

The Healthcare Consortium



A collaborative
rural health network

Improving access to healthcare



Celebrating 20 Years

of serving Columbia & Greene Counties

Celebrating 20 Years 1998-2018

Do you remember where you were and what you were doing in 1998?

For our part at the Healthcare Consortium, we were just starting our organization, with a handful of people in a basement office, on a shoestring budget, and a mission to provide information, education, and much needed services to our community's residents.

In 2018, we find ourselves reflecting upon, and celebrating, twenty years of fulfilling our central mission: improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the people in our rural community. We are also celebrating our growth, as we now employ about 35 people who serve residents in both Columbia and Greene Counties; celebrating our strong partnerships with both public and private organizations throughout the Twin Counties and beyond; and, most importantly, celebrating the thousands of community residents we've been able to help in those years.



Who We Are

The Healthcare Consortium is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1998 to create a network of health and human service providers serving the community in and around Columbia County with the shared goal of ensuring that our residents could get and stay healthy.

Our Purpose

The result that we are trying to achieve is Healthy Rural People and Places.

Our Mission

We contribute to this result by advancing our central mission: improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the people in our rural community.

Our Values

Access to healthcare is a fundamental right of every individual. Individuals are primarily responsible for their own healthcare decisions and require information and education to fulfill their role effectively. Improving the health of our community occurs through the partnership of health, social service and wellness organizations, and all levels of government. Collaboration and provision of preventative and wellness services has long-term efficiencies.

Improving Access: Addressing Physical Barriers

In many communities, and especially rural ones, the lack of transportation is a major physical barrier to accessing healthcare services. We address this by providing door-to-door non-emergency medical transportation through our **Children and Adults Rural Transportation Service – CARTS**. One of our oldest programs, CARTS continues to be one of our largest and best known.

Since its start in March 1999, the CARTS Program has...

SERVED

9,000 clients

PROVIDED

165,000 rides

TRAVELLED

2,281,648 miles



The Impact of the CARTS Program, in the words of a client:

In 2006, my parents couldn't drive anymore, and their adult children lived far away. They started using the C.A.R.T.S. program to get to their doctors' appointments; the drivers were so good to my parents, and so kind.

A few years later, after my parents passed away, I broke my ankle, and couldn't drive. I had no family in the area and needed transportation to physical therapy in Rhinebeck, and to my doctor at Albany Medical Center. I remembered the C.A.R.T.S. program and how well they had cared for my parents, so I called the Consortium. They were wonderful about accommodating my schedule. The drivers are so caring, and always cheerful! They ask the clients how they're doing, and tell them stories; their care and interest mean a lot when a person isn't feeling well, or is worried.

Some clients have no families; sometimes the Consortium's drivers are their only link to other people. I am so grateful to them; it was not just pick-up and delivery; they made sure I was safely home. The drivers have a relationship with the people in the community. The expense they'll travel to is also great; if I had needed to pay for transportation to my medical appointments in Rhinebeck and Albany, I couldn't have afforded it. C.A.R.T.S. is a valuable community resource in this rural area; if you don't have a car, you're not medically served. How do other counties do without?

– Maryann, CARTS client

Improving Access: Addressing Financial Barriers

As far too many of us know, another barrier to accessing healthcare services is financial. We address financial barriers to access by helping people to enroll in health insurance through our **Navigator Program**. This program provides in-person assistance to individuals and small businesses when shopping for, selecting and applying for health insurance on the NY State of Health: The Official Health Plan Marketplace.

Since its start in 2013, the Navigator Program has...

ANSWERED

13,347 inquiries

FACILITATED

12,795 enrollments

Its precursor, the Facilitated Enrollment Program (2003-2013)...

RESPONDED TO

17,566 inquiries

FACILITATED

over 12,500 enrollments



“

The Impact of the Navigator Program, in the words of a client:

“I have utilized the services of the Healthcare Consortium for the last three consecutive years and have been equally impressed with the quality of assistance I received each time. Applying and enrolling for health insurance can be daunting to say the least, but the Healthcare Navigators at the Consortium make it painless. Not only are they knowledgeable, respectful and efficient, they are truly kind. I can't say enough good things about them. I always leave feeling completely taken care of. I think the Consortium and the Navigators are a tremendous asset to the community and we are lucky to have this resource at our disposal.”

–Vaughn, Navigator Program client

”

Regular and routine cancer screenings are vitally important for the early detection of cancers, but far too many people forego them because they lack resources. We address this financial barrier to accessing care by providing free breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings for the uninsured and underinsured through our **Cancer Services Program**, or **CSP**.

Since its start in 2001, the Cancer Services Program has...

PROVIDED

10,793 breast, cervical & colorectal cancer screenings



The Cancer Services Program Impact, in the words of a client:

“Five years ago I found a lump in my breast. At that time I had no health insurance at all. When I saw a flyer for the Consortium’s Cancer Services Program in the post office, I gave them a call. They helped me set up an appointment for a mammogram. When the mammogram came back negative, the women at the Cancer Services Program insisted that more testing and follow-up be done. It turned out that first mammogram result was a false negative, and I was diagnosed with stage 2 cancer. I received treatment for eight months, and I believe their perseverance saved my life.”

Thanks to the wonderful Cancer Services Program, I was able to finish nursing school, and am now in graduate school. I’m so grateful for the warmth, kindness and professionalism of the women in the Cancer Services Program; I want to ‘pay it forward’ and help educate other women, because I have been given the gifts of life and time with my children, the opportunity to be there for them. I will be forever grateful to the Cancer Services Program for each and every cherished moment with my family and friends!”

– Shawn, CSP client

Other ways in which we address financial barriers to accessing health services include paying for prescription medications through our **Prescription Access and Referral Program**, and, by helping with health-related and other household expenses when serious illness creates financial hardship, through our **Financial Assistance Funds**.

The Prescription Access and Referral Program offers assistance in obtaining low-cost or no-cost prescription medications for residents of Columbia, Greene, and Northern Dutchess Counties.

Since its start in 2006, the Prescription Access Program has...

SERVED

1,440 unique clients

The Financial Assistance Funds offer financial support for healthcare and other expenses for limited-resource individuals and families.

Since its start in 2008, the Financial Assistance Funds has...

SERVED

355 unique clients



Improving Access: Addressing Complexity

Sometimes, the complexity of our highly fragmented and largely disconnected healthcare system can act as its own barrier to access. We address that complexity by performing a critical function we call “way-finding”—leading others through the maze that is healthcare. Through programs like **NYConnects**, which helps individuals and families in need of long-term services and supports, we provide information, assistance and appropriate referrals that help people connect to the parts of the system that will serve them best. Way-finding is a part of all our programs, and the reason we can claim, “We’re Never the Wrong Door” for people seeking help.

NYConnects provides information, assistance, and referral for individuals and their families in need of long-term services and supports, including the aged and disabled of any age.

Since its start in 2010, the **NYConnects Program** has...

SERVED

3,100 clients



So while the Healthcare Consortium is not a healthcare provider we are a **PARTNER IN CARE** helping people to **GET AND STAY HEALTHY** by improving their access to healthcare.

More of What We Do: Supporting the health and well-being of rural people and places

Beyond the provision of services directly to members of our community, our work also includes advocating for policies and resources that support the health and well-being of the people in our rural community.

For example, our **Tobacco-Free Action Program** works to promote policy measures that eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke, make tobacco use more expensive and less convenient, and make tobacco products less visible and accessible.



Some program accomplishments since its start in 2001 are...

- In Columbia County 94% and in Greene 50% of affordable housing providers are now smoke-free.
- A total of 28 towns, villages and cities in both counties have tobacco-free parks and recreation areas.
- Catamount and Windham Mountain became the first ski areas in NYS to restrict smoking.
- The Village of Tannersville enacted a local law prohibiting the sale of tobacco and vaping products within 1000 feet of the High/Middle School.

We also regularly participate in activities to assess the health of the community and plan for how to improve it. At times, that has meant bringing a new healthcare resource to the community, like the mobile dental van (now managed by our local health system) or the Community Health Center we were instrumental in attracting to the area. At other times, it has meant making sure that our existing resources are working as well as they should, and as well as they can together. And at yet others, it has meant serving as an advocate for our rural corner of the world. Whether it's plugging in the holes or smoothing the edges of an imperfect system, the Consortium's goal is to have its thumb on the pulse of our community and respond to its unmet needs.



Direct services

Education

Information

Advocacy

In all these ways, the Consortium has helped, in one way or another, literally thousands of Twin County residents during its 20 year history, and our plan is to continue for at least 20 years more!

Celebrating 20 Years

of serving Columbia & Greene Counties

July 1997

A Rural Health Network Development grant is awarded to Columbia Memorial Hospital as lead agent, and The Healthcare Consortium is born!

December 2000

The Consortium receives the first of three grants to start The Children's Dental Health Partnership.

Spring 2002

The Mobile Health Partnership is created, forged by a collaboration of providers and health services.

Spring 2002

The Consortium moves to 389 Fairview Avenue.

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

January 1998

The Consortium takes up residence in a basement office with \$140,000, four staff members and a mission to "increase access to, information and education about, and improve the quality of the health care delivery system serving the diverse needs of all residents in Columbia County."

February 1999

Columbia County Health Services Directory is mailed to 30,000 households.

March 1999

Children and Adults Rural Transportation Services (C.A.R.T.S.) begins operations.

January 2001

Rip Van Winkle Tobacco-Free Coalition is born when NYSDOH awards funding to The Healthcare Consortium

Spring 2001

The Consortium is named coordinating and fiscal agent for the Columbia County Healthy Women Partnership; free breast and cervical exams become available to qualifying women.

Winter 2003

The Healthcare Consortium becomes coordinating agency for the Columbia-Greene Diabetes Coalition

Winter 2003

The Facilitated Enrollment Program begins assisting residents in the Twin Counties to enroll in Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, and Medicaid.

Spring 2003

The Consortium is awarded two grants from NYSDOH Bureau of Chronic Diseases: Ovarian Cancer Awareness and Cancer Support Services.

March 2006

The Healthcare Consortium becomes coordinator for Long-Term Care Insurance Education and Outreach.

October 2006

The Healthcare Consortium is awarded a second Ovarian Cancer Awareness grant.

January 2009

The Healthy People Partnership transitions into the Cancer Services Program of Columbia and Greene.

July 2009

The Healthcare Consortium partners with Columbia Memorial Hospital to bring mobile dental services to children and adults in Greene County.

November 2009

The Healthcare Consortium begins coordination of NYConnects, Columbia County, an information and referral service for individuals with long term care needs.

2003

2005

2006

2007

2009

2010

February 2005

The Healthcare Consortium launches the Prescription Access and Referral Program.

August 2005

On the road again, the Consortium moves into the new Columbia County Human Services Building at 325 Columbia Street.

January 2007

The Consortium is awarded the first NY State grant for Colorectal Cancer Screening and Education for the Twin Counties.

Winter 2007

The Cancer Support Program is expanded to serve both adults and children in Columbia & Greene Counties.

June 2010

Berkshire-Taconic Foundation helps fund Assuring Your Wishes, an on-line program that allows individuals to record and store their healthcare proxy in a secure environment on-line for easy retrieval by healthcare professionals if needed.

September 2012

The United States Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) awards the Consortium a one-year planning grant to explore the feasibility of establishing a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in or around Hudson.

November 2012

The Galvan Foundation awards the Consortium \$25,000 to support the Bengali Community Health Worker Project, which supported training six young men and women from Hudson's Bengali community to serve as Community Health Workers. The grant also supported training additional health and human service workers and a partnership with Operation Unite.

August 2014

The Consortium packs up and moves down the hall to its current suite of offices.

December 2014

The Foundation for Community Health awards the Consortium \$50,000 to purchase a new minibus for the C.A.R.T.S. program.

March 2017

C.A.R.T.S. reaches the two million miles travelled mark.

November 2017

The Foundation for Community Health awards the Consortium \$25,000 to support C.A.R.T.S.' ongoing operations.



January 2011

The Dyson Foundation awards \$46,000 to the Prescription Access Program.

January 2013

The Foundation for Community Health, based in Sharon, CT awards the Consortium a grant to administer the Children's Mental Health Services Project in the Taconic Hills (Columbia County) Central School District.

August 2013

The New York State Department of Health awards the Healthcare Consortium a contract to serve as In-Person Assistors/ Navigators for Columbia and Greene Counties.

Fall 2015

Develops a partnership with the Columbia County Department of Health's Migrant Worker Program, utilizing staff from both Cancer Services and Navigator Programs.

The Healthcare Consortium celebrates its 20th anniversary!

Perspectives

BETH SCHUSTER
Immediate Past
President



...from the Outgoing President

On the one hand, twenty years can seem like an eternity; on the other, they can seem to pass in the blink of an eye. In a way, it seems like the Healthcare Consortium has always been around, providing much needed services and support throughout the community. When I think back to a time before the Consortium existed, it seems strange that our community didn't have CARTS, the Consortium's door-to-door medical transportation program that brings Columbia County residents to and from doctor's appointments, didn't have the Cancer Services Program to provide free breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings to the uninsured, didn't have Navigators to help people enroll in health insurance, and didn't have any of the many other forms of assistance now provided by the Healthcare Consortium. These programs and services have become so much a part of our community's resources, and are relied upon by so many Twin County residents, that it's hard to remember, or even imagine, a time before they, or the Consortium, existed.

The Healthcare Consortium has not only added to the services directly available to Twin County residents, they have also been instrumental in changing our environment in ways that support and promote the public's health. For instance, the strong and persistent voices of those involved in the Tobacco-Free Action Community Coalition have helped to create smoke-free environments in both our indoor and outdoor spaces. For anyone who remembers smoke-filled restaurants and cigarette-littered playgrounds, you'll recognize this as a huge change from what life was like 20 years ago.

Too, the Consortium has played a role in health education, advocacy, and health improvement planning, all of which has been demonstrated by its efforts to address the current opioid epidemic. Its work providing information and referral to individuals and families affected by addiction, support and coordination for other agencies, and education for our community members, has helped to organize our community's response and alleviate the stigma that surrounds addiction.

Whether through direct service delivery, advocacy, education or planning, the Consortium's impact on the community during its 20 years of existence has been positive and profound. I look forward to what comes next.

ROBIN ANDREWS
President



...from the Incoming President

It is very exciting to be able to celebrate 20 years of the Healthcare Consortium's active involvement in our community! When the Healthcare Consortium started 20 years ago offering transportation to and from medical appointments for Columbia County residents, it would have been difficult to imagine how responding to this fundamental need for access to healthcare would grow over the next twenty years. Today, we not only continue to meet the medical transportation needs of residents but have expanded our services to include cancer screenings, insurance enrollment, financial assistance, and information and referral.

Moreover, the Consortium's service area now includes Greene County and even a little piece of Dutchess. In addition to its direct service delivery, the Healthcare Consortium also plays a role in advocating for the policies and structures that create healthy communities, through projects like the Tobacco-Free Action Community Partnership, and it has continued to expand its role in planning and coordination, as evidenced by its work around the ongoing opioid crisis. By all these means—direct service delivery, advocacy, education, planning and coordination--the Consortium's reach into and impact upon the community has been great.

That reach and impact depend upon the organization's understanding, value and commitment to truly being a CONSORTIUM of our rural health and human service providers. As the designated Rural Health Network of Columbia County, the Consortium is in the unique position to develop strategies for improving the system of health and human services in our rural community. I am excited that we have just recently agreed to update the organization's mission statement to "improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of people in our rural community." Through collaboration, information-sharing, and an intimate and nuanced understanding of complex local healthcare issues, we can be on the forefront of opportunities to be of service as we head into the next 20 years. We thank all of you who have supported us to get here, all of you who we have had the opportunity to serve, and all of you who continue to support us, and all of those whom we hope to serve.

CLAIRE PARDE, MS
Executive Director



...from the Executive Director

The origin story of the Consortium is a great one. It begins over two decades ago with a group of stakeholders—some from the public sector, some from the private, all concerned citizens—who recognized the challenges that Columbia County residents were facing when trying to access healthcare services. What made their work marvelous is that they didn't merely identify problems; they set about solving them. They created something where there was nothing, giving birth to an organization that lives to this day. To these parents of the organization, who had the vision, commitment and perseverance to make their ideas real, we are indebted.

Thereafter, some of the people involved at the outset continued to serve the organization in governance roles, along with many others who have joined our large and active Board since. Governing a not-for-profit organization is no light matter or minor commitment; it's time, when there's never enough, it's attention, when there are competing demands, and it's care, when there are lots of other things worthy of care. To these caretakers of the organization, who have shepherded it through the past twenty years, we are also indebted.

And then there's the staff, both past and present, those on this earth and beyond it. Any impact we have made has been earned by the tough, dedicated, resourceful, purpose-driven professionals who have worked the mission on a daily basis. To these keepers of the organization, whose efforts cemented our reputation and reinforced our value, we are most indebted.

And lastly, we are grateful to the wider community—the residents of Columbia and Greene Counties, whom we serve, the public agencies and community-based organizations that are our invaluable partners, and the funders and supporters that make our work possible. It is our fervent wish that we may continue to serve you, to partner with you, and to be worthy of your support for the next 20 years to come!

Twenty Years of Board Volunteers

Kit Ali*	Lisa Evans	Martin Miller*	Laurie Scott†
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Gail Durland*	Dr. Bernard Mehl	Beth Schuster†	Todd Zbytniewski
			Anne Zittell*

* Founding member † Current member

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Chris Blass†
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Andrea Bruce
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Rachel Cole†
Darcy Connor*
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Laura Cullen
Craig Cunningham
Robert Delaney
Fran DelGaudio†
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Barbara Eacott
Betty Foss*
Diane Franzman*
James Funk
Ronald Garcia

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Ruth Gutman
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Holly Hedgepeth
Lisa Heintz†
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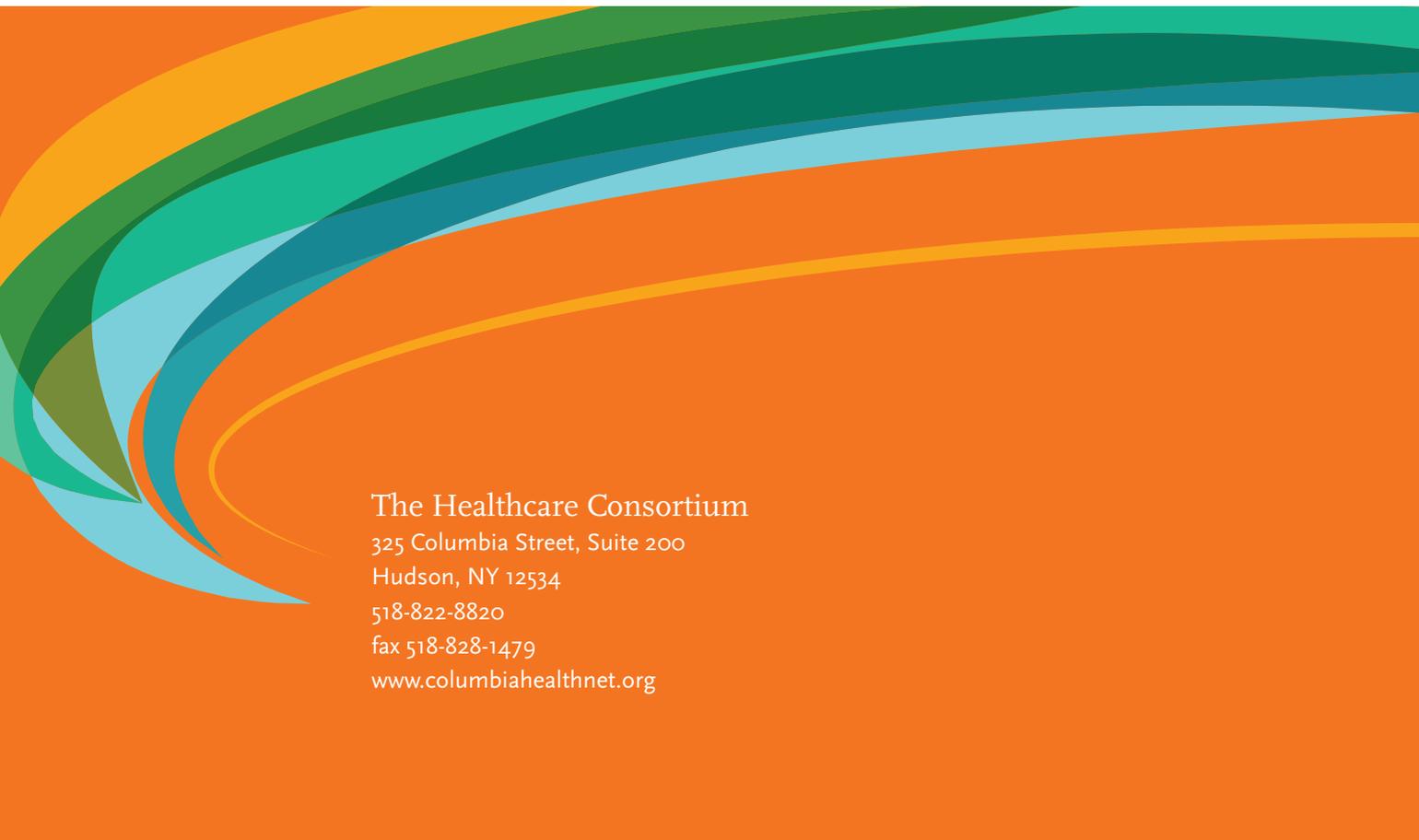


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