

## **Healthy Hearts on the Hill Coalition Retreat Report**

**March 10, 2011**

The Healthy Hearts on the Hill (HHH) Coalition is a grass roots organization co-founded in 2007 by Koinonia Primary Care and the Center for Excellence in Aging Services and Community Wellness (CEACW) at the University at Albany. The HHH Coalition envisions a time when all of our neighbors in the West Hill, Arbor Hill and South End communities will have the means and access to live heart healthy lifestyles within and supported by the community.

The HHH Coalition consists of both public and private organizations as well as community advocates. In bringing together community members, service and healthcare providers, faith based organizations and community business owners; the Coalition seeks to address both the environmental and individual level mechanisms likely to support increased personal health and health care practices and to raise awareness of the risk and protective factors for optimal health. The Coalition is a great example of how a group of ordinary citizens can make a huge difference in their own neighborhoods, with just a small amount of public support.

The HHH retreat was organized to bring together current and new Coalition members to help refocus coalition activities and resources in 2011. Community partner organizations were also asked to invite community members who had a genuine interest in working with the Coalition and the ability to make a commitment to attend future meetings. Potential new partners were identified and invited to attend.

The work of the Retreat centered on the three focus pillars supporting the coalition's mission - Healthcare Access / Physical Activity / Nutrition.

- In an opening activity, participants introduced themselves to the other workgroup members, shared their interests in the coalitions work and identified resources available to support that work.
- Each participant self-selected to participate in discussions on one of these pillars during a break out/work group session.

Each work group discussed and reviewed previous coalition activities, achievements, and challenges before brainstorming how the Coalition could move forward within that pillar area in ways that would compliment and support work currently taking place in the West Hill, Arbor Hill and South End communities and increase the likelihood of impact.

Led by a convener and with notes taken by a scribe, each work group brainstormed around four questions:

- What are the most pressing needs in the West Hill Community (tailored to the group's agenda)
- What has the coalition achieved to date in addressing those needs
- Which specific needs (identify two) should the Coalition focus on in the year ahead and why

- What first steps are members of this group ready to undertake to advance meeting those needs
- A summary was then developed of each work group's activities.

## **I. Health Care Access**

This work group identified that the most pressing needs for the catchment area were

- increased availability of urgent care 24 hours a day and for the homeless,
- education on services and the value of wellness,
- increased provision of dental care.

Coalition achievements noted were conducting health fairs, uniting stakeholders, and educating on nutrition.

### **Top two issues identified:**

- 1) Education and advocacy, on available services, money, coverage, overall health and wellness, and self-sufficiency of clients
- 2) Collaboration and integration of stake holders by increasing communication

### **First steps Identified:**

- identifying a "Health Captain" or point person within the community
- creating a health care info number or "Health Care Watch"
- creating a community service/health care directory
- holding a human service fair in order to network, have face-to-face contact with the community, and keep information accurate and up-to-date
- spreading the word about the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP).

### **Action steps work group members would like to work on:**

- Koinonia to contract for additional social work services
- document demographics and needs of the community to support case for retention of health care services
- develop an advocacy group
- map local services
- have Health Managers within Coalition faith communities
- link clients with services

## **II. Physical Activity**

Some pressing needs in the community this work group identified were:

- jobs,
- housing,
- affordable health care.

Coalition achievements identified were the healthy spaces program, the community calendar, and the Biggest Winner contest.

**Top two issues identified:**

- 1) Education
- 2) Increasing the number of fitness locations/programs

**First steps identified and action steps work group members would like to work on:**

- market the existing healthy spaces and other safe accessible activity sites within the community
- utilize the County DoH, Trinity Alliance, community members and local churches to disseminate information
- utilize volunteers to train community members on physical activities
- Evaluate how to expand existing programs
- recreate or create material
- Use electronic media/email more to advertise programs and provide education
- Simplify the messages in educational materials

**III. Nutrition**

Pressing needs identified by the work group were

- readily accessible nutritious foods,
- more resources to make contact with local store owners and to support their offering of healthy alternatives.

Coalition achievements noted included providing access to nutritious foods at the Trinity Alliance and at food pantries, raising awareness about nutrition/healthy cooking through the Biggest Winner contest and development and distribution of the Community Calendar.

**Top two issues identified:**

- 1) Increasing access to nutritious foods
- 2) Building the infrastructure for this to happen

**First steps identified and action steps work group members would like to work on::**

- Distribute to the work group data on local stores recently collected by a work group member
- Develop a proposal for local store owners to become HHH certified if they carry at least
  - 1 whole grain bread, 2 fruits, 2 vegetables, and 1 low fat milk option
- Identify which work group members will contact which local store
- Create a directory of “HHH certified locations” and food pantries (w/catchment area indicated)

- Create a HHH logo sticker for HHH certified stores to stick on their window
- Identify coalition partners willing to market HHH certified stores

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

Each workgroup identified several pressing needs/issues facing the communities of West Hill, Arbor Hill, and the South End, established some priorities and determined tangible next steps to take. Both new and current Coalition members expressed feeling re-energized by the retreat activities and expressed their interest in and determination to work on the next steps identified for the three workgroups and for the Coalition as a whole. To begin the process of moving forward with the 2011 Agenda established at the Retreat

- Three permanent work groups will be created to represent each of the coalitions pillars
- Leaders will be identified for each work group at the next Coalition meeting
- Break-out group meetings will be added to the agenda of each monthly Coalition meeting

Healthy Hearts on the Hill Community Coalition

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