanted to grow," said Mayo. "They learned that hot dogs and macaroni and cheese could not be grown in the garden. They learned what items could be grown, and what types of whole foods were used to make a session where they decided what they wanted to eat. They enjoyed the entire process of preparing the soil, planting the seeds, and weeding as a physical activity, and of course, harvesting what they grew."

Nutrition education for all ages has been a growing focus of the PPHC in recent years. Krystle Parkman, SNAP-Ed nutrition education coordinator, joined the PPHC team because, "growing up in Piscataquis County, I thought it would be wonderful to now be able to offer these much-needed services to the community," she said, noting that the organization's missions and goals were, "in line with how I wanted to use my education and experience to share and teach others about nutrition and physical activity."

Parkman provides nutrition education aimed at helping low-income families make healthier food and physical activity choices. The SNAP-Ed program provides services in settings that are most accessible to eligible individuals, including schools, food pantries, grocery stores, Head Start programs, and other childcare settings.

"I feel as though I have little scesses all the time, from something as small as having a student say that they finally got a family member to try a new fruit or vegetable that we talked about that month, or that they are now eating more fruits and vegetables at home or at school," said Parkman. "I've had parents tell us that their children would refuse certain foods at home, but because they were able to try it with their friends at school, they will now eat it at home. The majority of my work is done with youth. It's amazing to see the children try something that we may eat as a norm in our diet, but that they have never tried before,

such as blueberries, raspberries or sweet potato. To have children be excited at the opportunity to try new vegetables when you are in their classroom is very rewarding, and you know that you are helping to influence one child's eating habits, at the very least, in each classroom."

Andy VanEss, community health promotion specialist, joined the PPHC team because, "I saw real value in the work that was being done throughout the region," he said. "In my time as an undergraduate and graduate student I studied the healthcare system and it was clear that the way to reduce Maine's healthcare costs while increasing their quality of life was to prevent health conditions before they progress. I decided that being an educator and advocate for a healthy lifestyle was something I wanted to be a part of, and felt like my efforts would have a lasting impact on the communities we serve."

VanEss works to increase physical activity in communities, promote locally grown agriculture, and increase student and staff wellness in schools. "I also work with local food pantries to educate individuals on how to cook using products found at the food cupboard, and offer Shopping Matters store tours during which participants receive great shopping tips, practice label reading, and compare pricing to learn how to buy healthy foods on a limited budget. I take individuals around a grocery store and show them how to shop healthy while teaching them some money-saving tips along the way."

One way Van-

Ess has helped make communities more active is with a series of walking maps he created a year ago for communities and businesses throughout the area. Maps include various routes, mileage, number of steps, calories burned, and the time required for each route. "Seeing those maps still being used today to promote walking as a part of wellness programs and 'Biggest Loser' challenges lets me know that people find value in the maps, and hopefully people use them as a tool for years to come," he said.

Reducing tobacco use and substance and alcohol abuse remain important focuses, as well. Lisa Kingsbury, community health

promotion specialist, concentrates on substance abuse, tobacco, and underage drinking prevention. The loss of local school health coordinators when funding was eliminated in 2008 has made her work more challenging, she said. But the community involvement aspect of the job is rewarding. "I work with so many different agencies, such as schools, law enforcement and municipal offices. I have enjoyed building some pretty strong networks."

To learn more about any of the Piscataquis Public Health Coalition's programs, visit www.piscataquispublichealthcouncil.org or call 564-4344.



KRYSSTLE PARKMAN PROVIDES NUTRITION EDUCATION to preschoolers during a SNAP-Ed program last summer. Photo courtesy of the PPHC.

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Pine Tree Hospice mission is all about quality of life

by Sheila Grant

Special to The Eastern Gazette

DOVER-FOXCROFT—The motto of Pine Tree Hospice is, "We can't add days to your life, but we can add life to your days."

PTH, now in its 29th year, is a vastly misunderstood organization, said Jane Stitham, executive director.

"One of our biggest challenges is that people hear that word and immediately think it's a medical hospice that is for people during the last six months of life, for old people, or for those with cancer, so they don't call," Stitham said, noting that Pine Tree Hospice recently had a 97-year age span from its youngest to oldest client, and that clients have a variety of diagnoses.

Unlike the many excellent medical hospice programs, Pine Tree Hospice is a volunteer-driven organization that serves any person impacted by any progressive, life-limiting illness—regardless of how long that person has to live—as well as that person's family members and other caregivers. The organization had one client for 10 years, and a current client has been with them for five years. The nonprofit raises all of its own funding to provide services free to residents of Piscataquis, and parts of Penobscot and Somerset counties.

How PTH differs from medical hospice care

Clients can begin working with PTH as soon as they are diagnosed, rather than waiting until the end is near. Working with PTH is not an either/or proposition. Clients can have volunteer care the entire time, combined with medical hospice once they have a life expectancy of six months or less. Unlike medical hospice, PTH is able to work with clients who are taking curative measures rather than those who are accepting only palliative care. Medical hospice programs are required to provide volunteer services, and volunteer programs such as PTH do not provide any direct medical care, making for "a very nice partnership," Stitham said.

Pine Tree Hospice is able to work with clients at home, in the hospital or at boarding and nursing homes. In addition to Stitham's full-time position, PTH has three part-time employees and about 130 volunteers. Not every PTH volunteer provides direct care. Others provide bereavement services for caretakers after the client has died. Many volunteers share a skill and have contact with the clients only to provide transportation, cooking, gardening, plowing, or other tasks the client is no longer able to perform. Some volunteers take people fishing. There are also volunteers who prefer to do board and committee work. Some volunteers have ongoing duties, while others help out for one event and are then done. Area students from Life Skills and media classes, as well as the Tri-County Technical Center, volunteer by providing food, assistance or PR materials for PTH events.

Having such a wide variety of volunteers allows PTH to meet a multitude of client needs, from rides to medical appointments to picking up prescriptions, grocery shopping, doing light housekeeping, or simply keeping a household patient company while a regular caregiver takes a much needed break.

The organization also facilitates connections between families and other resources they may need, such as heating oil, a handicap ramp, or services for veterans.

"We've worked with somebody who was blind before, and found someone to read to them," said Stitham. "We have a lot of clients who respond to singing so we have volunteers who just go singing to them. We have taken a wheelchair-bound person who had not been out of the house in a year out through collaboration with our donor agency with a van, for fall foliage rides and ice cream. It's not uncommon for a volunteer to help them write letters to people."

Volunteers do not go in around the clock, but generally provide two or three hours a week doing whatever will best serve the client and caregivers. It's all about a client deciding what he or she and the family want to do, and how PTH can help facilitate that, Stitham said.

"I want people to realize that we are here and we can help and I'm signing up with us that doesn't mean you're giving up," she said. "It means you have a unique opportunity to have some support to carry out your life as best you can—but we're not going to go in there and tell them what they need to do. They are in charge. And they don't have to go through a doctor, although we do receive referrals from the medical community. They can find out about us by just making a phone call."

Support programs are also offered

Pine Tree Hospice provides many support programs for caregivers, including Caring for the Caregiver workshops for past and present caregivers, during which educational and nurturing activities are provided for those who have cared for, or are caring for, a terminally-ill person. Educational workshops cover topics such as dementia and the special needs of veterans. Other events offer a day of respite, providing caregivers with complimentary lunch, along with nurturing activities such as manicures, massage, guided meditation and acupuncture.

Bereavement support services are provided via the PTH Evergreen Center for Grieving Children and Adults. Services include Evergreen Nights of Service, "a safe space where children, teens, adults and families grieving a death can share experiences with each other at their own pace and under the guidance of two trained bereavement facilitators." Anyone who is mourning can attend, whether the deceased was a PTH client or not, and whether the deceased died a day ago or years ago.

There's also an Evergreen Bereavement Lunch and Learn Series, a monthly evening adult support series, and a crisis response team that works with those dealing with a traumatic death incident, whether it be students dealing with the death of a peer, or first responders dealing with a particularly difficult emergency situation.

There's a tendency for us to feel that we are strong and we can do all this, but it's not a failure to find out what other resources are out there to make not only the client's life, but the caregiver's life, easier," Stitham said. "We may not be able to help, but we might be able to find that shower chair you need but can't afford, or an electric wheelchair, or to provide respite care so you can go to a Caring for the Caregiver event, or if you just need a place to talk, we're safe, so just call."

For more information about volunteering or receiving Pine Tree Hospice services, call 564-4346, email wcarre@pinetreehospice.org or visit www.pinetreehospice.org.

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Healthcare providers try to reduce travel for patients

by Sheila Grant
Special to The Eastern Gazette

PENQUIS REGION - Many patients in this region no longer need to travel to larger cities for specialized healthcare. Vision Care of Maine, for example, now provides diabetic eye care and other specialized treatments in its regional offices (including Dover-Foxcroft) on a limited basis. And both Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft and the Charles A. Dean Memorial Hospital in Greenville have brought several specialists on staff, while scheduling others to visit to serve the needs of patients in Piscataquis County and portions of Somerset and Penobscot counties.

"Dr. Elnoor is a urologist, and he is also a pediatric urologist," said Brad Clark, Mayo's director of marketing, community and physician recruitment. "There are not very many of those in our area of a Maine." The urologist is full-time with Mayo, but does provide care at other healthcare facilities once or twice a month.

Mayo also has an ear, nose and throat specialist on staff, as well as one full-time general surgeon, and a general surgeon and orthopedic surgeon who are on loan as needed from St. Joseph Healthcare in Bangor. "It works as a win-win for both facilities because it allows Mayo to extend surgical coverage and provide patients in our area the convenience of having surgery done close to home," said Clark.

A new OB/GYN has recently joined the Mayo staff. In addition, the Women's Imaging Center at Mayo offers mammography, and, "we've had good feedback from patients about the convenience, privacy, and staff for that service."

Mayo also has a physical and occupational therapy department headed up by Ryan Moore, RPT Moore, along with several other hospital staff and staff from Foxcroft Academy collaborated on a new program to recognize and treat concussion injuries, based on a model developed at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. As of May 7, 2014, Mayo had treated over 100 concussions since the previous August. Additionally, Mayo provides support to FA's athletic programs. The concussion program has also been beneficial to a number of elderly patients - a demographic more prone to falling.

A \$25,000 donation to Mayo will help fund relocation of its oncology department from the old hospital building into the main facility, "to provide privacy for patients, and maybe a separate entrance, infusion rooms, more contemporary space, and telemedicine options so that oncologists can conference in on the days that they are not on site," said Clark.

C.A. Dean Memorial Hospital offers patients in Greenville and the surrounding region many specialized healthcare options, as well. "We have cardiology, gynecology, podiatry, and orthopedic and general surgery," said Geno Murray, executive director.

The hospital is part of the Eastern Maine Healthcare system, and is thus able to secure visiting specialists to meet the needs not covered by physicians on staff. C.A. Dean staff includes specialists in podiatry and orthopedics; a search for general surgeons is underway. General surgeons, OB/GYN, and cardiology specialists visit as needed. "Because our patient volumes are lower, we try to identify the disciplines that are needed based on volumes, then offer those services and bring the specialists in," Murray said.

Cardiology, for example, is provided in partnership with EMMC Northeast Cardiology Associates, which sends practitioners to Greenville monthly to perform initial visits, follow-up treatments, and to oversee outpatient cardiac rehab services for patients with weakened or damaged heart muscles.

Door-to-door healthcare pilot underway

Both Mayo Regional Hospital and C.A. Dean are part of a 12-site pilot paramedicine program in Maine. Under this program, members of the hospitals' Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department are able to deliver some medical care to patients at home.

"Our team can help patients relying on the emergency department as their healthcare safety-net navigate to more appropriate care settings," said Eric Young, Director of Mayo EMS. "This program could go a long way to bridge the gap between a stressed emergency care system and the high cost of treating patients who access the emergency care setting unnecessarily."

Primary care providers must refer patients to EMS responders, who then go to the home to assess and meet patient needs, including blood pressure checks, post-surgical wound care or drawing blood for lab work.

"Many times they work with home health providers to augment those services," said Murray. "The real goal here is to try to augment those needs out there that, if they can't be covered by home health, we can get to them so they don't have an extra doctor's office visit or ambulance ride to the ER. We are trying to be proactive."

At this time, paramedicine services in Maine are not being reimbursed by Medicare or MaineCare, and are offered on a limited basis in the Greenville and Dover-Foxcroft areas. Patients should check with primary care physicians to see if they are eligible.

For more information about health care services at Mayo and C.A. Dean, call 564-8401 or 695-5200 respectively, or visit their websites, www.mayohospital.com and www.cadean.org.



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Sebasticook Family Doctors (SFD) cares about all aspects of a person's health and having enough to eat is a huge part of that concern.

"The Snack Pack Program, in partnership with RSU 19, began in 2013 and was designed to help prevent hunger in children over February and April school vacations," said Robin Winslow, CEO of SFD. "School breaks are hard because often children are provided

food at school which leaves a gap during vacations. We are also very happy to that the program is able to cover all kindergartners in the district."

SFD and RSU 19 are committed to feeding families in the region and were thrilled with the generous donations from Sebasticook Valley Federal Credit Union, People's United Bank and Bud's Shop N' Save, Bradstreet's Potato Farm, and North Star Apple Orchard.

"We had a friendly competition between SFD and RSU 19," Winslow said with a laugh. "SFD's staff donated 150 jars of peanut butter and the staff at RSU 19 supplied 150 jars of jelly. That's a lot of PB and J sandwiches."

One unique aspect of this program is that parents always have the option of donating their Snack Pack to another family who may be in greater need than

themselves during these school vacations, added Winslow. "It's really about community support—"

According to Feeding America, the USDA estimates that 14.7 percent of Maine households, or approximately 200,000 individuals, are food insecure. Forty-percent of Maine's food insecure population makes too much money to qualify for food stamps and must rely on the charity food assistance network.

To be considered "food insecure," a person must lack access to enough food to ensure adequate nutrition.

"Child food insecurity rates in Maine are 23 percent, meaning nearly 1 in every 4 children,

is food insecure," said Winslow. "SFD and RSU 19 are working to change that as much as we can."

For more information on the Snack Pack program, or if you would like to make a donation for the April vacation Snack Packs, please contact Sebasticook Family Doctors at 368-5189.

This year, for April vacation, SFD is holding a cereal drive. If you want to help, please bring cereal or any other non-perishable food item to the lobbies of all SFD offices.

"We are doing everything we can think of to ensure the proper nutrition of our children," said Winslow. "The reality is that too many little kids are going to bed hungry. It's just so sad."

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The Healthy Community and Thriving in Place Projects
Creating Solutions that are Small Enough to Do
and Big Enough to Matter
HOW CAN YOU HELP?

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HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY/DISABLED is located at *Penobscot Terrace* (1 & 2 bedrooms), *Bickmore Manor* and *Marsh Island Apartments* in downtown Old Town; *Hillside Apartments* in Bradley; and *Dow III Apartments* in Old Town. These buildings are Smoke-Free and offer quiet, comfortable and secure living. Most are located within walking distance to banks, doctors and other downtown amenities and offer free transportation to the grocery store and other shopping. An Activities & Services Referral Coordinator is available in the downtown buildings to provide social activities and assist residents in dealing with a variety of situations. The **Congregate Housing Services Program** is a unique program that offers supportive services to help residents of *Marsh Island Apartments* maintain their independence. Fees for services are based on income. Services include two meals a day, light house cleaning, help with the laundry, shopping and errands. Assistance is also provided for referrals to outside nursing and home health care services.

FAMILY HOUSING is located at *Meadow Lane*, *Anderson Lane* (2, 3 & 4 bedrooms) and *Dow IV Apartments* (2 & 3 bedrooms) in Old Town. *Hillside Apartments* located in Bradley are one bedroom units starting at \$460/mo plus electricity; rental assistance is available for some units and Housing Choice Vouchers are accepted.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM provides rental assistance to families and elderly/disabled individuals in open market rents in OLD TOWN and those towns within a 10-mile radius. **The Family Self-Sufficiency Program** and **Homeownership Option Payments Program** are also available to qualifying participants currently on the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

FOR AN APPLICATION OR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Housing Authority of the City of Old Town • PO Box 404 • 358 Main Street, Old Town, ME 04468-0404. Tele 207-827-6151 • Fax 207-827-1502 • Relay 711 hacot@oldtownhousing.net • www.oldtownhousing.net

- > Income limits and other eligibility requirements apply for all programs
- > Rent amounts for most units are based on 30% of adjusted gross income
- > All applicants are selected by date and time of application



We Are An Equal Opportunity Provider



In accordance with Federal Law and USDA Policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410, or call 1-800-795-3272 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."



SEBASTICOOK FAMILY DOCTORS, in partnership with RSU 19, puts together bags of food for the Snack Pack Program. These bags were sent home with children for February school vacation to ensure they have enough to eat while not at school. If you'd like to help out with the April Snack Packs, let us know!

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SVH EMS EASA BLAYLOCK assisting patients during recent mock disaster in Newport. (Photo courtesy SVH)

SVH EMS is "HeartSafe"

PITTSFIELD - Sebasticook Valley Health (SVH) has announced that SVH Emergency Medical Services has been successfully redesignated as a Maine HeartSafe Community by the Maine Department of Public Safety, the Maine CDC/DHHS, and the Cardiovascular Health Program. SVH Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has been designated as a HeartSafe Community since 2007.

SVH President and CEO/EMHS Senior Vice President Terri Vieira complimented EMS for its efforts. "I am proud that our EMS team has successfully maintained and enhanced our capacity to fulfill the requirements of the HeartSafe Program's Gold Level. Our first responders are committed to saving lives and protecting the health of our patients, and the HeartSafe designation ensures that our EMS team has the resources it needs for positive outcomes for heart attack and stroke patients."

For the past eight years, SVH has met the criteria of the HeartSafe Community Program, which recognizes the work of Maine EMS programs and provides resources to improve the chances of positive outcomes for patients in cardiovascular events, like heart attacks or strokes.

According to Mainehealth.gov, about 335,000 people a year die of coronary heart disease without being hospitalized or admitted to an emergency room, which is why the Maine CDC/DHHS Cardiovascular Health Program, and the Maine Emergency Medical Services office have partnered to assist Maine cities and towns in improving the chances that anyone suffering a cardiovascular-related event will have the best possible chance for survival and recovery.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Yarbrough at 487.4024. SVH comprises a progressive 26-bed, critical access hospital and a wide range of outpatient services throughout the region. SVH is a member of Eastern Maine Healthcare System (EMHS).

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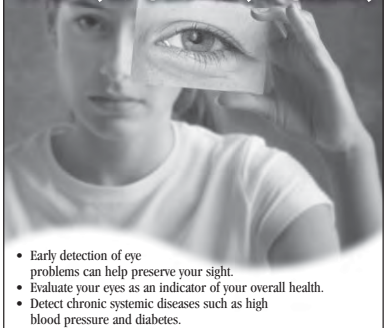
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