

The Evolution of a High Functioning, Shared Approach to Health Improvement

In 1988 Carroll Hospital Center (CHC), then called Carroll County General Hospital, and the Carroll County Health Department (CCHD) began to work collaboratively on community health education goals. Those critically important early joint efforts became the foundation for a unique and highly productive organization which is incorporated as The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County, Inc.

The story of this organizational leadership collaborative and yet community-led effort is worth sharing. The shared “Healthier Community” vision which emerged has stood the test of time, has demonstrated a remarkable ability to be ahead of trends and has resulted in transformative health and health care improvements in the Carroll County, Maryland community.

In the early 1990’s nationwide, community mapping and “healthy cities and communities” efforts were gaining momentum. By the mid 1990’s other Maryland Hospitals in the region, and both the State and other local health departments like those in Carroll County were similarly beginning to try to align their outreach efforts with validated needs obtained via community assessment projects; and beginning to work collaboratively toward those goals. Around that time, Carroll Hospital Center and a group of eight other regional hospitals were looking at opportunities to pool purchasing powers or other shared efforts which would produce cost savings and improve care quality. They were loosely formed as the *Atlantic Alliance* and included Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, UMMS- Baltimore, St. Joseph, Sinai, Calvert Memorial, Upper Chesapeake, Anne Arundel Medical Center; Union Hospital of Cecil County. Their first joint venture was to conduct a regional population health-focused assessment.

The Atlantic Alliance hospitals and their health department partners launched a variety of community forums to initiate community awareness and involvement (*Healthy Harford* and *Healthy Charles* were forming and there were other hospital-health department joint efforts underway in Washington and Allegany Counties too). In Carroll County, that launch event was held at Westminster High School, and announced the formation of a 44 person Steering Committee to lead the local Community Health Assessment Project (CHAP) and the engagement of the Holleran, Inc. company of York Pennsylvania to implement household surveys with core questions common across the different communities and tailored questions to address specific community needs. With the Steering Committee, Holleran also led focus groups, conducted secondary data analysis to identify health needs and priorities and completed key informant interviews in each of the Atlantic Alliance hospital areas. A team comprised of key CCHD and CHC staff provided critically needed support and organization to the CHAP; nurtured long lasting commitment from the steering committee members and ultimately built the framework that became the cornerstone of The Partnership organization.

The goal of the CHAP was to assess and improve the health of the whole population in Carroll County and not just the uninsured, given the volume of poor health indicators across all groups. After the year-long assessment concluded the steering committee leadership had reviewed all the multi-data sets and identified key priorities for action. Significantly, the steering committee members did not want to dissolve their leadership role. However, they recognized that the expert leadership and strength of the

two lead health and Health Care agencies would be critical for sustained success. The Carroll County Health Officer and the President and CEO of Carroll Hospital Center were interested and the creation of a stand-alone private non-profit corporation which would be community-led but supported by both Carroll Hospital Center and the Carroll County Health Department became the proposed model. The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County was incorporated in 1999. An early decision that proved insightful was a commitment that The Partnership would not be a direct service provider.

The Partnership governance began as health sector dominated but has grown to include Carroll Hospital Center leaders, Carroll County Health Department senior staff, local government representatives, colleges, local k-12 public and private schools senior administrative representatives, providers, law enforcement, a community pharmacist and others. The hospital is the authorized corporate member providing a majority of cash and in kind contributions including executive leadership staff, corporate office space, accounting service, telecommunications support and more. CCHD contributes essential public health staff assistance, access to data resources, extensive community health improvement and health promotion systems and linkages to state-wide and county specific opportunities. Competitive grant awards secured by The Partnership and our varied partners assist with operational funding. Check out The Partnership's early story recounted in a short video located on our website at www.HealthyCarroll.org/howeare/video.html

Because of the leadership and support of CHC and CCHD, The Partnership's Board of Directors can focus on planning to accomplish impact and results in the need areas. This model has helped The Partnership recruit Board members from the cross-section of leaders needed to integrate action strategies at the policy, leadership and results levels ---to foster results focused partnerships. The organization has adopted the highest standards of governance excellence expected of a high functioning private non-profit organization driven by clear and accountable Bylaws and corporate values.

The Partnership has evolved in several ways. It has grown in focused alignment of activities around strategic goals – rather than “following the money” as so often is the case. The agency staff and leaders encourage actions that “move the indicators” often accomplished by concentration on gaps in services. Finally, The Partnership has relationships with individuals and organizations throughout our community – and these are not provider-patient based relationships.

In October 2011 The Partnership Board of Directors voted unanimously to lead another Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for Carroll Hospital Center in compliance with elements of the 2010 Affordable Care Act. Also in October of 2011 The Partnership's Board voted to serve as the Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) for Carroll County responsible for the development and implementation of a Local Health Improvement Plan (LHIP) that meets the requirements as proposed in the State Health Improvement Process(SHIP). In September 2012, The Partnership led a community-hospital-Health Department interactive review of all the data results from both the S.H.I.P and the C.H.N.A. resulting in a *Community Benefit and Health Improvement Plan* which after approval by the governance of CHC and The Partnership, will serve as a major part of each agency's corporate strategic plans.

Highlights of Some Community Health Improvement Actions

Access Carroll – Members of The Partnership’s Access to Healthcare Leadership team determined a portfolio approach to care access would be needed to get low-income uninsured adults better access to good primary care and specialty services. Building on a small primary clinic that had emerged inside CCHD, Access Carroll was established by the founding organizations of CCHD, CHC and The Partnership in 2005. They recently opened services in a new facility expanding space from 2500 square feet to 15,000 square feet and welcomed a new major partner in this access vision as the full space is being provided at no charge to Access Carroll by our county government. Primary care services include integrated behavioral health services and involvement of specialty providers are provided pro bono or at very low cost or sometimes total cost is absorbed by Access Carroll. Incredible pharmaceutical assistance (over \$1,000,000 worth in FY 2012) is harnessed by Access Carroll staff via the PAP programs at most major pharmaceutical suppliers. A dental service for adults is coming on line in April 2013 with generous support from the Weinberg Foundation. Visit www.accesscarroll.org for more information.

L.E.A.N. Carroll-It’s Crunch Time and Farm to School- Members of The Partnership’s Prevention and Wellness Leadership Team determined that unhealthy family weights, nutritional trends and a lack of exercise were a major health risk in our community. Tapping into an initiative launched by the Kaiser Permanente foundation, The Partnership implemented major actions to change school policies, change parents lunch-packing habits, change kids inclusion of fruits and vegetables, change snacks stocked in school vending machines and change utilization of local produce in school cafeterias. A two year effort saw significant results. Sustainability and a new emphasis on selecting less of the sugary based drinks by children and teens is a hope for the future.

Fuller utilization of available resources for diverse health assistance— The Partnership is participating in the development of a “Physician Hospital Organization (PHO)”. Seventy physicians, 25% of Carroll County community providers, are now participants in this affiliation of the hospital and physicians. PHO participants are using a common Electronic Health Record and common health protocols. They also have access to a shared patient outcome learning environment.

The fourth edition of our “Substance Abuse and Mental Health Resource Directory for Carroll County” was published this year and is another example of efforts to maximize use of available local resources. With printing expenses underwritten by the CCHD Prevention and Recovery Support Bureau, distribution of this very comprehensive guide resulted in a copy in EVERY police cruiser throughout the county; in every guidance counselor office; in every faith community office and more.

Lessons for Other Local Health Improvement Coalitions

Joint planning is a great foundation for collective action. Hospitals and Health Departments that can do joint community health needs assessments will find other activities to productively work together.

Staffing

Employees of Carroll Hospital Center, the Carroll County Health Department, and staff employed directly by The Partnership operate together in a highly cooperative work environment. Similarly they each have other opportunities for influence within their own agencies. That influence is proportionately engaging their organizations in this shared work.

The people listed below, whatever their "home" organization, are trusted, knowledgeable members of The Partnership's staff who support the work of the corporation, the Leadership Teams, and the Action Teams.

Dorothy Fox

Executive Director & CEO

410-871-6373

Dlfox@CarrollHospitalCenter.org

Becky Herman

Grants Manager

410-871-6372

Rherman@CarrollHospitalCenter.org

Kimberly Arthur

Executive Assistant

410-871-7249

Karthur@CarrollHospitalCenter.org

Jayne Levy

Community Health Improvement
and Event Specialist

410-871-7648

JMlevy@CarrollHospitalCenter.org

Carol Ann Bauman

Community Health Improvement
Specialist - Heart Health

410-876-4958

Carol.bauman@Maryland.gov

Bethaney Myers

Community Health Improvement
Specialist - Behavioral Health

410-871-7268

BAMyers@carrollhospitalcenter.org

Karen Davis

Administrative Coordinator

410-871-7442

Kdavis@CarrollHospitalCenter.org

Barbara Rodgers

Community Health Improvement
Specialist - Access to Health Care
Director of Community Health Promotion,
Carroll County Health Department

443-375-7286

Barbara.rodgers@Maryland.gov

Darlene Flaherty

Community Health Improvement Specialist –
Elder Health/Prevention and Wellness
Director of Nutrition Services, Carroll County
Health Department

410-876-4981

Darlene.flaherty@Maryland.gov

Original draft by Dr. Madeline Shea
Revised draft by Barbara Rodgers
Final document (pdf) by Patricia Supik