

SUCCESS  
STORIES



2023  
2024

# Healthy Horizons





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## **SKOWHEGAN STUDENTS ASSESS "RICK'S RISK" AS PART OF iPOWER**

Substance Use Prevention, Maine Prevention Network

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## **HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND MAINE QUITLINK: A QUITTING TEAM**

Tobacco Use Prevention, Maine Prevention Network

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## **FROM SEED TO TABLE WITH SOMERSET COUNTY JAIL & MADISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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## **PATIENT NAVIGATION HELPS CHART THE PATHWAY TO RECOVERY**

Substance Use Disorder Patient Navigation

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# SKOWHEGAN STUDENTS ASSESS "RICK'S RISK" AS PART OF iPOWER

## Over 400 Students Participate in Prevention Education

### The Why

Over 30% of middle school students in Somerset County feel there is slight or no risk in having one or two drinks of alcohol nearly every day, according to the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey.

Research from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration shows that a youth's perception of the risks associated with substance influences whether youth engage in substance use. For many schools, helping students learn the risks associated with substance use is just one of many priorities.

Even though it is well documented that one of the most effective strategies for substance use prevention is school-based prevention programming, especially when it includes skills training in critical thinking and problem-solving, schools may not have the capacity to focus on it.

### The Approach

We offered substance use prevention programming to Skowhegan Area Middle School students as a part of the school's iPOWER (Public Outreach With Educational Responsibilities) program.

Using engaging questions and discussion, Our educators, Sean and Shaleigh, presented "Rick's Risk," a skills-based SEL4ME module that helps students identify different types of risks in different situations. Open discussions allowed students to hear their peers voice opinions about the why certain risks feel healthy or unhealthy. These discussions were especially relevant to substance use prevention in one scenario where the main character, Rick, feels pressured to use alcohol.



### The Results

Over 400 SAMS students received our substance use prevention education. We also led a parent education night providing adults practical skills in talking with youth about substance use. While no formal evaluation process was in place, SAMS felt the program was successful and intends to keep SPH involved in their annual iPOWER programming.

Moving forward, both parties plan to develop a survey that can be administered in the future and are exploring ways to engage students in more meaningful prevention activities. In lieu of evaluation results, SAMS School Counselor, Matt Bigelow shared his thoughts. **"Our experience with Sean and Shaleigh has been outstanding. Their passion for teaching and genuine care for our SAMS students and community members make them the most awesome duo ever!"**

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Prevention efforts supported by  
the Maine CDC

# HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND MAINE QUITLINK: A QUITTING TEAM

## RFGH Staff Learn Maine QuitLink Referral Process

### The Why

Over 17% of adults in Somerset County smoke, according to Somerset County Health Profile 2021 data.

Experts at the Center On Rural Addiction (CORA) say doctors play a vital role in treating Tobacco Use Disorder as the potentially terminal illness that it is. One of those experts, Dr. Eli Kemplerer, says the "Gold Star" practice is for health care providers to include a referral to a quit line along with nicotine replacement therapy or medication when meeting with patients and discussing their health care plans.

People who access quitting services along with the use of nicotine replacement therapy have a 40% success rate. Compare that to quitting cold turkey, which has a success rate of 4%.

### The Approach

With cooperation of practice managers, providers, and the education department within Redington-Fairview General Hospital, we trained 10 doctors and 12 nurses and medical assistants. The trainings highlighted the Maine Quit Link's services, how to make a referral digitally or by fax, and the "Gold Star" practice for making a referral.

The Maine Quit Link provides free coaching sessions, nicotine patches, gum and lozenges, and many tools to help people quit smoking, chewing and vaping. However, many smokers do not know about the Quit Link, and doctors may not be aware of improvements and updates that have been made to the program.



### The Results

Currently, there is no way for a health care team to easily indicate if a referral to the Maine Quit Link has been made by a provider or their team.

However, thanks to collaboration with Michele Vigue, a practice manager for five RFGH practices, changes will be made to the current electronic health record so that referrals to the Quit Link can be tracked.

With this information, we can evaluate our work and adjust as needed to connect as many people to the Maine Quit Link as possible and improve the lives of our citizens.

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# From Seed to Table with Somerset County Jail & Madison Elementary School

## Cultivating Farm to Institution

### The Why

Data from the 2019 Somerset Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) report food insecurity in Somerset County climbing to 17%, with the state average at 12.4%.

The 2021 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) report 62% of Somerset County students report eating less than one vegetable per day.

School wellness policies have strong language for nutrition standards supporting access to locally grown food, but procuring affordable locally grown food in school nutrition is often a challenge.



### The Approach

Students at Madison Elementary School (MES) planted squash and eggplant seeds in early Spring. They watched their seedlings grow, while learning the importance of eating healthy through both Maine SNAP Educators and Boston Children's Hospital's fit kit nutrition lessons.

In early June, the seedlings were transported to the Somerset Jail where inmates grew the vegetables in 26 raised beds created with support from the Move More Kids Program.

Vegetables were harvested, prepared fresh and frozen, and delivered back to the school by Officers Travis Andrews and Kevin Lombard. Somerset County Jail staff reflected on the partnership and program:

“The gardening program allows the inmates to work outside in the garden for 1.5 hours per day. The whole time they were outside, they had no stress. They were smiling and were happy the whole time they were working in the garden.”

### The Results

Over 50lbs of frozen squash and eggplant were delivered to Madison Elementary School, which will result in locally grown vegetables going into over 2,000 meals this school year.

School nutrition manager Kelly Williams has included squash and eggplant into her pizza sauce, spaghetti and pasta recipes.

Future plans include: increasing the growing time by installing a 10' X 20' greenhouse at the jail, and adding a second school district to the partnership.

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# Momentum in Movement: MMK's Impact in Student Health

## 100 Mile Club Students Double Their Miles and Smiles

### The Why

Move More Kids (MMK) aimed to enhance physical activity and health education among students, addressing the need for engaging, hands-on learning experiences in health and wellness with our two programs 100 Mile Club and Boston Children's Hospital's fit kit.

With rising concerns about student health and inactivity, MMK's goal was to make a meaningful impact by expanding our reach and providing a more interactive learning experience.

### The Approach

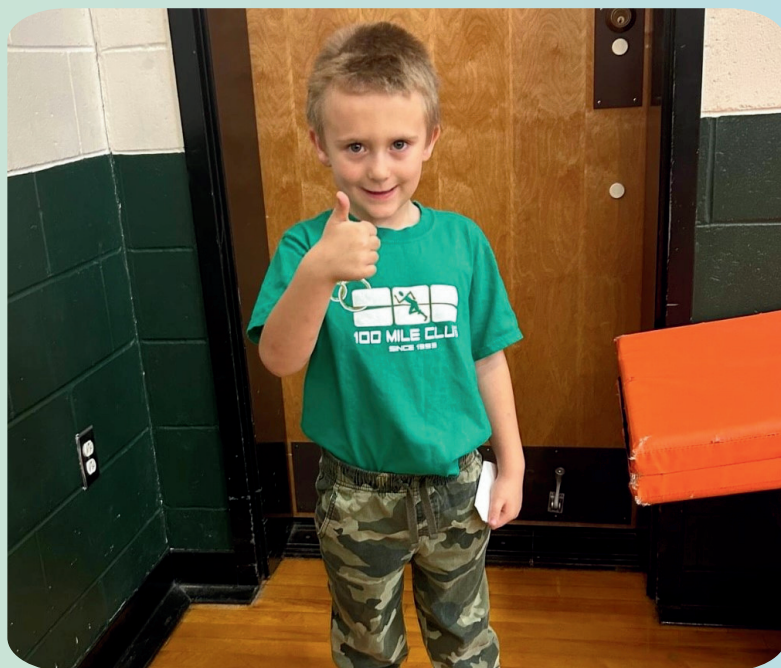
This year, we saw remarkable growth and innovation in the fit kit program. A total of 2,184 students participated, marking an increase of 619 from last year.

We delivered 9,828 lessons both in-person and virtually. The MMK team played a crucial role, conducting in-person lessons for 695 students in grades 3-9. They introduced new, interactive activities to each lesson, offering students hands-on experiences in all modules.

Virtual lessons further extended our reach, with 1,489 students engaging independently through their teachers.

Collaboration with Boston Children's Hospital allowed us to focus on a sample of 202 students, who collectively attended 1,423.1 total hours of fit kit programming.

Additionally, the 100 Mile Club saw impressive participation, with 2,943 students logging a combined total of 227,698 miles—nearly doubling last year's mileage.



### The Results

The results were outstanding. The fit kit program's increased participation and the introduction of new activities significantly enhanced student engagement and learning.

The substantial rise in both in-person and virtual lesson completion, coupled with the extensive involvement in the 100 Mile Club, demonstrates the program's success in promoting physical activity and health education.

Our efforts with fit kit and 100 Mile Club programs provided valuable insights and further validated the program's impact, making this year's achievements a testament to the program's effectiveness and reach.

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# ADDRESSING THE MEAL GAP IN SOMERSET COUNTY

## Somerset Public Health Leadership Feeds Results

### The Why

The Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) brought to our attention their Somerset County Meal Gap Report from 2022, emphasizing the urgent need to address food insecurity in our county in a variety of communities.

Somerset County ranked one of the highest counties in Maine for food insecurity. Data indicated that areas such as The Forks and Caratunk needed 451 lbs. of additional food to make the communities food secure.

With a significant portion of the population lacking consistent access to nutritious meals, GSFB and Somerset Public Health collaborated to reduce the meal gap.

### The Approach

To achieve this, Somerset Public Health and GSFB recognized that a partnership was essential for creating sustainable solutions. Our Maine SNAP-Ed Educator Cheryl met with GSFB to target specific sites and identify resources needed.

Cheryl meets regularly with Somerset County Pantry Directors and Bruce Bottiglierie: Director of the Winslow Community Food Mobile, allowing her to connect the resources with the needs in the county. They identified funding needed for three specific projects.

- Solon Community Food Cupboard was in need of a new and larger space to qualify them as a GSFB partner.
- Upper Valley High School in Bingham was in need of non-perishable food storage for serving their community and
- Winslow Community Food Mobile was in need of a new forklift and two additional refrigerated trailers to continue serving Somerset County towns.



### The Results

GSFB provided funding to two out of the three projects.

- Solon Community Food Cupboard was awarded \$120,000, and is in the process of purchasing the former Solon Superette as their new Food Cupboard location.
- Winslow Community Food Mobile received the funding to purchase the equipment needed and has been able to serve food to 21,172 people in Somerset County so far this year.

We will be continuing our partnership with GSFB and working towards closing those meal gaps.

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# SHOWING UP IS THE FIRST STEP IN SUPPORTING RECOVERY

## Bringing Hope, One Interaction at a Time

### The Why

In Somerset County from October 20, 2022, to October 29, 2023, there were 174 calls requesting assistance for substance use and addiction, according to 211 Maine, the statewide resource for help.

Addressing trauma and building resilience are strategies vital to alleviate the effects of an entrenched culture of substance use in communities. Creating a resilient community starts with showing up and being present. It continues with people making connections with one another and with organizations with the goal of challenging systems thinking and transforming the community to what its members need.

Through our Pathways to Recovery, 1st Response to Recovery work, we are showing up for the residents in Bingham.

### The Approach

One way to develop resilience is to increase connection and engagement between youth and families within the community. SPH has been trained in trauma informed strategies and understands that developing resilience in community members is effective in mitigating trauma.

To that end, SPH established a Community Connection Center, a place where people can go locally for resources and connect with people. We implemented the first annual Bingpendous Family Fun event, which brought in money for the local food pantry through Darlings Ice Cream for a Cause, and we participated in the Bingham Day Kids Day event.



### The Results

Through relationships and being present, at the community level, Betsy helped coordinate a new support group in Bingham for Parents of Addicted Loved One's (PAL's), supporting the community with an identified need.

At the individual level, during the Kids Day event in Bingham, a gentleman inquired casually about accessing treatment for his substance use. Betsy met him where he was by providing him with information that met his needs. A few days later, when Betsy was sending him additional resources and checking in on him, he let her know he was standing outside the treatment center and thanked her for helping him.

When you show up for people, or for communities, in a non-judgmental way, things can happen that can support them in sustainable ways.

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# Transforming Discipline: MSAD #54's Alternative to Suspension Program

## 23 Students Discover Their Healthy Futures

### The Why

MSAD #54, like many other school districts, has faced a growing challenge: a significant increase in substance use policy violations, particularly related to vaping nicotine.

Traditional disciplinary measures, such as suspensions, are counterproductive. Research shows that suspended students are at higher risk for academic setbacks, including not graduating on time, repeating grades, dropping out, or becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Moreover, these punitive approaches disproportionately affect students of color, those receiving special education services, students from low-income families, LGBTQ+ students, and male students.

Recognizing these challenges, MSAD #54 aims to implement a comprehensive, supportive approach that keeps students engaged in their education.

### The Approach

SPH worked with MSAD #54 to provide Stanford University's *Our Healthy Futures* for students who were caught with tobacco products. The program teaches students the risks and health effects of tobacco while teaching coping skills and strategies for quitting.

Teaming up with the Center for Tobacco Independence, students are also offered one-on-one treatment, recognizing that most young people who vape want to quit but may need personalized assistance.

This approach creates a supportive environment that encourages students to quit using tobacco rather than punishing them, acknowledging that young people have been unfairly targeted by tobacco industry marketing tactics.



### The Results

In the first year of implementation, the program served 23 students with impressive results:

- Fewer lost school days,
- Improved student engagement,
- Increased community connections, and an
- Increase in understanding of the impact of substance use, coping skills, triggers, and resources/supports

This success demonstrates how supportive, education-focused approaches to reducing policy violations can positively impact students' long-term well-being and academic success.

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# PATIENT NAVIGATION HELPS CHART THE PATHWAY TO RECOVERY

## Patient-Centered Support Opens Treatment Options

### The Why

Substance Use Disorder is a complicated disease that effects every facet of life and it takes a comprehensive care team to help someone get well.

Many Mainers feel they can do it on their own if they want it enough. This is not true. It takes a network of people, and a long timeline.

The SUD care continuum is fragmented and difficult to navigate. A recovery journey will include a network of people and supports.

### The Approach

The Patient Navigator for Substance Use Disorders uses a patient-centered approach to help individuals navigate complex systems.

In May 2024, a patient with a lifelong history of alcohol use was referred to the RFGH Bridge Clinic by his primary care provider.

After a discussion with the Patient Navigator about his goals and past experiences, he decided to pursue a 30-day rehabilitation program.

However, due to his insurance, finding a suitable program was challenging. Together, they contacted navigation groups, his insurance company, and rehab centers across the northeast. They found a program, but the patient needed to complete an application and a 3-5 day detox first.

His case manager assisted with the paperwork, and in July, the patient detoxed at a hospital in Augusta. Afterward, the care team coordinated his transfer to rehab, and a non-profit provided free transportation.

The patient completed rehab and returned home, continuing his care for the first time with the support needed to navigate the treatment system.



### The Results

Through this collaborative work, community members are able to understand their treatment options across the continuum of Substance Use Disorder care, and are able to access that care.

Practicing interdepartmental and inter-organizational collaboration helps everyone involved to become more aware of the resources that are available.

The patient's case worker said, **"I've never heard of so many resources!"** Most importantly, the patient now has a network of healthy, supportive people who are able to help him with ongoing challenges.

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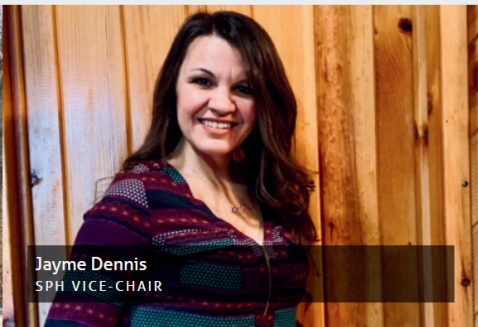




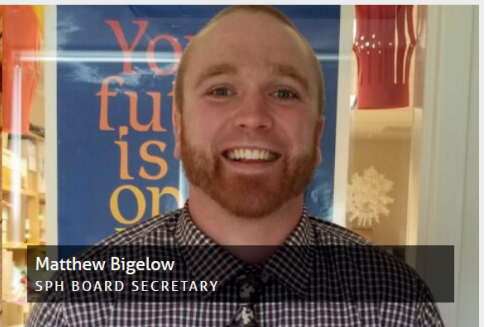
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