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Contact: Liz Fitzgerald
603-864-0203
Lfitzgerald@unitedwaynashua.org

COALITION SEEKS TO IMPROVE HEALTH EQUITY IN GREATER NASHUA

Connecting people, advancing economic vitality will lead to better health outcomes, stronger community

(Nashua, NH) – Sharing the belief that the entire community is stronger when everyone enjoys good health and well-being, numerous organizations and individuals have come together to launch One Greater Nashua, a coalition focused on improving health outcomes through enhanced social inclusion and integration efforts.

“Of the things that influence health outcomes, social factors account for 40 percent of a person’s health. If people feel more connected to their community and have better opportunity to participate and thrive, we expect over time they will have better health outcomes and the entire community will be stronger for it,” said One Greater Nashua Co-Chair Liz Fitzgerald, director of community impact for United Way of Greater Nashua. “Research by the NH Center for Public Policy Studies shows that health outcomes vary markedly by demographic group, with people of color having the least favorable results. Our work together seeks to reverse those trends.”

Fitzgerald said the roots of the coalition extend back to a “community conversation” among area leaders convened by United Way and Nashua Community College in September 2012. “From that discussion among elected officials, business CEOs, non-profit agency directors, school administrators, healthcare providers and others, a common issue emerged,” said Fitzgerald. “Many people – including some who have moved to Greater Nashua recently – have a lot to offer but do not feel connected to the community due to language or cultural barriers. When the Endowment for Health announced the request for proposals to improve health equity, it presented an opportunity to bring people together around a common goal: to improve the health of our community by breaking down barriers and increasing social integration.”

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The coalition formed in early 2014 and was awarded a \$10,000 planning grant from the Endowment for Health, which also is supporting health equity efforts in Concord, Laconia, and Manchester. With United Way of Greater Nashua as its fiscal agent and convener, and NH Listens as its facilitator, One Greater Nashua developed a plan to improve health equity through increased leadership capacity, economic vitality, and community engagement.

The Endowment for Health recently awarded One Greater Nashua a three-year, \$60,000 grant to implement the plan, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation has committed to match that amount. United Way of Greater Nashua is providing staff time and \$10,000 for each of the three years. Additionally, coalition members are committing in-kind time and expertise valued at \$42,000 annually.

“Our community’s best resource is the people who live here, and we are stronger when we work together,” said One Greater Nashua Co-Chair Jared Barbosa, soccer coach at Nashua High School South. “Coalition members have done an outstanding job in building a shared vision.”

One Greater Nashua’s plan is a three-pronged approach to improve health outcomes by reducing social barriers and enhancing inclusion efforts in our area:

1. **Youth Leadership and Family Engagement** – Empower youth with leadership skills and opportunities, and encourage better understanding of different cultures. Partners include:
Nashua School District (focus on middle school students and families)
Welcoming New Hampshire
Youth-focused local organizations that offer leadership development and connections to community
2. **Key Gateways and Cultural Navigators** – Help orient newcomers to the community and connect them to learning opportunities as they discover ways to share their unique skills, talent and ideas. Partners include:
Adult Learning Center
Nashua Public Library
Nashua Community College and WorkReadyNH

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- 3. A Diverse Business and Civic Network** –Encourage diverse civic leadership and community engagement. Leverage the strengths and enhance opportunities that showcase Greater Nashua's growing diversity, which will attract young people and professionals to our region. Partners include:

Leadership Greater Nashua

iUGO (Greater Nashua's young professionals organization)

Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce

Nashua Community College

Positive Street Art

Gate City Initiative of the Mayor's Cultural Connections Committee

The coalition is convening three goal groups to implement these three pathways.

"We plan to develop a program for middle school students that builds leadership skills, including listening to other voices and giving back to the community," said Scott Jaquith, vice principal of Fairgrounds Middle School in Nashua and co-chair of the Youth Leadership and Family Engagement group. "We will build on the strength of our community's network of after-school programs," he added.

The second goal group will establish a mentor program to support newcomers in becoming active in their communities. The program will be based on the "Cultural Navigators" model implemented by the Hartford, CT, Public Library. "Many people who are new to Greater Nashua have a wealth of experience, skills, and new ideas that can help our community move forward," said Jennifer McCormack, director of the Nashua Public Library. "We're excited about creating opportunities for newcomers to discover all that Greater Nashua has to offer and how they best can contribute."

The civic network goal group will focus on enhancing diversity in Leadership Greater Nashua. "By engaging leaders from diverse backgrounds, we broaden the spectrum of voices that inform local decisions," said Chris Williams, president and CEO of the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce. "This will enrich our community and make us more economically competitive."

Fitzgerald said One Greater Nashua currently has 49 active participants and is looking to expand. Individuals and organizations that want to help grow a stronger community should contact her at 603-864-0203, or lfitzgerald@unitedwaynashua.org.