

Fiscal Year 2020

# PROGRESS REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Addressing community health needs



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

A.R. Gould Hospital

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Gregory T. LaFrancois,  
CPA, MHA, FACHE  
President  
**A.R. Gould Hospital**

The emergence of COVID-19 brings unique challenges and opportunities to our community. The potential size and scale of the COVID outbreak creates a threat that can only be addressed through a coordinated effort of all health resources across the entire continuum of care. We, in the County, are very successful at coordinating efforts and will continue our preparedness to respond to both emergent and extended needs.

Our County response focuses on the needs of our most vulnerable community members, including older adults, those experiencing hunger, and the homeless. Together, we provide food, housing, and transportation for those negatively affected by COVID-19; as well as childcare for essential workers.

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 along with public input to develop a three-year strategy to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

This report is an update on the progress of our community health strategy for fiscal year 2020, representing the first year of our three-year health improvement plan. In addition to the extraordinary 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, and weight

Northern Light AR Gould Hospital provides a safe place for our neighbors to receive personalized care. We've worked hard with our partners in the County to ensure all hospitals remain strong and encourage our community to use the services of all. We are determined to provide options so our community will feel comfortable receiving the care they need at a place they trust. I look forward to what we can accomplish in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Gregory LaFrancois  
President, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital

# Progress report update

## FY 2020 Progress Report

### Priority #1: Social Determinants of Health

**Objective:** Increase the number of sites implementing screening and referral for health-related social needs from 0 to 6 by 9/30/20.

**Status:** Foundational work started

**Strategy to achieve the objective (approaches taken, and resources used):** In fiscal year 2020 (FY20), Northern Light AR Gould Hospital participated on a Northern Light Health systemwide Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) workgroup responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the effectiveness of a system approach to SDOH screening and intervention inclusive of food security and other social needs. To date, the workgroup's focus has been on the identification of the SDOH screening and referral process, local resource development, provider training and education requirements for the screening tool's implementation, quality review and management of these efforts. Northern Light defined SDOH screening and intervention as a strategic priority to improve the health of the patients it serves.

As Northern Light AR Gould Hospital continues to participate in the systemwide SDOH workgroup, it became apparent that it would be helpful to explore the possibility of providing food bags at our outpatient clinics. Since we have been doing the food insecurity screening for several years, we have a good understanding of what clinics would benefit from having these on hand. Fort Fairfield Health Center was chosen due to their accountability of screenings and the high number of positive screens they continue to have. We worked with folks at Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) to make this happen. GSFB provided us with a \$1200 mini grant to continue providing this service to our patients.

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

- Aroostook County Action Program
- Fort Fairfield Health Center
- Good Shepherd Food Bank
- Northern Light Beacon Health
- Northern Light Blue Hill Hospital
- Northern Light CA Dean Hospital
- Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center
- Northern Light Home Care & Hospice
- Northern Light Inland Hospital
- Northern Light Maine Coast Hospital
- Northern Light Mayo Hospital
- Northern Light Mercy Hospital
- Northern Light Sebecook Valley Hospital

**Highlights:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital, as part of the Northern Light systemwide workgroup, engaged in literature reviews and outreach efforts to other healthcare system's efforts in this realm to learn about the successes and challenges related to this type of screening effort that will ultimately help to inform how we will operationalize this effort throughout our system.

**Outcome measure:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital's identified individual targets were not met for this priority area of work due to the deliberate approach by Northern Light Health as a system, to define a standard process for SDOH screening and intervention. As a result, this year's efforts have primarily been foundational. To date, the efforts of this workgroup has resulted in increased support for this initiative and the development of a screening tool for identifying patients in need.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, Community Health and Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** In fiscal year 2021 (FY21), Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will continue participating in the SDOH workgroup through Northern Light Health. The group will proceed with identifying the specific social needs to be recommended for inclusion in the system screening process. The group will also continue discussions and planning for provider education efforts to increase understanding of SDOH and current development of NLH screening and intervention protocol. We anticipate roll-out implementation of the SDOH screening efforts to take place in the coming year. In addition, we'll also continue to consider COVID-related changes to primary care and how these may impact feasibility and provider/patient receptiveness of SDOH screening and referral.

## Priority #2: Substance Use

**Objective:** Increase the number of partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts from 0 to 4 by 9/30/20.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy to achieve the objective (approaches taken, and resources used):** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital's Community Health and Volunteer Coordinator, Dawn Roberts, sought out opportunities to increase partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts by joining local coalitions and making connections. The partnerships joined included; Aroostook County Action Programs (ACAP) Drug Free Aroostook Coalition, Aroostook County Marijuana Work Group, MicMac Drug Task Force, Aroostook District Coordinating Council, Aroostook Mental Health Centers (AMHC), HRSA RCORP Planning Consortium, Aroostook County Collaborative Meeting, Health Service Advisory Committee, and Working on Wellness Meetings at Northern Maine Community College. Each of these groups brings several participants from different backgrounds to the table with information around what is happening, services that are available, and opportunities for collaboration.

AR Gould Hospital participated in several events that were related to substance use prevention, these included; AR Gould's annual health fair, The Great American Smoke Out, Community Health Talks, and the Walk With A Doc program. Drug Deactivation Bags were provided to community members at the following venues; Senior Connections meetings, health fairs, outpatient clinics, and upon request. Drug Takeback magnets and cards were provided to patients in our primary care offices and at AR Gould's reception desks. We held a Wear Red for Heart Health Event and had Tobacco Cessation and Prevention representatives from Aroostook County Action Program join us to share resources join us. We partnered with AMHC by resourcing one of our providers, trained to prescribe Medication Assisted Treatment, one day a week in the AMHC Caribou office. AR Gould Hospital partnered with ACAP on an event titled IMPACT for youth to engage in substance use and prevention activities offered by a collaborative of service and prevention partners. Our

Walk With A Doc event engaged participants to discuss exercise and aging and how to keep yourself from needing medication for joint pain.

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

- Aroostook Area Agency on Aging
- Aroostook County Action Program
- Aroostook Mental Health Center
- Boys and Girls Club
- Caribou Law Enforcement
- MicMac Tribe
- Northern Maine Community College
- Pines Health Services
- Power of Prevention
- The Northern Lighthouse

**Highlights:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital partnered with Aroostook County Action Programs and Drug Free Communities to spread the word about the National Drug Take Back day on October 26th. Efforts to spread the word of the event included the use of brochures, placing information on all hospital monitors, and our Facebook page. Through this collaboration, Aroostook County was able to collect 1,797 pounds of unused and unwanted medications which translated to 61 boxes of medications now properly disposed of that cannot make it out onto our streets for illegal use.

**Outcome measure:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital increased the number of partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts from 0 to 10. Due to COVID 19 restrictions we had to cancel some of our planned events. However, we were still able to hold 10 events related to substance use prevention efforts that collectively served 2,250 people directly and an estimated 300,000 others reached through social media, television and print.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, Community Health and Volunteer Coordinator.

**Next steps:** In FY21, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will continue to increase the number of partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts from 10 to 12 by 9/30/21. We plan to continue to serve on established local partnerships with community-based substance use prevention efforts as well as seek out additional partnerships. AR Gould was recently chosen to participate in Aroostook Mental Health Centers (AMHC), HRSA RCORP Planning Consortium. This two year over \$200,000 planning grant has been awarded to AMHC to seek out resources available in the community and identify gaps to prevention and treatment. This grant will be a wonderful opportunity to see what is needed in Aroostook County. We are planning a lot of the same activities as last year; Great American Smoke Out, Wear Red, Drug Take Back Day, Walk With A Doc focused on pain medication reduction. In October we will provide an Air Out Tobacco Dirty Laundry Event with a local recreation center, this will be a new event for us this year. Hopefully COVID-19 will not hinder any of our plans going forward.

### Priority #3: Access to Care

**Objective:** Increase the number of colorectal cancer educational opportunities in the community from 0 to 4 by 9/30/20.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy to achieve the objective (approaches taken, and resources used):** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital implemented many different approaches to provide colorectal cancer educational opportunities to the community. Prior to COVID-19, we offered five in-person educational opportunities. After COVID-19 arrived and changed the way we previously conducted business, we had to re-think how we would provide educational opportunities moving forward. We incorporated the use of the following outlets to provide colorectal cancer education via hospital monitors, Facebook videos, pamphlets in offices, and radio. With valuable help from AR Gould's marketing and communications department we were able to meet our objective while faced with the challenges of the pandemic.

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

- Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)
- Department of Federal Accounting Services (DEFAS)
- Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF)
- Nordic Heritage Center
- Power of Prevention
- Townsquare Media

**Highlights:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital applied for and received a two-year Maine Cancer Foundation Colorectal screening Grant to increase the community's awareness about the benefits and the different types of colorectal screenings, availability and demystifying fears that surround these tests by providing quarterly educational opportunities for the public. AR Gould focused on screenings within primary care offices with the use of updated materials and resources. The \$70,710. grant is for 2 years and will help us with these goals. We also still have Screen Me flyers in all our outpatient clinics, show clips on the monitors and Facebook and continue to provide colorectal cancer educational opportunities to our community.

**Outcome measure:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital was able to achieve our goals to increase the number of colorectal cancer educational opportunities by using many different techniques. Due to COVID-19 in-person activities were limited from March on. We held our annual health fair in October, added colorectal information to several events we held before the pandemic, conducted a virtual Walk With A Doc on Colorectal health, provided a radio advertisement called Medical Minute on colorectal health, had our general surgeon speak at a Healthy Aging luncheon, in addition to other efforts. In total we provided 9 educational opportunities to the community that reached over 81,000 people.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, Community Health and Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** In FY21, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will increase the number of colorectal cancer educational opportunities in the community from 8 to 11 by 9/30/2021. With the grant received by the MCF we will focus on increasing the number of screenings done in our Fort Fairfield Health Center as well as create new media and brochures for patients. Our hope is that these materials will remove the stigma of colorectal screenings that will in turn increase numbers. In FY21, thanks to the grant, we will be able to offer some free FIT testing to patients that are either not insured or underinsured to ensure accessible to those in need.

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

**Objective:** Increase the number of evidence-based programs focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity from 1 to 3 by 9/30/20.

**Status:** Completed

**Strategy to achieve the objective (approaches taken, and resources used):** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital provided a number of programs focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity and nutrition to the community. We leveraged many local partnerships to achieve these goals. Activities provided were either free or offered at a reduced cost to participants. We partnered with the AR Gould's Total Health Team to provide a fall hike up Haystack and a winter snowshoe hike at Nordic. We partnered with Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB), and Graves Shop and Save to provide grocery store tours and a series of nutrition classes. We provided four Healthy Aging luncheons for seniors and participated in local health fairs to promote our Fit-n-Fun Series of events. We offered two free skate days, reduced cost ski passes/ rentals, and reduced cost tubing passes. Also offered was a new program, Walk With A Doc, which allowed the public to walk and talk with a provider in a casual out-of-office environment while getting out and getting physically active. In February our Wear Red for Women's Heart Health event featured information on healthy eating, physical activity, and weight management. March brought about our partnership with Nordic for the Winter Frolic Event that provided free ski lessons, snowshoe lessons, and fat bike demonstrations. Beginning March 15<sup>th</sup>, our planned events were cancelled and replaced with Facebook messaging and online contests due to COVID-19 restrictions. A very successful online event was the spring Garden Kit Project that provided a garden growing kit to anyone that requested one; we were able to provide 101 garden kits all over Aroostook County to help youth understand where their nutritious vegetable come from. Another online activity that had a positive response was the Spring Get Out and Get Moving challenge. Each week in May participants who sent in a photo of a healthy activity would be entered into a drawing for a gift basket. We provided a Yoga in the park activity in June that was well attended and utilized COVID-19 precautions. Our objectives were met with this goal, and despite the pandemic, AR Gould was able to pivot in ways that allowed for creative forms of engagements to ensure our community members still had physical activity and nutrition opportunities available.

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

- Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)
- Aroostook Area Agency on Aging (AAAA)
- Aroostook State Park
- Aroostook Center Mall
- Aroostook Band of Mic Macs
- Big Rock
- Beacon Health – Cara Miller
- Crown Ambulance
- Department of Finance and Accounting (DEFAS)
- Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB)
- Graves Shop and Save
- Let's Go 5-2-1-0
- Maine Agri Women
- Nordic Heritage Center
- Northern Maine Community College (NMCC)
- Presque Isle Recreation Center
- Presque Isle Housing Authority

**Highlights:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital used local collaborations to achieve the goals of increasing local programming around nutrition and physical activity. Not only do these collaborations bring in subject matter experts, but they provide an opportunity for these programs to work alongside each other to get the biggest impact and reach the most people. By starting a new program called Walk With A Doc, we were able to provide a learning opportunity for community members while they participated in a physical activity. These walks also provide an opportunity for citizens to meet with providers in a relaxed atmosphere where they feel comfortable to discuss topics and encourage them to see that provider when needed. After doing a poll with the Senior Connections group, we were able to better understand areas of interest for this population, such as a strong desire for nutrition education. This proved true with the abundant participation in both our nutrition classes and the grocery store tours. Youth also expressed interest in nutrition education as demonstrated in the tremendous response to the garden kit project. While COVID-19 changed some of the activities we had planned, AR Gould's community health team, along with help from Marketing and Communications, were able to continue with the programming and messaging in a different way.

**Outcome measure:** In FY20, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital provided 43 evidence-based programs focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity and nutrition activities to the community. This far exceeded our original objective by 41 additional programs. Twenty-nine unique sites were exposed to these interventions and 1,738 people attended these events in person. Information was also provided to people in other ways, through local television, multiple Facebook videos, hospital monitors, posters and brochures in the community, radio and mailings. COVID-19 changed the way we engaged the community and due to creative approaches, we were able to continue our outreach efforts, just in a more socially distanced manner.

**Project lead:** Dawn Roberts, Community Health and Volunteer Coordinator

**Next steps:** In FY21, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital will continue to provide evidence-based programs focused on increasing access to and availability of physical activity. It is unlikely we will be able to provide additional programming due to COVID-19 and social distancing but hope to maintain our offerings at 43. Some of the programs we plan to continue include: Walk With A Doc; hopefully reinstating our Healthy Aging luncheons; Community Health Talk; free skate, ski and swim events; and nutrition classes and store tours when allowed. We also plan to continue with our collaborative events with Let's Go! 5-2-1-0, SNAP, local recreation centers, Presque Isle Housing Authority, and other community partners working towards the same goals. It is our hope that we will once again be able to offer more in-person events, but if that is not possible, we will find new and creative ways to continue to provide programs that educate participants on physical activity opportunities and nutrition education.

## Conclusion

Northern Light AR Gould Hospital continues work on identified priorities through its 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.

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