

Legacy *Matters*



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Smart Investment: Preventive Healthcare

Our nonprofits address Valley problems & solutions



Winners of the VITAHLS Cook-Off held May 19th at Molto Bene restaurant in Ansonia, with Dr. David Katz of Yale-Griffin PRC and guest Emcee Chef Neil Fuentes



Students at Shelton High School raised more than \$3,000 for The Valley Goes Pink 2013 campaign, to benefit The Hewitt Center for Breast Wellness

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. – Benjamin Franklin

Nonprofits serving the Valley are putting those words into action, educating residents in our community about the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle, and striving to prevent chronic conditions down the road.

It starts early with the Valley Initiative to Advance Health & Learning in Schools (VITAHLS), a collaboration of Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (PRC), Griffin Hospital and Valley School Districts. VITAHLS is implementing school-based nutrition and exercise programs with a goal to reduce the prevalence of obesity among students in Pre-K through 12th grade.

“It’s one of our core research initiatives,” says Beth Comerford, Deputy Director of Yale-Griffin PRC. “It’s largely obesity prevention, but through that you reach several chronic diseases – hypertension, heart disease, diabetes - and their prevention.”

Going into its fourth year, the VITAHLS Initiative features programs like “Nutrition Detectives” and “ABC (Activity Bursts in the Classroom) for Fitness®” in elementary schools.

“We’re focused on getting that 30 minutes of activity every day,” says Amy Shields, Public Health Specialist at Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD), one of the key partners in implementing VITAHLS. She says the emphasis has been on elementary students, but the plan is to do more in secondary schools. A successful first step was the Healthy Cooking Challenge among 6th grade students this past school year (*photo on cover*), that featured a final Cook-Off with Chef Neil Fuentes.

Education is the basis of preventive health, and the Valley Parish Nurses play an important role in making sure residents have the knowledge to live a healthy lifestyle.

“They act as health educators,” explains Daun Barrett, Director of Community Outreach and Parish Nursing at Griffin. About 75 nurses volunteer their time through 30 churches in the Valley. “They link people to all the services they may need.”

Free community screenings, for blood pressure, cholesterol and skin cancer, open the door to conversations about overall health, says Barrett. The screenings, made possible with funding from organizations like the VCF and Matthies and Hewitt Foundations, give nurses a chance to learn more about residents

and provide them with information and referrals to other health services.

The Valley Women’s Health Initiative encourages women to get mammograms and provides free services to those without insurance or the ability to pay. The unfortunate reality is that one in eight women will get breast cancer at some time in their life, and may need support.

The Valley Goes Pink is a grass-roots effort to raise awareness about breast health and early detection. What started as a week-long campaign in October of 2010 has now grown into a month-long “Pink Party.”

“We invite people all over the Valley to do their own events and donate the proceeds to the The Hewitt Center for Breast Wellness (at Griffin Hospital),” explains Connie Evans, Executive Director of Griffin Hospital’s Development Fund. She helps businesses and groups in the community publicize their events, which raised about \$60,000 last year. “The best part about it is the younger generation learning about philanthropy; they take the vision and grow it and they get to see where it’s going.”

Seymour Pink has turned raising awareness, funding research and providing support for breast cancer patients and families in the Valley into a year-round effort. President and Founder, Mary Deming says there was a need in the Valley that was bigger than she realized.

So big, in fact, that Seymour Pink will open a store in September at 3 Franklin Street. Residents can buy apparel, like the Annual Seymour Pink Day T-shirt, to support the efforts of the organization. Valley residents currently receiving breast cancer treatment can pick up financial assistance applications at the store, as well.

It’s not only about women’s health. The Health Initiative for Men (HiM) is raising awareness about men’s health issues (*see article next page*).

There are many more preventive health resources in the Valley. including dental clinics, a chronic disease management program and a coalition focused on maternal health and women’s reproductive services in the Valley, led by NVHD.

Let’s not forget our natural resources. There are miles of riverfront trails and community paths for walking and biking. Rivers provide opportunities for fishing, boating and kayaking.

Good nutrition, regular exercise and healthy lifestyle choices can help reduce the risks of obesity and illness for everyone.

What you can do:

Get Active! -

At least 30 minutes of daily activity is recommended for adults. Yale-Griffin PRC has created a program for adults, “Activity Bursts Everywhere (ABE) for Fitness®” available at www.abeforfitness.com.

Visit www.hvatoday.org for a *Welcome to the Valley Greenway* brochure.

For Women -

Practice breast self-exams and talk to your doctor about the Breast Health Risk Assessment Tool, available at www.cancer.gov/bcrisktool.

For Men -

Talk to your doctor about what tests and screenings are appropriate, based on age and family history.

Support Your Community -

Learn about events and activities supporting awareness and preventive health measures.

Donor Spotlight: Frank & Judy Michaud

A Mission to Improve Men's Health in the Valley



Judy and Frank Michaud have devoted a considerable amount of their time and money to ensure that men in the Valley know the importance of taking care of their health. Married for more than 25 years, Frank and Judy enjoy traveling, antiquing along the shoreline, and visiting the occasional stop on Connecticut's Wine Trail.

Every June, for the last four years, Frank Michaud has delivered thousands of Father's Day cards.

The cards come with a special message to fathers in the Valley – take care of yourself.

Since men are usually less likely than women to seek medical attention, and since most major health risks that men face are preventable, Frank and Judy Michaud wanted a way to educate men and inspire them to do more for their health.

"Someone told me that there were more cases of men with prostate cancer in the Valley than there were of women with breast cancer," Frank explains. "So I said, 'What's being done about that?'"

The Michauds sat down with a group of physicians and staff at Griffin Hospital and, in 2011 created the Health Initiative for Men (HiM).

Frank and Judy also established the Health Initiative for Men (HiM) Fund at the Valley Community Foundation to support the activities and programs of the Initiative.

The Father's Day cards are the first step to educating men about their health. The cards are delivered to schools in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton, and students can bring them home to their fathers or guardians. They include a "Tune Up" checklist for Dad to bring with him next time he visits his doctor. Prostate screening, colonoscopy, blood pressure and cholesterol test – those are just a few items on the checklist.

"We are trying to mirror the Women's Health Initiative (at Griffin)," says Frank.

Frank and Judy would like to build the HiM Fund and be able to provide free screenings to men who are underinsured and can't afford services on their own.

"The idea is to get the promotion going and get the word out to fathers to take care of themselves," he says. The annual Father's Day card was turned into an art contest for Valley students in 2013, which helped inform more parents about the Initiative. Students in elementary school (1st - 6th grades) and middle and high schools (7th - 12th grades) submitted artwork to be featured on the cards.

Winners were chosen from each age group in each Valley town, with prizes awarded for first and second place. Then, grand prize winners from the Elementary and Middle/High School divisions were chosen, and their designs were featured on the Father's Day cards distributed Valley-wide.

Frank says the Sports Center of Connecticut in Shelton has jumped in to help publicize the importance of men's health by hosting an Annual Men's Health Day for the last two years. Including free screenings and one-on-

one consultations with Griffin physicians, men can win prizes and enter a drawing for a free grill.

Frank is a principal with Michaud, Accavallo, Woodbridge & Cusano LLC in Ansonia. He is currently brainstorming new ways to help spread the word about and gather support for the HiM Fund. He wants to make sure men are aware of how easy it can be to detect men's health risks early on.

"Someone told me that there were more cases of men with prostate cancer in the Valley than there were of women with breast cancer. So I said, 'What's being done about that?'" - Frank Michaud

Father's Day Cards Are a Hit for Men's Health!



About 17,000 of the 2014 HiM Father's Day cards were distributed to schools in the Valley. The elementary school card (above) was designed by Colin Armistead of Ansonia, and the middle/high school card (below) was designed by Savannah Nido of Seymour.



Upcoming VCF Sponsored Events

14th Annual Women Making a Difference in the Valley Tribute and Fundraiser
October 2nd, 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm
More at www.griffinhealth.org

"Pounding the Pavement for Pink" 3rd Annual 5K to benefit Seymour Pink
October 4th, 9:00 am
Register at www.runsignup.com

Harvest Festival 11th Annual event
October 4th, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
More at www.cityofansoniam.com



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Good News About the Valley



8th Annual Bikes for Kids

This June, fifty children of all ages arrived at the Sports Center of Connecticut for a day of family fun. Much to their delight and surprise, the kids went home with free, brand new bikes and helmets thanks to support from VCF and other sponsors of The Foundation for Life's 8th Annual Bikes for Kids event.

Since 2007, Bikes for Kids has given away over 1500 bikes and helmets to underprivileged youth. The goal is to provide kids a safe way to get out in their communities, feel a sense of pride and excitement as well as to stay fit in a healthy way.



Boys and Girls Club Girls Night Out

The Boys and Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley held its annual Girls Night Out, a free program for women and girls ages ten and up. The night included dinner, dancing, confidence boosters and motivational speakers. This year, 100 girls and their mothers/guardians attended the "sweet, sassy and everything classy" themed event.

Sponsored in part by VCF, the Girls Night Out is a tradition that ensures women and girls of our community continue to make positive choices, be confident and feel great about themselves.



Seymour Founders' Day

The 5th Annual Seymour Founders' Day was a celebration of heritage and history, not to mention a successful fundraiser benefitting Seymour's two fire departments, Citizens' Engine Co. 2 and Great Hill Hose Company. The downtown business district was filled with vendors and family activities. The Seymour Historical Society offered free tours of the Katharine Matthies House and Museum as well.

Sponsored in part by VCF, the event raised more than \$10,000 in proceeds. Funds will go toward the cost of new equipment and upgrades for the two fire departments, as well as the Seymour Animal Shelter.