

Salem Health & Wellness Foundation

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Established in 2002 from the sale of The Memorial Hospital of Salem County in Salem, New Jersey, the Salem Health & Wellness Foundation (SHWF) was formed for the purpose of improving the health of poor and medically underserved residents of Salem County. Since its first year of grantmaking in 2004, the foundation has invested \$10 million in programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring access to quality, affordable health services for all.

SHWF's longstanding interest areas include access to health care, prevention, and career opportunities. SHWF's service area includes all 15 municipalities across Salem County—a region that includes urban, rural, and suburban communities.

Program Information: SHWF's mission is to invest in sustainable initiatives that promote the overall health of Salem County residents. The foundation's vision is to be a financial resource for organizations specializing in attending to unmet health needs of the underserved.

► Financial Information:

Total Assets: \$52 million (FY 2012)

Amount Dedicated to Health-Related Grants: \$900,000 (FY 2013)

► Special Initiative: Healthy Kids, Bright Futures

Established in the Fall of 2012, the foundation's Healthy Kids, Bright Futures Initiative seeks to improve the health outcomes for local children and teens. The initiative's twofold purpose focuses on reducing childhood obesity, and curbing teen pregnancy and mitigating sexually transmitted diseases.

- **Objective 1: Reduce Childhood Obesity by Promoting Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles and Nutrition Education** – Salem County ranks 20th out of the 21 New Jersey counties in health behavior measures, including adult obesity and physical inactivity, and ranks last in overall mortality from premature death. In addition to the county's obesity issue, high rates of unemployment and poverty make food insecurity and food access a high priority. Within Salem County there is an 11.3 percent unemployment rate, and 17 percent of the county's children are living in poverty. The percentage of food insecure children in Salem County is 18.6 percent.

There are a wide-range of public and private initiatives addressing nutrition: childhood obesity; access to healthy foods; access to open space and safe places for kids to play

and get exercise; nutrition and fitness education; farm-to-table programs; and new federal food mandates for school cafeterias, to name a few. The foundation will focus its efforts to address critical nutrition issues through the following venues: educational settings; emergency food and social service providers; clinical and health care providers; food access and food retail establishments; and community health and wellness providers.

- **Objective 2: Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases among Young People in Salem County** – According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Thomas Frieden, "Teenage pregnancy really is the intergenerational transmission of poverty." He added that lowering teenage pregnancy rates is "[o]ne of the things we can do that has the biggest impact in societal inequality." Having a child during the teen years carries high costs—emotionally, physically, and financially to the mother, father, child, and community. The teen birth rate in Salem County continues to climb while the national average has started to decline. SHWF seeks to reduce the teen birth rate by engaging community leaders, educators, service providers, and parents. The foundation will promote community efforts that use evidenced-based programming in teen prevention. Areas of focus are Unwanted Teen Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Access to Health Education.

Focused Strategies Will Make the Greatest Impact

"The Salem Health & Wellness Foundation believes its greatest impact can be made by dedicating funds to influence change in reducing the health disparities of children and adolescents in Salem County. Reducing childhood obesity and teen pregnancy is our first commitment to this goal."

Brenda L. Goins
Executive Director

