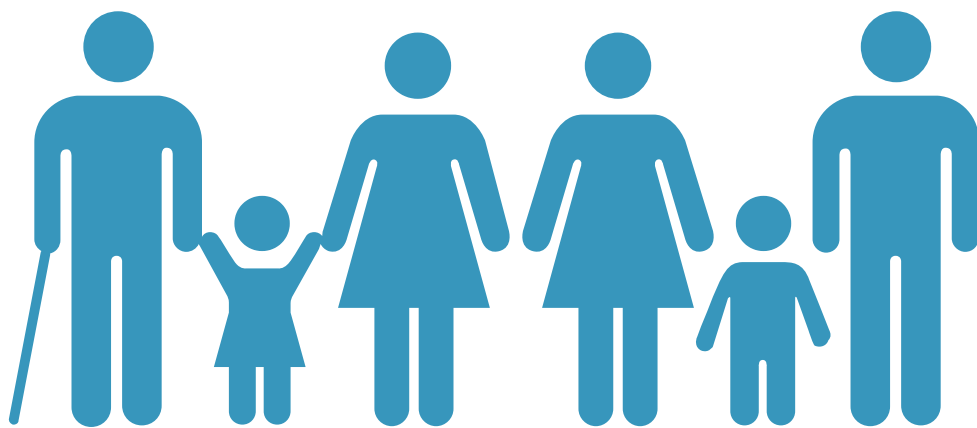




# **SEACOAST PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT**

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**2022 - 2023**



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# MEET THE SPHN STAFF



**Name** Paula Smith

**Title** Director, Southern NH AHEC and Contract Administrator, Seacoast Public Health Network

**What do I do for SPHN?** As the Contract Administrator I am responsible for financial and program management of SPHN, providing staff with support, technical assistance and resources to achieve work plan deliverables. I also act as a liaison with the Southern NH AHEC to collaborate on training opportunities. I am interested in promoting education, equity and a culturally competent health and public safety workforce.

**What do I do in my spare time?** I am an avid swimmer, reader and kayaker and enjoy being outdoors with family and friends.



**Name** Maria Reyes

**Title** Continuum of Care Facilitator

**What do I do for SPHN?** The Continuum of Care Facilitator conducts a continuum of care assets and gaps analysis with on-going updates. The COC works across the Continuum of Care from prevention, early intervention on treatment, recovery, overdose prevention and health promotion.

**What do I do in my spare time?** I love to be in the outdoors observing wild life. My favorite time of the year is autumn which ignites my passion for fly-fishing in NH mountain streams.



**Name** Julia Meuse

**Title** Public Health Emergency Preparedness Manager

**What do I do for SPHN?** I recently started my role as the PHEP Manager in March 2022 but have been on the SPHN team since 2018. I coordinate the public health emergency preparedness initiatives and assist in overseeing the Medical Reserve Corps and CHW programs. I also provide support to PHAC meetings and activities.

**What do I do in my spare time?** In my free time you'll usually find me with my miniature dachshund, Martha. I also enjoy golfing, skiing, walks on the beach, and trying new restaurants.

# MEET THE SPHN STAFF



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**Name** Samantha Areson

**Title** Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator (SMP)

**What do I do for SPHN?** As the SMP for the Seacoast Region, my main focus is to educate, promote and partner with local schools, organizations, coalitions and community members. This includes educating the dangers of drug and alcohol use on the adolescent brain, increasing healthy coping skills in responding to stress, as well as preventing suicide and educating on the warning signs and risk factors that contribute to suicide.

**What do I do in my spare time?** I enjoy adventuring to find new and interesting places to take pictures of as well as adventuring with our new puppy.



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**Name** Yosita Thanjai

**Title** Community Health Worker (CHW)

**What do I do for SPHN?** My goal is to conduct outreach within the community, to educate, and provide different types of supports to increase access to quality health care in the Seacoast area. I am excited to be organizing community engagement activities to promote social determinants of health and reduce barriers to vaccination.

**What do I do in my spare time?** During the warmer months, I enjoy doing all outdoor activities. My favorites are camping, kayaking, and tennis. I love to stay in and bake desserts in the winter.



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**Name** Julie Irwin

**Title** Seacoast Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator

**What do I do for SPHN?** As the MRC Coordinator I coordinate volunteer recruitment, trainings, activities, and vaccine clinics for SPHN. I also will be educating our communities in family and individual preparedness.

**What do I do in my spare time?** I work as a Paramedic for Exeter Hospital ALS but in my free time I love spending time with my friends and puppies! I enjoy going to the beach, gym and trying new restaurants and adventuring!



# PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL



## Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC)

The mission of the Seacoast Public Health Network (SPHN) is to strengthen public health partnerships in emergency preparedness, community health, and substance misuse prevention in order to better serve our communities.



### THE ROLE OF THE PHAC

Identifying regional public health priorities based on assessments of community health; guiding the implementation of programs, practices and policies that are evidence-based to meet improved health outcomes; and advancing the coordination of services among partners.

#### FOR INQUIRIES, KINDLY CONTACT US AT:

Contact Maria Reyes for more information on the Public Health Advisory Council or to become a member.

[mreyes@seacoastphn.org](mailto:mreyes@seacoastphn.org)

[www.seacoastphn.org](http://www.seacoastphn.org)



1

## SPHN PHAC Partner Organizations

Austin17 House

Lamprey Health Care

Core Physicians

Magnolia House

Cross Roads House

Office of Chris Pappas

Exeter Hospital

Seacoast Mental Health Center

Exeter Together Coalition

SoRock Coalition

Granite United Way

Southern NH AHEC

Raymond Coalition for Youth

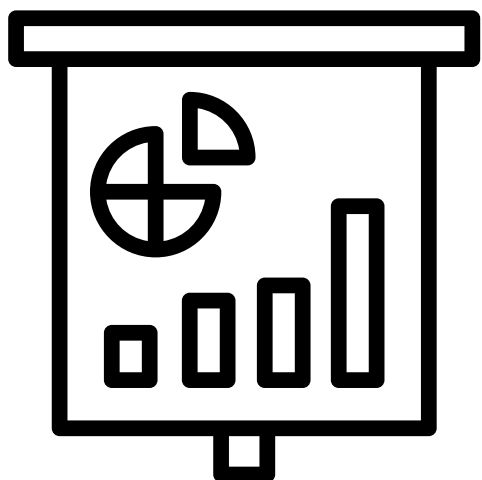
Wentworth Douglass Hospital

# SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION UPDATES

Our Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator has had a busy year! Samantha started off the year by attending a training to become a Mental Health First Aid Trainer. She passed the training with flying colors and has since co-facilitated a MHFA course where **24** participants attended! She received great feedback from that training.



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Throughout the year, our SMP has been working with various community partners to help fund several substance use prevention and mental health promotion programs. One of which was called the "Getting to Y" program, which was carried out through the Greater Portsmouth Youth Wellness Coalition. This program worked with the High School students to comb through the YRBS data for Portsmouth, help them understand the data, and present their findings. This program is so amazing in helping students find their voice and advocate for their needs!

Our SMP participated in the DEA Take Back Day in October 2022 and April 2023. **12** Police Departments in the Seacoast participated, and through social media posts and supply delivery, over **1300** pounds of prescription drugs were collected both times!



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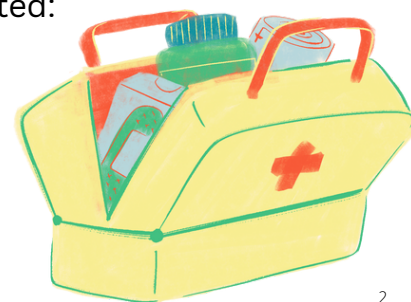
1. SPHN courtesy photo

2. "Graph". Canva element. (2023)

# SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION UPDATES

Samantha is very involved with distributing harm reduction materials to our community partners. Our partners are hands on in the community and know exactly where these materials would best be accessed. Over the year, our SMP has distributed:

**15** Prescription Lock Boxes  
Over **288** Naloxone  
Over **500** Overdose Prevention Kits  
**12,000** Fentanyl Test Strips



2



3

On April 7th, 2023, our SMP conducted a focus group at Sanborn High School to talk to students about the effects of the pandemic as it relates to substance use and mental health. With help from SoRock Coalition, gift cards, and pizza, **11** students ranging from sophomores-seniors participated in the group. Samantha was met with amazing participation from these students and was able to gather information that she can use in her work in the next coming year!

On April 24th, 2023, our SMP and the SMP from Sullivan County Public Health Network, Deryn Smith, were invited to join the NH Talk Radio show, Your Health NH.

They are pictured with Southern NH AHEC staff Nitanga Jean de Dieu and Jodi Harper. This was a great experience for Samantha, and she got to talk about all things substance use prevention, harm reduction and what she is doing to help our youth communities! Give it a listen here: <https://www.nhtalkradio.com/?p=19288>



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# CONTINUUM OF CARE UPDATES



Seacoast Public Health Network received a grant from the Partnership for Public Health to create a SPHN Veteran Partner Coalition. We are excited to collaborate with J. Justin Moeling, LICSW Community Engagement and partnership coordinator from the Manchester VA Medical Center. Justin will assist SPHN to build a strong Veteran Coalition with a focus on suicide prevention and mental health recovery.

No Veteran should go through a crisis alone. Save the Veterans Crisis Line number—Dial 988 then Press 1—in your phone in case you or a Veteran you care about needs support. Caring responders are ready to listen and help day or night. There is 24/7 Support for Veterans and Their Loved Ones



Since 2018, the COC facilitator provides evidence based resiliency and thriving trainings from the National Wellness Institute. This past year in 2022-2023, we provided **three** trainings with Community Health Workers. They provided excellent feedback on how stress affects them and more importantly have the tools for healthy coping! The goal is to offer fun and insightful understanding of how stressors can affect your mind, body and soul. If you are “Stressed Out”, please join us to for some peace of mind! Please Contact-Maria Reyes If you are interested in learning more about the Resiliency and Thriving training.





# PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS UPDATES

This year SPHN participated in the state wide Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP) to determine priorities for future emergency preparedness work. On May 4th, 2023 the Seacoast Public Health Network convened regional partners for the Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop (IPPW). As part of the IPPW, the regional partners discussed preparedness priority factors, including historical knowledge, exercise findings, real-world experience, and shared organizational needs and requirements.

Many regional partners in attendance expressed a need for support in areas related to behavioral health (ie. overdose prevention, suicide prevention and active shooter situations.) We believe that prioritizing preparedness in these areas will not only help our emergency preparedness partners but it will also bridge gaps within the Public Health Network. We plan to collaborate more with the Substance Misuse Prevention and Continuum of Care side of the PHN and break down walls between the formerly siloed work and therefore creating a more robust PHN.

This past year we offered many emergency preparedness training opportunities to our Medical Reserve Corps volunteers. We had our own training officer conduct various trainings via Zoom in order to accommodate the most amount of volunteers. Our topics included suicide prevention, fire safety, COVID/flu illness and exposure and risk management. We were able to provide a regional opportunity for a CERT class at a neighboring MRC to those interested. The state provided a fabulous opportunity for an in person volunteer conference to all MRC's; some of our volunteers took advantage of in June for the first time since COVID.

We have also had several new members processed through NHResponds. We continue to look at new opportunities for our volunteers to be active within our community that is not directly emergency need. In the coming year we hope to expand our CPR program and engage volunteers directly in the program to better assist the community.

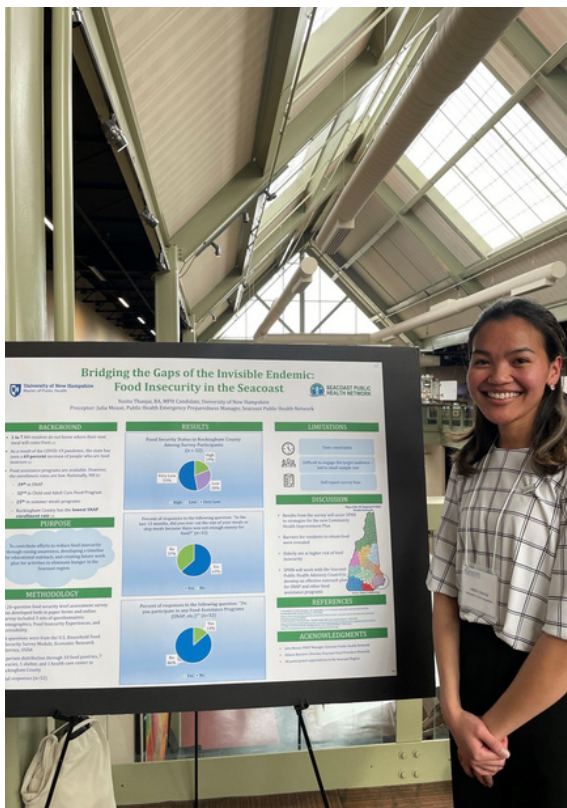
# FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

## SPHN Food Drive

Seacoast Public Health Network held our first food drive for two weeks in January and February. There were a total of **10** food drop off locations. All of them were libraries in the region and the drive was very successful! SPHN was able to donate over **190** pounds of food to Gather, a pantry in Portsmouth. SPHN also donated to nine more pantries in the Seacoast region. We look forward to hold another drive in the upcoming year.



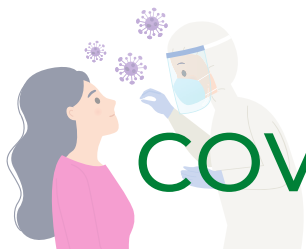
## Bridging the Gaps of the Invisible Endemic: Food Security in the Seacoast



One of Yosita's final classes of her MPH program was the Field Study, which is a class intended to provide students an opportunity to apply public health knowledge and standards in real world settings. SPHN was able to precept Yosita for this. The main objective of her project was to obtain data about food insecurity in the Seacoast region to use this a support in selection process of priorities for the next year's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). To do this, Yosita coordinated with local pantries that participated in the SPHN food drive earlier in the year to drop off copies of her surveys. She was able to get libraries in the area to engage, too!

On April 11th, 2023, our CHW Yosita presented her findings of the project at the New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) Membership Annual Meeting and was awarded the Best Student Poster!





# COVID-19 TESTS DISTRIBUTION

SPHN hand delivered **10,111** COVID kits and **510** masks to libraries, shelters, and food pantries during the 2022-2023 fiscal year! CHW Yosita and SMP Coordinator Samantha have established many connections along the way and are looking forward to continue keeping the Seacoast communities healthy and free of COVID-19.



1

Weeks Public Library



1

New Generation Shelter



1

Olive (Yosita's cat) loves to climb boxes of COVID tests!

# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Health Disparities Program Initiative Funding Opportunity

SPHN created a mini-grant program to get funding out to organizations in SPHN communities that provide activities and programs that address Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and COVID-19 prevention and mitigation. There were 7 recipients and those are **Raymond Coalition for Youth, Waypoint NH, Austin17, SoRock, The Newmarket Community Church Food Pantry, Gather, and Granite United Way.**

### Updates from Gather

Gather's mission is to offer innovative programs that build food security in welcoming and dignified ways in Greater Seacoast communities. With the support from SPHN, Gather's focus has been: 1) Expand the reach of Meals 4 Kids and Mobile Market program, 2) Strengthening the regional food system and 3) Continuing to remain vigilante in its COVID-19 mitigation efforts. The organization achieved this by

- Increasing the number of Mobile Market sites from **7 to 11** across the Seacoast. In total, the Mobile Market programs reached **6,195** individuals each month.
- Reaching more underserved individuals. Over **570,000** pounds of food were distributed to food insecure communities.
- Distributing **22,862** pounds of food to **623** school-age children and their families through the Meals 4 Kids program.
- Providing **400** COVID-19 test kits to residents at the Rochester, Seabrook, and Gosling Meadows mobile markets.



**gather**  
For a Hunger-free Community





# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from Granite United Way

Through the support from SPHN, Granite United Way was able to invest in building and expanding the Granite Youth Alliance (GYA) program as a part of the youth investment portfolio designed to increase youth capacity to create community change around substance misuse. GYA is a network of youth empowerment teams across the greater seacoast region. The students engage in a variety of prevention activities including education, policy change, community awareness and media activities.

In addition to ongoing activities throughout the school year each of the teams participated in the Granite Youth Film fest that was attended by over **200** community members. Ten (**10**) short films created by youth were showcased at the festivals held at two screenings on June 4th and 5th at O'Neil Cinema in Epping. Four films were created by Rockingham County teams,

### Film Festival Feedback:

- **100%** of students reported that they agree or strongly agree that the film festival allowed youth to have a voice on important issues.
- **97%** of students reported that they agree or strongly agree that the film festival allowed them to influence others on important issues related to alcohol or other drugs.

### General Program Feedback:

- **83%** of students reported that they had a chance to use any new Knowledge (such as an understanding about current drug use trends) gained from the program in settings outside GYA.
- **100%** of students reported that they agree or strongly agree that in the last 12 months they have engaged in specific activities designed to reduce alcohol or other drug abuse in their school or community.



# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from SoRock

SoRock's mission is to address mental health and substance misuse prevention initiatives in the community by providing physical resources and incentives to members as well as QR access to support Social Drivers of Health. The following projects/initiatives were completed with the support from the SPHN Mini Grant:

Senior Citizen Power Packs - **30** Senior Power Packs were distributed to the over **65** population of Kingston NH. Power packs included but not limited to:

- Reusable plastic resource bag
- Locking Rx Medication Box & Detera pouch
- Information on safe Rx storage and disposal
- The Complete Guide to Senior Health and Wellness
- 988 wallet card
- NH I Care rack cards / NH Rapid Response / 211 rack card



Stand By Me - The mission of this program is to inspire and develop self-esteem, empathy, communication, respect, and teamwork in grade 5 students as they begin the process of transition from elementary school to middle school. *Stand By Me* guides parents in ways to help their children make healthy, responsible choices.

# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from Newmarket Community Church Food Pantry

NCC Food Pantry's mission is to provide access to nutritious food to people in the greater community who experience food insecurity while building community, creating connection, enriching lives and community service opportunities.

With the funding from SPHN, the NCC Food Pantry was able to serve **3,116** individuals during the grant period (February - June 2023) and meet the needs of the residents of Newmarket and Newfields weekly by providing fresh and non-perishable food, personal hygiene products and basic home cleaning supplies. A summary of the individuals the pantry served follows:

- **54.08%** or 1,685 individuals were 19-59 years old
- **30.52%** or 951 individuals were 60+ years old
- **15.40%** or 480 individuals were 18 and younger

On June 26, 2023, Yosita and Samantha were invited to the Food Pantry Reopening & Ribbon Cutting ceremony!





# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from Raymond Coalition for Youth (RCFY)

RCFY's mission is to empower the community to promote positive youth development and reduce substance use and suicide risk.

RCFY Operation Raymond Clean Up Event is one of the longest and most successful engagement over the years. It is a community-wide clean up event, where everyone is encouraged to clean up their section, neighborhood, or favorite place of the town. The event is "kid-designed" by the Coalition's students and adult supported. There were **150** families and business members, **229** students, and **77** staff who participated!





# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from Austin17 House

Austin17 House provides after school mentorship and activities that support the local youth and adults through the development of positive life skills. Their goal is to always have an atmosphere of fun and self acceptance while creating friendships and building a strong community.

With the support from SPHN through the mini grant, Austin17 House has been able to establish a healthy infrastructure and ensure that funds are allocated to those in need, and ensure that the center is able to provide a safe place for families. The following are actions taken using the funding:

- The Family Scholarship
  - Provides the basic needs to address SDoH including gas cards to help with transportation costs, groceries, housing and other miscellaneous expenses, as well as communication needs such as cell phone cards and mailing costs. **5-10 youth and families** received grocery cards.
  - Combats homelessness and addiction. Austin17 used this funding to purchase and provide basic needs such as transportation services to treatment centers, as well as clothing, blankets, hygiene items, and food. **Five (5) youth and families, and 5 volunteers** received this help.
- Volunteer training
  - **45 volunteers** were trained on childhood grooming - what to look out for and how to take action.
  - **11 volunteers** attended a three-day Trauma Based Relationship Intervention Training.
- Purchase supplies
  - **15 families** received family style dinners and hygiene products.



# ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Updates from Waypoint at the Richie McFarland Center

Waypoint's mission is to empower people of all ages through an array of human services and advocacy. Waypoint programs and services include:

- Homeless Youth and Young Adult Services
- Family Preservation Programs
- Home Care of Seniors and Adults with Disabilities
- Early Childhood and Family Support Services



Waypoint is working to create a nature-based, outdoor classroom at the Stratham Family Resource Center. To date the design process and cost estimate has been completed as well as initial inspection work on trees and septic that may impact the work. Currently Waypoint is bidding out the work with a goal of breaking ground on this work July or August 2023. This timing is delayed from initial expectations so while we are hopeful work will be fully completed by Fall 2023, there is a possibility that work will extend. The timeline will be updated once a contractor starts.

Waypoint will utilize the outdoor classroom space to provide families with opportunities to learn, play and socialize while incorporating nature-based learning themes. This will provide another option for family focused programming, centered around encouraging families to be outside with their children. Waypoint supports families experiencing a range of stressors and social determinants to health. This includes families with children who have a developmental delay or disability, families living in poverty or with very low incomes, and at-risk families who are experiencing stress making it difficult to parent effectively.



# FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

## Building Resiliency in the Classroom

The Center for Trauma-Responsive Practice Change worked with Southern NH AHEC and the Seacoast Public Health Network to pilot the implementation of **The Miss Kendra Program** at a public school in Strafford County. With funds from Connections for Health, the Region 6 Integrated Delivery Network, the pilot program has a goal of helping schools prevent and address student exposure to adversity. The program focuses on supporting social-emotional learning and a trauma-informed approach to build resiliency for students in Kindergarten classrooms. It also provides educators with capacity building strategies to support student stress.

The Miss Kendra Program teaches children about their safety and how to take action when feeling unsafe. **Eighty-seven students in six kindergarten classes** participated in the pilot. Students participated in fourteen 40-minute lessons.

They had the opportunity to write three letters to Miss Kendra and also received three letters from Miss Kendra. Educators report that they observed a positive impact on student's behavior after the lesson 66.7% of the time, including observing increased empathy, more energy and engagement, and students who were calmer and more engaged.

Open responses from a weekly teacher survey indicate positive experiences with The Miss Kendra Program. A sample of comments include: "The students are eager to share their personal stories and seem to feel a great connection with [the Miss Kendra clinician], their teachers and classmates", "The compassion children have for each other when sharing big feelings is amazing".

Play-based stress reduction sessions help students with a need to process emotions individually. **Ninety (90)** play based sessions for **14 students** were provided during this pilot. Additional work on the pilot will continue into fall 2023.

Dear Miss Kendra,



My dad got arrested a long time ago. It's not my fault.

From: \_\_\_\_\_

# FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

## Greater Seacoast Early Childhood Initiatives

In 2016 Granite United Way (GUW) in the Greater Seacoast invested resources in Somersworth, which has resulted in real and lasting change in supporting early childhood interventions.

The focus area the Somersworth community identified was kindergarten readiness; with a goal of helping all children enter school ready to succeed. One of the core elements of their approach to supporting kindergarten readiness in Somersworth was to expand access to infant toddler playgroups. Creating programs that promote healthy development is essential to building a foundation for future success, especially since 80% of brain development happens within those first 3 years of life.

What started 7 years ago with a group of dedicated educators and community members in Somersworth has grown into a region-wide approach to expanding access to family playgroups in underserved communities. With resources brought into the state through the Preschool Development Grant administered through University of New Hampshire, GUW convened a Regional Leadership Team who conducted a regional needs assessment focused on families' access to support services. The assessment identified several communities across the region in which a relatively large number of families with young children were experiencing socio-economic barriers and had little geographic access to the Family Resource Centers or other related providers in the region. One of these communities was Seabrook.

The staff in the Greater Seacoast regional office as well as GUW leadership are excited for the opportunity to invest in the families and community members of Seabrook. Through the partnership with Families First, they have been able to invest Preschool Development Grant funds to support infant toddler playgroups that will be held through the Seabrook Recreation Department. They have also invested grant funds in early learning programming at the Seabrook elementary school including resources for families that promote healthy social and emotional development and mud kitchens for the school's preschool program, which promotes nature-based learning!



# COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

The following graphic outlines our public health priorities and goals and objectives for 2019-2023. SPHN staff continuously work on improving these health priorities in the Seacoast region.

The Seacoast Public Health Network will be working with the Public Health Advisory Committee on a new Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in the upcoming year.

## SPHN Community Health Improvement Plan

"The greatest wealth is health" Virgil

1

