

2016 Community Health Leadership Award – Nomination

Nominator Name: Eric Moll, Chief Executive Officer
Organization Being Nominated: Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics
Name of Program: Healthy Children
Program Contact: Eileen Branscome, COO & Lauri Bolton, VP of Human Resources

Program Description:

A disproportionate number of children in our county live in poverty (24% in Mason County versus the State average of 18%). The three programs launched under the Healthy Children initiative have resulted in preserving access to free physical recreation (community pool), developing life skills around nutrition (Hope Garden), and improving education and career opportunities (Health Science Academy).

Mason General Hospital (MGH) has partnered with the Shelton School District on the Healthy Children initiative resulting in two program successes: HOPE Garden and Community Pool. This initiative has also laid the groundwork for a third collaboration, which is the Health Science Academy. This partnership has allowed MGH to become more active in improving overall population health, and providing better access to health for all members of our community, which is especially critical and challenging in a rural environment with a high rate of poverty.

HOPE Garden works with CHOICE High School students to cultivate a community garden while teaching employment skills, nutrition, cooking, and other life skills. Jayne Rossman, HOPE Garden program director, commented that “HOPE staff provides a supportive environment for students who often don’t have that support elsewhere in their lives.” She also added that, “The students have been working very hard for the past six months to transform a very rocky piece of land – allocated from Mason General Hospital – into a bountiful, beautiful, fruit and vegetable garden.” MGH has provided land, volunteers, and financial support to help HOPE Garden become a positive beacon for “at risk” students. It has a dual role as a healing garden for patients and family members.

In 2014, the community pool, opened in 1972, was in need of extensive immediate repair, and the School District board, lacking the funds to address the immediate capital improvement needs, had voted to close the pool. MGH stepped in to lead a community effort to raise funds to keep the pool open, and transition to a new sustainable model for the pool as a critical community resource to maintain access for health benefits. With the needed repairs, the Shelton High School pool facility now will continue to provide our community and student population with diverse educational, athletic, recreational, health, fitness and wellness opportunities in the short term.

This pool provides many of the Public Hospital Districts’ patients who have health issues a low impact exercise option- no other alternative exist in Mason County. Some of the ailments these patients have are fibromyalgia, suffering from pain in the back, knees, hips and shoulders.

The governing boards for Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics and Shelton School District met in a combined session on April 12, 2016 to approve a joint operating agreement to establish a Health Science Academy at the Shelton High School. The purpose of this new collaborative effort is to connect students with Mason County's leading healthcare employer – Mason General Hospital & Family of Clinics. This partnership directly supports Graduation Matters-Shelton in terms of enhancing the instructional program not only at Shelton High School but throughout the K-12 system. This unique partnership will motivate students to pursue further education toward careers in medical/healthcare science. Through a rigorous specialized curriculum and community based partnership, students will be inspired to serve society with compassion, skill and vision.

The goals of the Health Science Academy include:

- Exposing students to a variety of healthcare careers.
- Increasing the number of Shelton School District students who choose a healthcare career by creating linkages to educational opportunities and real-life experiences.
- Enhancing instructional programs by creating strong alignment between current school curriculums and the health, science, and technology needs of the future.
- Employing qualified Academy graduates at MGH&FC.

Population Served:

This initiative impacts 11,700 children under age 18 in Mason County.

Goal and Measure of Success:

The goals for the Healthy Children initiative relate to our Community Health Needs Assessment. Based on county health ranking data, we targeted population health metrics related to mental health and obesity seeking a 10% improvement.

Health Outcome 2014 2016
Poor mental health days 4.4 3.8
Access to exercise opportunities 62% 68%

An additional goal was increasing utilization of the community pool both by children and overall.

Community Pool Visits 2014 2016 % Improvement
Students 2,286 3,268 43%
Overall 9,363 10,424 11%

We believe the increase in community pool utilization correlates to the improvement in the above county health ranking "Access to exercise opportunities".

How did the nominee identify the community's health need, for example, did you use the community health needs assessment?

Our Community Health Needs Assessments has goals for improving mental health and decreasing obesity. Both the Community Pool and HOPE Garden were specific actions tied to these goals.

Describe how community partners were involved:

HOPE Garden is supported by several local organizations in addition to MGH&FC. Other community supporters include Mason Matters, St. David of Wales Episcopal Church, Green Diamond Resource Company, Skookum Rotary, Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, and the Federal SNAP-Ed program.

As mentioned earlier, Shelton School District has been a close working partner in planning and executing these programs around the Healthy Children initiative.

Was the Board of Trustees or the Board of Commissioners involved in the program?

Yes! Our board met several times with the Shelton School District Board to develop and approve an interlocal agreement for joint operations of a community pool and the Health Science Academy. One of our commissioners, Nancy Trucksess, has been on the advisory board for the HOPE Garden. Our Board president, Scott Hilburn, was the MGH liaison to community fund raising committee (SPLASH) for the community pool.

Did you use data in benchmarking and goal setting? If you didn't use data, how did you evaluate effectiveness? Please describe.

We used County Health Rankings performed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We used 2014 County performance as our baseline for tracking improvement. We targeted making a 10% over two years, which was achieved.

How did this project help to advance the cause of Equity of Care in Washington State?

As stated under "program description", a disproportionate number of children in our county live in poverty (24% in Mason County versus the State average of 18%). The three programs launched under the Healthy Children initiative have resulted in preserving access to free physical recreation (community pool), developing life skills around nutrition (Hope Garden), and improving education and career opportunities (Health Science Academy).

What results are you seeing? What difference has this program made in the community?

Beyond the numbers articulated above, Healthy Children has served as a catalyst for change inspiring others in the community to work together to create positive change. For example, the \$50,000 that Mason General Hospital contributed to the capital improvements for the community pool was matched by the community raising an additional \$120,000. The Health Science Academy is changing how school district staff are approaching curriculum development, and how students view the importance of graduation and their future.

Has this program been award or recognized by others?

In May, MGH received a Certificate of Merit from the Washington Association of School Administrators for our collaboration with the Shelton School District on the Community Pool.

Who else was involved in making this successful?

Alex Apostle, Shelton School District Superintendent

Anything else you want to add about this program?

We are using the collaboration with the School District as inspiration from reimagining how we partner with organizations in our community to serve other populations in our community.