

Fiscal Year 2022

# PROGRESS REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Addressing community health needs



**Northern Light**<sup>SM</sup>

A.R. Gould Hospital

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**Greg LaFrançois, CPA, MHA, FACHE**

President,  
Northern Light AR Gould Hospital

Senior Vice President,  
Northern Light Health

This past year, we not only continued our ongoing work to safeguard our communities from the COVID-19 pandemic, but we set our sights towards the future. We looked to build and improve upon the delivery of healthcare in Maine, and partnership is essential to this work; coming together to ensure our families, friends, and neighbors have access to the very best resources for generations to come.

While the pandemic still looms and may for quite a while, we will never stop looking forward and thinking strategically about addressing the most critical community health needs. In 2019, Northern Light Health partnered with three healthcare systems and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to create a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). We used that assessment and public input to develop a three-year strategy to improve the health and well-being of the communities that we serve.

This report is an update on the progress of our community health strategy for fiscal year 2022, representing the third year of our three-year health improvement plan. In addition to the extraordinary ongoing outreach and collaborative efforts during the coronavirus pandemic, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital continues to engage in priority areas of work, including:

- Social determinants of health
- Substance use
- Access to care
- Physical activity, nutrition, weight

I hope you find the update contained in this report informative. If you ever have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to [communitybenefits@northernlight.org](mailto:communitybenefits@northernlight.org). Lastly, we know our community trusts us to provide exceptional healthcare and resources that complement a healthy, enriched life, and we are dedicated to maintaining that trust through hard work and commitment to doing what's right for Maine. We look forward to our continued services in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Greg LaFrançois, CPA, MHA, FACHE  
President, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital

# Progress report update

## FY 2022 Progress Report

### Priority #1: Social Determinants of Health

**Objective:** Increase the number of sites implementing screening and referral for health-related social needs from zero to two by 9/30/22.

**Status:** In progress

**Strategy:** In fiscal year 2022 (FY22), Northern Light Health made significant progress in Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) screening and intervention. The Northern Light Health SDOH Team defined “completed” SDOH screening and established a system policy for minimum SDOH screening standards to provide consistency in screening guidelines. During the course of FY22, the SDOH Team worked with Information Systems to continually improve the SDOH Screening Tool based on user recommendations and will continue to manage user requests moving forward. SDOH Team leaders worked with members of Northern Light Health Quality to develop an SDOH screening dashboard which provides real-time screening rates by member organization, practice, provider, and payor type, as well as prevalence of SDOH need from positive screening results. The dashboard is undergoing validation and is anticipated to be available in FY23. Northern Light Health achieved a significant milestone in responding to social health needs when the new Northern Light Health findhelp platform went live on September 13, 2022. Findhelp is a national social care network that will make it easier for patients and providers to find and connect with local resources. The platform is embedded within our electronic health record so that care teams can find and refer patients to resources and has a public portal that community members can access at any time.

Northern Light AR Gould Hospital’s community health coordinator continues preparing a food insecurity report monthly and sharing the results with all managers and leads on this project. Each department has been encouraged to increase the number of screenings that are performed in their clinic area. Food bags from Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) have been expanded to all areas of the hospital, and anyone who has a positive food insecurity screening can receive one. Gift cards, purchased with a grant from GSFB, are also available for patients in need of food but have transportation issues. Through this process, AR Gould has screened 10,844 patients for food insecurity; of these, 282 had a positive screen and 78 patients received some sort of assistance.

**Partners engaged:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital partnered with the following entities on this priority:

- Acadia Hospital
- Beacon Health
- Blue Hill Hospital
- CA Dean Hospital
- Eastern Maine Medical Center
- Home Care & Hospice
- Inland Hospital
- Maine Coast Hospital
- Mayo Hospital
- Mercy Hospital
- Sebasticook Valley Hospital

**Outcome measure:** System data for SDOH screening became available in December 2021 and revealed that 2.6% of patients had a completed SDOH screening within the past 12 months. By September 2022, this rate had increased to 8.2% with minimal education or promotion from the system. Among the five practices participating in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement/Pfizer, Inc. quality improvement project, average completed SDOH screenings among all five sites increased from 4.2% to 22.1%. This project demonstrated the benefit of a quality improvement approach to increasing SDOH screening rates and lessons learned will inform best practices to be shared in fiscal year 2023.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, LPN, Community Health & Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** The Northern Light Health SDOH Team will continue to monitor and support improvements to SDOH screening and support efforts to increase availability of accurate and timely SDOH screening and results data. In fiscal year 2023 (FY23), Northern Light Health will focus on optimizing the Northern Light Health findhelp platform by increasing community partner awareness of and engagement with the platform. A Community Engagement Workgroup has been convened and will meet regularly to discuss and plan community outreach and engagement as part of the FY23 Community Health Improvement Plan goal of increasing community partner use of the platform.

## Priority #2: Substance Use

**Objective:** Maintain the number of partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts at 12 by 9/30/22.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy:** In FY22, a Northern Light AR Gould Hospital representative served on the Aroostook Mental Health Center - HRSA Consortium Workgroup and has been a member of the Aroostook County Action Program – Drug Free Aroostook coalition. We also participated in Cary Medical Center’s Power of Prevention meetings and Aroostook County Action Program’s Health Service Advisory Committee.

As a way to reach and educate the people in our community, AR Gould provided activities with local recreation departments, participated in the Great American Smoke Out, spread the word about Drug Take Back events, raised awareness to the dangers of smoking through information provided to patients during Wear Red for Women’s Heart Health, and provided Facebook and Medical Monday information on substance use and tobacco. AR Gould’s community health coordinator attended education on Stigma Training, Substance Use and attended the Governors Opioid Response Seminar. We were thrilled to have been awarded the Platinum Level award for tobacco policy, a step up from last year’s Gold Level.

The United Way of Aroostook, Aroostook Mental Health Center (AMHC) and AR Gould held a Substance Use Symposium on April 1, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. This symposium was for employers and the public to explain what Aroostook County is seeing for problems with substance use, what our resources are, and who is there to help. A total of 85 people attended the event, and nine vendors had tables to represent their programs. Gordon Smith, the Yankowskis (a family that has experienced substance use tragedy), Joanna Russell (from Maine Department of Labor), and a panel of people that included the medical director of our emergency department, a person in long-term recovery, an affected individual, a human resources

professional, a law enforcement officer, and a behavioral health provider were on the panel. The feedback was very positive for this collaborative effort.

Other partnerships included printing prevention booklets for Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) to be distributed throughout Aroostook County and sharing medication lock boxes and drug deactivation bags, donated by Power of Prevention and Drug Free Communities, with our pharmacy staff to be given out to patients that have been prescribed scheduled medications.

**Partners engaged:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital partnered with the following entities on this priority:

Northern Light partners:

- COPD Nurse Navigator- Jennifer Bartlett
- Print Shop
- Marketing and Communications
- Guest Relations
- Care Coordination
- Primary Care, Presque Isle
- Primary Care, Mars Hill
- Primary Care, Caribou
- Primary Care, Fort Fairfield
- Dialysis Center
- Eye Care
- Ear Nose and Throat
- Surgical Services

Community partners:

- Aroostook County Action Program: Drug Free Aroostook, Tobacco Prevention and Tobacco Cessation Lets' Go 5-2-1-0
- Aroostook Mental Health- HRSA Consortium
- Easton Recreation Department
- Local Drug Stores: Walgreens, City Drug, Walmart, Presque Isle Pharmacy
- Local Police Departments: Presque Isle, Caribou, Fort Fairfield
- United Way of Aroostook
- University of Maine at Presque Isle
- Power of Prevention
- MicMac Health Department
- Drug Free Kids
- Link for Hope
- The Northern Lighthouse
- Bangor Public Health

**Outcome measure:** In FY22, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital held seven community events including a Substance Use Symposium, participated in three trainings, served on four community boards related to substance use, and partnered with 22 community groups and 13 AR Gould departments to spread the word about substance use services in Aroostook County. We also received the Platinum Award for our extensive tobacco policy, printed 12,000 prevention guides for distribution in our community and partnered with other agencies to provide lock boxes and drug deactivation bags to our pharmacy departments both inside the hospital and at outpatient clinics. Through this work an estimated 126,938 (includes duplicates of individuals

who accessed more than one program) across community members received substance use prevention messaging.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, LPN, Coordinator, Community Health & Volunteer Services

**Next steps:** In FY23, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will leverage partnerships to reduce barriers and improve access to and availability of substance use prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services. We will also optimize relationships with partners who can help engage effectively with populations in need. With this plan, we hope to improve pathways to prevention, treatment, and recovery for individuals with substance use disorder.

### Priority #3: Access to Care

**Objective:** Increase the number of colorectal cancer educational opportunities in the community from nine to 12 by 9/30/22.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy:** In FY22, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital's Community Health Coordinator worked to implement work through the Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF) grant that was received. This grant was provided to give uninsured or underinsured access to free FIT tests and provide education opportunities about colorectal screenings to the public. Steps to administering the grant and providing education included meeting with all of the outpatient office managers, creating posters and handouts, sending letters to all uninsured patients at AR Gould, Facebook posts, advertising in local papers, and featuring the grant in our monthly newsletter. Through our efforts, we were able to far exceed our goal of reaching 14,000 Aroostook County citizens with important information about colorectal cancer screenings. MCF was happy with the outreach projects we provided and felt that the message was received by the desired audience. The grant ended in June 2022.

**Partners engaged:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital partnered with the following entities on this priority:  
Northern Light Partners:

- Primary Care, Presque Isle
- Primary Care, Mars Hill
- Primary Care, Caribou
- Primary Care, Fort Fairfield
- Marketing and Communications
- Print Shop
- Dialysis Center
- Eye Care
- ENT
- Surgical Services
- Guest Relations

Community Partners:

- Star Herald
- Aroostook Republican
- Houlton Pioneer Times

Saint John Valley Times  
Maine Medical Center  
Maine Cancer Foundation  
American Red Cross  
American Cancer Society  
Limestone Public Library  
Town of Limestone  
Limestone Snowmobile Club

**Outcome measure:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital ran four newspaper advertisements about colorectal cancer screenings, mailed out 149 letters to uninsured patients, handed out 550 packets of information, mailed out 800 newsletters, created three Facebook posts, provided 250 pamphlets on colorectal screening opportunities, and sponsored two signs for the Limestone snow drag. All together, we were able to provide 12 educational opportunities with 19 different sites and reached more than 49,771 people with important colorectal screening education.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, LPN, Community Health & Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** In FY23, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will not be continuing this work as a formal FY23 priority area of work. However, we will continue providing education on the importance of all cancer screenings when the opportunity arises.

#### Priority #4: Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Weight

**Objective:** Maintain the number of evidence-based events focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity and nutrition at 25 by 9/30/22.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy:** In FY22, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital worked collaboratively with 36 partners to provide 41 events for the citizens of Aroostook County. These events were held in the community, virtually, in businesses, and through individual mailings and giveaways to our patient population. These efforts included creating a new monthly newsletter and informational programming for seniors, offering a school-wide bike rally and health-related programming for youth, and visiting colleges and businesses with health programs and information. These evidence-based events focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity and nutrition information. We've received positive feedback from our community on these endeavors.

**Partners engaged:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital partnered with the following entities on this priority:

Northern Light Partners:

Total Health Team  
Marketing and Communications  
Print Shop  
DEI Team  
Cancer Care

Community partners:

Mark & Emily Turner Library



5-2-1-0 Let's Go!  
Easton Recreation Department  
Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)- SNAP Program  
Northeastland Hotel  
Cooperative Extension  
ACAP Prevention Services  
Aroostook Agency on Aging  
Northern Maine Community College  
Aramark  
Easton Senior Group  
Katie Putnam – Certified Nutrition Expert  
ACAP WIC Program  
WAGM TV  
Presque Isle Forum  
Mapleton Elementary  
Limestone Recreation Department  
Big Rock Ski Area  
Ashland Recreation Center  
Ashland Library  
Easton Elementary School  
Presque Isle Recreation Center  
ACME Monaco  
Northern Maine Fair Association  
Town of Portage Lake  
American Red Cross  
Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce  
Limestone Chamber of Commerce  
University of Maine at Presque Isle  
Town of Easton

**Outcome measure:** Northern Light AR Gould Hospital worked collaboratively with 36 partners to provide 41 events for the citizens of Aroostook County. We were able to reach over 100,000 people (includes duplicates of individuals who accessed more than one program) across all ages with evidence-based events focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity and nutrition information. This far exceeded our goal of 25 programs and the 1300 people we had set as our goal in FY22.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, LPN, Community Health & Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** While Northern Light AR Gould Hospital plans to continue providing various physical activity, nutrition, and weight activities that our community enjoys, we will not be continuing this work as a formal FY23 priority area of work. The 2022 Shared Community Health Needs Assessment review and discussion by our diverse group of stakeholders determined other priority areas of focus for our community moving forward in FY23 – FY25.

# Conclusion

Northern Light AR Gould Hospital continues work on identified priorities through the Community Health Strategy and is thankful for the participation and support of our community members and many area organizations for contributing their knowledge of local community health needs related to our priorities of action. Through existing and future partnerships, collaborative efforts are essential in addressing the identified community health strategies prioritized within.

**Northern Light**  
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