



Ledge Light Health District

www.ledgelighthd.org

Preventing Illness, Disease and Injury



Exploring the Spectrum of Public Health

2009-2010 Report

Our Mission

To prevent disease, illness and injury, to protect and nurture our environment and to promote improved health and prosperity for all residents.

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Cover photos—Clockwise from left to right: 2009 Harry Watson Interns, 2009 H1N1 Flu clinic volunteers, Ledge Light sanitarian conducting routine restaurant inspection, 2010 African American Health Council (AAHC) event.

Board of Directors

Ledge Light is governed by a Board of Directors composed of community members appointed by member municipalities. Representation is governed by State Statute and is based on the number of people in each municipality.

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Danielle Gelinias, PT, DPT, CAGS
Maryellen Grace, RN

This report is dedicated to Dennis Sindel, DDS. Dr. Sindel served on the Ledge Light Board of Directors for nine years and was Secretary of the Board for over five years. Dr. Sindel recently resigned from the Board to focus on his other volunteer pursuits. We are grateful for his dedicated service and commitment to public health.



Table of Contents

	Ensuring Healthy Conditions for All Residents	3 - 6
	Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention	7 - 8
	Chronic Disease Prevention	9 - 12
	Disease Detection and Management	13 - 14
	Disease Protection Through Vaccination	15 - 16
	Preventing Food Borne Illness	17 - 18
	Protecting our Environment	19 - 20
	By the Numbers	21 - 22

A Message from the Director of Health

This has been a productive year with more than a few moments of excitement. Certainly, the District’s response to the H1N1 Pandemic Flu took center stage, as our staff and volunteer corps provided over 10,000 vaccines, more than any other health department in the State. Importantly, our sophisticated web-based registration process, coupled with GIS mapping, enabled us to periodically re-target our efforts to address our vulnerable and under-served residents with specially-sited clinics. Kudos to our accomplished staff, shifting three times a week from normal operations to emergency preparedness “incident command systems,” and special thanks to our many community and municipal collaborators and 125 volunteers!

Less visible, but of enduring importance, is our expanding effort to focus on the social determinants of health and the policy/regulatory changes necessary to improve community health outcomes. First, the CDC-funded ACHIEVE program is already bringing about significant revisions to municipal policy/regulations in New London (fresh foods, new bike trails, etc.). Second, the Kellogg-funded HEALTH EQUITY initiative places Groton in a national spotlight as the CADH “Health Equity Index” instrument is utilized for the very first time, aimed at measuring social, economic and environmental conditions in neighborhoods and then analyzing their impact on health status. The District is engaging residents of all ages in meaningful dialog aimed at collecting complimentary data and increasing citizen involvement in public health issues.

Our epidemiology program installed two years ago is now bearing heavy fruit. Last spring, we released our study of ten years’ Teen Pregnancy and STD’s numbers and rates for New London and Groton, and we’re currently reading supplemental reports covering the District’s other towns. The results led to the formation of our first Regional Communicable Disease Prevention Task Force and the submission of a multiyear, multi-million dollar proposal to the federal Office of Adolescent Health.

Finally, let me acknowledge that our performance ultimately is driven by planning, evaluation and accountability on behalf of the residents we serve. Our staff and board of directors (individuals appointed from each member town) are completing phase II of our 5-year strategic planning process that is encompassing the identification and prioritization of the “critical issues” confronting the District, along with consideration of the resources needed to accomplish short-term objectives and long-term goals. We are also in the process of developing and implementing a “customer satisfaction survey” as a part of our overall quality improvement strategy, which will allow us to focus on the best ways to serve our residents. For these and all other matters discussed in this Report, on behalf of our board and very competent staff, I welcome your comments and contributions.

Baker Salisbury, MPH, MSW, MHSA
 Director of Health
 bsalsbury@ledgelighthd.org

Ensuring Healthy Conditions for All Residents

Every day Ledge Light conducts a variety of activities designed to promote healthy conditions and prevent illness. Many efforts are in primary prevention, focusing on the root causes of illness or injury – those social, economic and environmental conditions that lead to poor health outcomes. These efforts help to ensure that systems and conditions are re-designed to prevent all members of the community from getting sick or hurt.

Health Equity Alliance

What are the conditions in Groton that lead to inequities in health? Are there policies or environmental conditions that lead to residents in one part of town having better health outcomes than in other parts? In 2009, Ledge Light received funding to begin a community conversation to answer these questions.

Through funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) is working with local health departments to pilot their Health Equity Alliance Project in three pilot sites: Groton, Hartford and New Haven. CADH's approach to health equity is three pronged, building on the use of data through their Health Equity Index, workforce development and community engagement.

The Health Equity Index measures nine social determinants of health: economic security, employment, education, environmental quality, health care access, housing, civic involvement/political access, community safety and security, and transportation. These data are then correlated with information on health outcomes to demonstrate connections between social and environmental conditions and good or poor health. Many data are presented at the census block level, enabling the health department to compare health outcomes among and between neighborhoods.

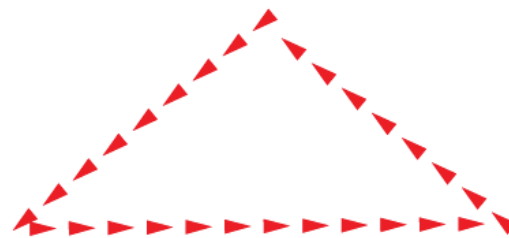
These data will be complemented by stories about real life, straight from residents. They will have the opportunity to share

their experiences, pinpoint which social determinants they feel most affect their health and generate recommendations for changes to improve health outcomes. Ledge Light is working with residents in the Field Crest, Fort Hill, Branford Manor and Mumford Cove neighborhoods.

Ledge Light is also working with our municipal partners to identify opportunities to change policies and practices that might be contributing to inequalities in health outcomes between Groton residents.

Over the next several years, this project will continue to engage community residents in conversations about their environments and social structures that could be changed to improve health outcomes. The implementation of a Health Equity Commission and the requirement of Health Impact Assessments are just two of the policy changes that could be implemented to lead to Groton being a healthier place for all.

Health Equity Index



Workforce Development

Community Engagement

Connecticut Association of Directors of Health's approach to addressing health inequity.

Contact Stephen Mansfield at ext. 307 for more information.

Words to Know

Social Determinants of Health are the social, economic and environmental conditions that influence health outcomes; they include education, transportation, economic security and political access, among others.

Health Disparities are differences in health outcomes between two groups of people. A health disparity, for example, is that African Americans have higher rates of diabetes than White Americans.

Health Inequities describe unfair and avoidable systems and conditions that lead to some people having better health outcomes than others. Inequities between people in the social determinants lead to inequalities in health.



LEGACY Grant

Racism impacts the health of the community. This is the premise held by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) for the Legacy Grant awarded to Ledge Light in 2009.

Ledge Light’s goal is to join together with community partners and residents to eliminate health disparities by focusing on the role institutional racism has on health outcomes.

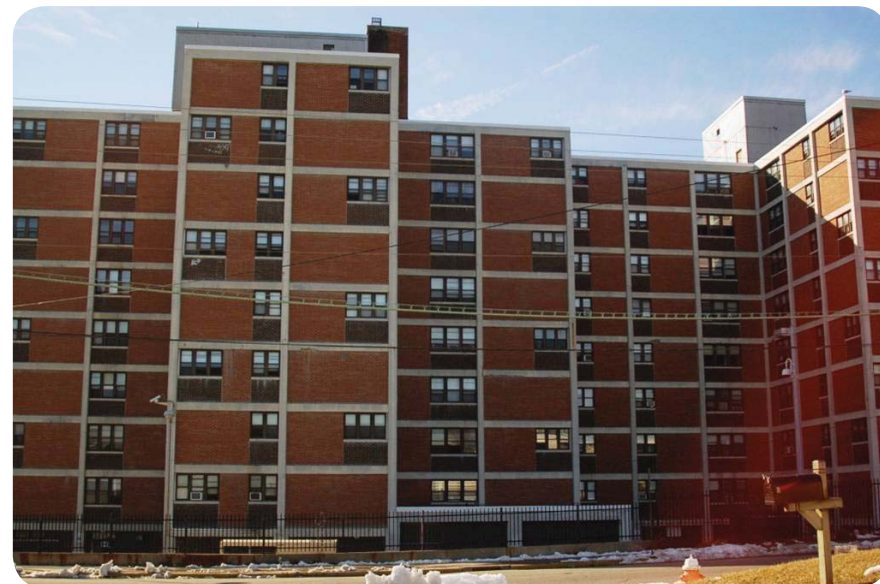
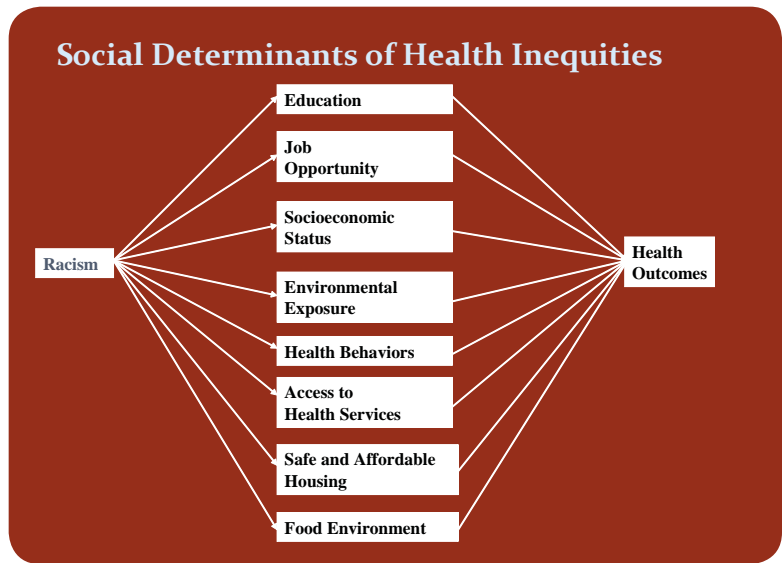
This collaborative project follows the framework provided by the BPHC. The focus of the project is to work with residents of the Thames River Apartments to encourage and empower them to promote positive changes in their community.

Residents of the apartments offered feedback through focus groups and community discussions to identify which social determinants of health are most important to the community. After learning what is most important to residents, a plan is being developed to seek policy changes based on selected social determinants that can be modified over time.

Interested community leaders, residents and

policy makers will be brought together to form a steering committee to work towards systemic change related to the health outcome that the residents chose. This is a grassroots project helping residents to advocate for themselves and create policy change.

Contact Stephanye Clarke at ext. 335 for more information.



Top: Framework provided by the Boston Public Health Commission.

Left: The LEGACY Grant will work with residents from the Thames River Apartments to encourage and empower them to create change in their community.



Action **C**ommunities for **H**ealth, **I**nnovation and **E**nVironmental Chang**E**

ACHIEVE Healthy Communities

In April 2009, Ledge Light received funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials to engage the New London community in a three-year process to improve health by adopting new policies, improving collaboration, and making changes to the community environment.

The first step in the process was to bring key leaders and interested individuals together to form the ACHIEVE New London Team. The team includes municipal and community organizations, health care providers and residents.

This team is working with community leaders in schools, work sites, health care, community organizations and neighborhoods to implement policy and environmental strategies which facilitate improved nutritional status and the cessation and abstinence of tobacco use, increase physical activity, and improve chronic disease management.

According to Ledge Light’s 2007 community health assessment, one out of four adults in the City of New London report having three or more chronic diseases, and one out of three has high blood pressure. If New London follows national trends, two of every three residents are overweight or obese.

ACHIEVE New London is working to improve these outcomes by promoting policies and changes that promote good health.

Contact Cindy Barry at ext. 302 for more information.

Achievements

- Created new community gardens at Calkins Park and Winthrop School.
- Promoted the adoption of the Hispanic Health Council’s nutrition curriculum in grades 1 – 5 at New London public schools.
- Implemented “Take the Stairs” campaign.
- Petitioned for new bike lane on Montauk Ave. and initiated bike share program through Bike New London.
- Created network for Live Well facilitators to coordinate and share resources.
- Increased access to neighborhood markets.



New London bike tour in July 2009 identifies need for safe bike lanes and signs.

Geographic Information Systems Mapping

Images tell stories and can provide graphic information that is easy to understand. Maps can be just as effective as, if not more effective, than words for presenting information, planning projects or evaluating services.

“Where people live, work and play has a dramatic effect on their health; GIS is a technology that can visually link people, place and health” said Ryan McCammon, Senior Sanitarian and GIS Coordinator.

Ledge Light uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping for a number of programs and campaigns. GIS combines the use of data and maps to create info-graphics that compare and visualize information. GIS allows for quick and easy interpretation of data for analysis.

“The majority of time spent creating a map involves assembling, organizing and populating geo-databases, which provide the data to make a map,” said McCammon. “Once the data is assembled, the map can be produced relatively quickly.”

The maps are created with software called ArcMap by ESRI. Ledge Light’s map data comes from member towns’ GIS departments, the Department of Environmental Protection, census information, ESRI and Ledge Light epidemiological data.

The map creation process includes determining the purpose of the map, finding out what data is available and accessible, assembling and standardizing the data, locating data that is missing, and drafting and revising the maps based on a timeline.

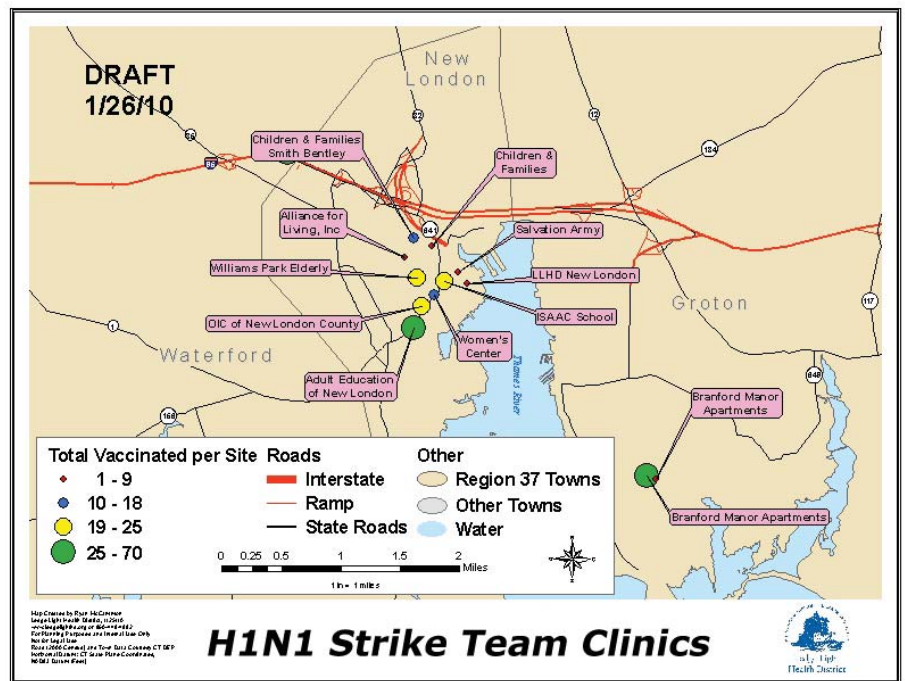
In 2009 and 2010, GIS maps were used for the H1N1 vaccination campaign, More Active People Program, Emergency Response and

the Health Equity Alliance.

“During the H1N1 Vaccination Campaign, GIS allowed the clinic planners to spatially see where clinics should be established based on access, proximity to population centers and transportation,” said McCammon. “The maps are a visual representation of the

thousands of vaccines provided and how effective each clinic was at vaccinating the local and regional populations.”

Contact Ryan McCammon at ext. 301 for more information.



Top: One of the maps used during the H1N1 mass vaccination campaign.

Left: The Tercentennial Legacy Playground at Poquonock Plains park was completed with funds from the More Active People project. GIS technology was used throughout the project.

Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention

Substance abuse in young adults has a negative impact on the individual and community. Alcohol or drug use impairs judgment, has harmful physical side effects for the user and has an emotional impact on families and other individuals involved. By offering community programs that promote healthy choices and provide students and families with information about the consequences of drinking and taking drugs, Ledge Light is making strides toward improving the wellness of the community.

Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition



The Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition had its first meeting in February 2007 after Ledge Light received grant funding from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to implement effective safeguards aimed at preventing underage drinking in Ledyard.

From that first meeting the coalition began working toward its mission of fostering a healthy, safe and drug-free environment for Ledyard youth through community collaboration. Members of the coalition include partners from the Ledyard school system, police department, local businesses, faith-based groups, parks and recreation, parents and teens.

In July 2009, the Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition established an anonymous 24-hour party patrol hotline at 860-464-SAFE (7233). By calling the hotline, anyone can report illegal underage drinking parties in Ledyard. Callers have the option to leave a message or speak to a live person.

One goal of the Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition is to educate adults about the legal ramifications of hosting underage drinking parties. In Connecticut, it is illegal to host a party where alcohol is consumed by minors, and anyone under 21 years of age is prohibited from possessing alcohol on public or private property.

Contact Kerensa Mansfield at ext. 309 for more information.

**Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition
Party Patrol Hotline**

464-SAFE

464-7233

Don't be a party to underage drinking!
Report underage drinking parties to Ledyard's anonymous hotline.

Magnets with the Party Patrol Hotline Number were distributed at health fairs and placed on lockers at Ledyard High School.



"Table tents" were displayed at businesses throughout Ledyard to create awareness of the social host law.

Achievements

- The Coalition conducted a survey of teens in grades 7 to 12 on use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in 2009.
- The 2009 survey documented a decrease in use of alcohol by middle school students when compared with the survey completed in 2007.
- Former Jets player Dennis O'Sullivan was the keynote speaker for a community forum in October, 2009.
- 1,000 table tents were displayed at local businesses to inform patrons about the Connecticut Social Host Law.
- Ledyard Youth Advisory Council members conducted 'locker shock' at Ledyard High school and a 'sticker shock' at a local package store.

Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

www.gaspcoalition.org



With the support of Ledge Light, the GASP Coalition was established in 1999. The Coalition carefully and continually assesses the strengths and weaknesses in the community that promote and threaten positive outcomes for youth. Through programs and marketing, the coalition has reached nearly 20,000 Groton residents. GASP members represent Groton schools, The Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut, Groton Parks and Recreation, Mystic Art Center, town and city police departments, Groton Human Services, Boys and Girls Club, Grasso Technical High School, churches, parents and teens.

Social Norms Campaign

The Groton Youth Survey has been administered four times, most recently in May of 2010, to learn about youth perceptions and behaviors related to substance abuse. Based on information from the 2008 survey, a social norms media campaign targeting teens was launched at Fitch High School in October 2009. This campaign aimed to correct misconceptions students have about underage drinking among their peers. The messages were posted throughout the school and community on posters and billboards.

The posters included statistics such as "3 Out of 4 FHS Teens Won't Ride in a Car With Someone Who's Been Drinking," and "77% of FHS Teens Don't Drink Alcohol."



Youth Against Drugs Committee member Kaitlyn King distributes social norms posters at Fitch High School.

"A lot of campaigns try to use statistics to scare people but these posters did the opposite and shed a new light on the issues by making sure that students know that the majority of people are not drinking," said Kaitlyn King, Fitch High School senior and GASP Youth Against Drugs member.

Presentations about the statistics were also given to faculty to raise awareness of the positive statistics within their school. The Youth Against Drugs Committee helped distribute posters around Fitch, and GASP Coordinator Michelle Hamilton gave students pens and small toy basketballs and footballs with the posters' messages at the schools' football and basketball games. Billboards, banners and news articles were posted about the campaign throughout the year.

High school can be a tough time for teenagers. The social norms campaign looked to relieve students from the pressures of drinking by making them realize that they don't have to drink to fit in.

"One of the biggest misconceptions in high school is that everyone drinks, and that a person will need to drink at some point," said King. "If this misconception can be changed then I think it would prevent a lot of students from feeling like they have to choose to drink."

Contact Michelle Hamilton at ext. 305 for more information.

Achievements

- Hosted Family Day Dinner for 120 Groton citizens in September 2009.
- Implemented Sticker Shock Campaign at liquor stores that reminded customers that it is illegal to purchase alcohol for minors.
- Sponsored compliance checks at liquor stores by Groton Town Police.
- Hosted SMART Trainings for alcohol servers and managers.
- Brought former Jets player Dennis O'Sullivan to speak to 350 Fitch athletes about the effects of alcohol.
- Posted "Parents Who Host Lose the Most" billboard informing parents that it's illegal to host underage drinking parties.
- Attended MADD Power Camp in July 2009 with Youth Against Drugs Committee to strengthen leadership skills.
- Received over \$20,000 in funding from the Drug Free Communities Grant for program activities to benefit the youth and families of Groton.
- Launched a social norms campaign targeting parents with the statistic, "70% of Groton Adults Don't Allow Underage Drinking at Home." The message was placed on 50 lawn signs of parents and community members.

Stay Connected with GASP



Chronic Disease Prevention

Chronic diseases are the number one cause of death and disability in the United States even though many are preventable illnesses. Cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes all fall under this category. Ledge Light offers educational programs for all ages to promote healthy lifestyle changes through eating healthier, getting physically active or quitting smoking.

Women's Healthy Heart and Celebra la Salud

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for all women. Nearly twice as many women die from heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases as from all forms of cancer. Women's Healthy Heart was implemented with funding from the Connecticut Department of Public Health to promote heart-healthy lifestyles for Latino women. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of Hispanic Americans.

The program brought together community partners from churches, health and social service providers and community residents to form the Latino Preventative Health Partnership.

The group's goals included reducing heart

attack and stroke among Latino women and reducing associated risk factors, increasing access to health care and social services and gathering important information about the health status of Latino communities.

Celebra la Salud is a subprogram of Women's Healthy Heart that is aimed at Hispanic women to teach them about cardiovascular health and its maintenance. Through a series of educational seminars that promote a heart-healthy lifestyle, the program aims to help women not only identify the risk factors that threaten their well-being, but also turn their lives around towards a healthy future. Participants received free health screenings, cooking and dance classes, education on managing diabetes, stress management and

goal setting.

The Celebra la Salud Program encourages women to adopt heart-healthy lifestyles, increase their recognition of the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke, and recognize the importance of calling 9-1-1.



Photo: istockphoto.com

Tobacco Cessation

Quitting smoking is not an easy task. Ledge Light received funding from the Connecticut Department of Public Health to organize Freedom From Smoking® programs throughout the District to help ease the stress of residents trying to quit.

The American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® is a nationally recognized program that provides a casual, supportive atmosphere throughout the eight week program. The program teaches skills to help

participants quit along with the opportunity to discuss their challenges and successes.

Participants don't quit the first day of the program; instead they are prepped and learn the stages of quitting. The fourth session is "Quit Day," the following sessions help participants stay smoke-free.

In combination with the free nicotine-replacement therapies that are provided at Ledge Light's classes, this program is a

proven tool for smokers who are ready to quit, including those who have tried to quit in the past.

Contact Kerensa Mansfield at ext. 309 for more information.

African American Health Council

Established in 2007, The African American Health Council of Southeastern CT (AAHC) is a culturally diverse, multidisciplinary, community-based coalition whose vision is a healthier Black community, living free from or appropriately managing cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. The primary goal of the AAHC is to secure and sustain a continuously improving state of health and wellness for residents of African descent in our communities. The AAHC's mission is to develop and implement culturally appropriate strategies that empower and educate, aimed at reducing the prevalence of cardiovascular and other chronic diseases that disproportionately impact Black and under served communities.

Council Celebration

The AAHC celebrated its second anniversary in August 2009 at Connecticut College, celebrating the partnerships that strengthen the AAHC, highlighting local youth and honoring community leaders/organizations with the following awards:

- Dr. Joseph Gadbow, (The Ondray Owens Memorial Outstanding Community Leadership Award);
- Lawrence & Memorial Hospital (The Institutional Partnership Award); and
- The Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut (The Distinguished Community Support Award).

Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better Program

On September 13, 2008 the AAHC invited local African American women to a "Conversation for Healthy Hearts." Forty-five people attended the event, which featured a healthy breakfast, an overview of the Sisters



African American Health Council Co-Chair Rev. Kenn Harris talks to State Representative Betsy Ritter at the Council's second anniversary celebration.

Together program and a motivational speech from Kenn Harris, AAHC Co-Chair.

Modeled after the original program piloted in Boston from 1994 to 1998, and funded by a grant from the CT Department of Public Health, Ledge Light's Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better program is not a diet but rather a guide, helping women learn to eat more nutritiously and to become more physically active.

The program also helps women recognize the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke and the importance of calling 911, and teaches women how to control cholesterol and high blood pressure and reduce heart disease and stroke risk factors. By partnering with existing programs, resources and community members, Sisters Together represents a true community commitment pairing the personal pledge of the participants with in-kind services from community business owners and medical professionals. Program participants in this free program were given pedometers and fitness diaries to record steps taken and log additional fitness and better nutritional efforts.

Contact Stephanye Clarke at ext. 335 for more information.



Within the first seven weeks of the Sisters Together program, Niantic resident Sadie Rivers had lost 8 pounds and taken nearly 1½ inches off her waist. Wearing her pedometer and logging the day's total steps taken helped Sadie track her progress, a component she credits directly with her overall wellness.



Luanna Pina also participated in the Sisters Together program. At the AAHC's second anniversary celebration, she spoke about how participating in the program motivated her to seek regular medical care to properly manage her diabetes and assisted in her weight loss of nearly 40 pounds.

Stay Connected with the AAHC





Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids

Childhood obesity is a major health problem in the United States, and the incidence of childhood obesity has been increasing at an alarming rate. For children ages 6 to 11, obesity prevalence has gone up from 6.5 to 19.6 percent from 1980 to 2008. According to the CT Commission on Children (2004), overweight children face increased risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids is a program that educates students and families about making healthy choices. The program teaches children at elementary schools about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity to avoid health concerns associated with childhood obesity.

Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids was established through a grant from the CT Department of Public Health to reduce obesity in elementary school children ages 5 to 11. The program strives to gain active participation from parents, faculty and community members. The program educates children by teaching them about proper nutrition and demonstrates the importance of physical activity.

In 2009, Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids was in its second year at Mary Morrison Elementary School. Activities held at the school included Jazzercise® classes that kept students active, a walking club and tips to achieve a healthier lifestyle. The program included a healthy tip of the week, an exercise of the week and newsletters. Education on healthy

living was also incorporated into the daily curriculum. At the end of the year a Family Health Night took place emphasizing the importance of eating varied healthy food.

“It is important that students know a way to be active both in and outside of school”

Jennifer Ferrari, Physical Education Teacher

and outside of school and [Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids] was a great way to show them!” said Jennifer Ferrari, physical education teacher. Though the program lasted two years at Mary Morrison Elementary, the school continues to utilize many of the program’s activities.



L to R: Ariana Vilella and Sydney Strauch are the first to receive their healthy dinner at Family Night at Mary Morrison Elementary School.

In 2009, the District also implemented Healthy Kids Are Happy Kids at Nathan Hale Elementary School in New London. Since then, the school has adopted new policies that promote healthy habits among students and teachers. A new “Healthy Snack” policy prohibits items such as soda, energy drinks, and candy. Teachers are encouraged to take physical activity breaks and walk with students around school grounds on days when there are no physical education classes. Healthy tips are read over the loudspeaker in the morning, and included in newsletters to parents.

Contact Carolyn Wilson at ext. 318 for more information.

Teen Tobacco Prevention

Tobacco Possession Campaign

The GASP Coalition implemented a statewide Tobacco Possession Media Campaign targeting tobacco merchants and schools. The campaign’s purpose was to increase awareness of the tobacco possession law. The law states that it is now illegal for someone under the age of 18 to possess tobacco; previously the law only made it illegal for teens to purchase tobacco products.

Ledge Light implemented a letter campaign to all 106 local tobacco merchants highlighting the CT State Statutes regarding tobacco sales to minors, including appropriately translated materials in Urdu and Spanish. Ledge Light collaborated with two youth service bureaus to create a 30-second PSA on not selling tobacco to minors.

Tobacco Merchant Trainings

Ledge Light and the GASP Coalition sponsored tobacco merchant trainings on staying compliant with Connecticut tobacco laws; 33 merchants attended breakfast training sessions and twenty-two attended Lunch and Learn outreach sessions.

“Looks are Deceiving” Contest

A tobacco prevention poster contest was implemented in three Groton middle schools and the high school. The poster contest, depicting the theme “Looks are Deceiving,” received entries from 113 youth from East Lyme, Groton and New London. A billboard with the winning drawing was displayed in Groton.

Under 18?
It is illegal to Possess or Purchase Tobacco Products

\$50 for the First Offense
\$100 for Any Subsequent Offense

think smart - don't start!

www.ct.gov/dmhas/tpep



A window decal that was sent to tobacco merchants informing consumers about the tobacco possession law.

More Active People

The purpose of More Active People (MAP) is to reduce childhood obesity among District children ages 8 to 18 by highlighting local parks and farm stands in order to encourage physical activity and healthy food choices. Ledge Light, along with the parks and recreation departments of all member towns, state agencies, non-profits and land trusts have implemented programs to achieve this goal.

Our Geographic Information System (GIS) was used to produce fun, kid-friendly maps that highlight recreational facilities and farm fresh foods within each municipality. In May 2009, Sanitarian Ryan McCammon taught Fitch Middle School students about GIS by using materials created for the MAP program and an online map web site.

Town maps and “feature park” maps highlighting two to four parks within each municipality were placed on pocket folders containing information about getting healthy and local resources. They were sent out

to grades three through five in schools throughout the District or through parks and recreations departments. A separate district-wide folding map was created and distributed to middle school students, highlighting all farm fresh food sources and municipal and state parks.

The District contributed to municipal parks by partially funding the rubberized ground surface

for Groton’s new, all access Tercentennial Playground at Poquonnock Plains Park and sponsoring new signs at feature parks of the other four municipalities. The signs include facility information and emphasize health and fitness messages to promote physical activity. Visit the District website to download maps and activity books.



L to R: New London City Councilors Kevin Cavanagh, Adam Spreccace, Peg Curtin and New London Parks and Recreation Director Tommie Major unveil MAP sign at Bates Woods Park.

Disease Prevention and Management

In addition to programs and services that prevent the onset of disease, Ledge Light offers services focused on stopping the spread of communicable disease and helping people to better manage existing chronic conditions.

Communicable Disease Surveillance

“As a health department the core of our mission is to prevent disease,” said Russell Melmed, Ledge Light’s epidemiologist. “We need to know the burden of disease in our community so we can take steps toward improving the problem.”

The State of Connecticut has a list of diseases that must be reported to the local health department by all laboratories and physicians. Diseases that are reported include tick borne illnesses, food borne illnesses, some viruses like chicken pox and measles, and some sexually transmitted diseases. Ledge Light also receives reports from the CT Department of Public Health and hospitals.

Ledge Light’s public health nurse and epidemiologist review the reports and conduct required follow-up investigations to make sure ill people are taking the appropriate precautions to stop the spread of disease. In the case of a food borne disease outbreak, the epidemiologist partners with a sanitarian during the investigation process. They work with the individuals affected to determine the most likely source of exposure in an outbreak.

Reportable disease information is analyzed to look at disease rates over time, in the whole population, and in particular subgroups. By monitoring diseases, Ledge Light’s epidemiologist is able to recognize if diseases are found disproportionately in a community. If it is decided that there is a disease outbreak, Ledge Light can implement interventions to stop the spread of the disease.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

“Disease surveillance relates to prevention in many ways,” said Melmed. “Surveillance allows us to see if our prevention efforts are working.”

In the last two years, the communicable disease department engaged in various forms of education and outreach to prevent disease, illness and injury in the District. Seniors were taught how to avoid and prevent falls. Teachers and children were educated at schools about hand hygiene. Blood-borne pathogen trainings were conducted for day care providers. Skilled nursing facility and homeless shelter staff were educated on infection control and disease prevention. The communicable disease team was also engaged in a massive H1N1 Flu prevention campaign, conducting programs for many businesses and community groups in the District.

In 2010, Ledge Light published reports analyzing the numbers and rates of sexually transmitted diseases and teen births in New London and Groton (follow-up reports focusing on East Lyme, Ledyard and Waterford will be published later this year). The reports highlighted alarming rates of STD’s among young people and prompted the formation of the Regional Teen Health Task Force. The Task Force is composed of community agencies, faith communities, the school districts, medical providers, residents, parents and teens and is looking at comprehensive community-wide initiatives to stop and reverse the disease trends and create healthy opportunities for our young people. (The Reports are available for download on our website at http://www.ledgelighthd.org/disease_prev/STD.)

Contact Kris Magnussen at ext. 331 for more information.

Easy Breathing[®]

Asthma is the most common chronic disease in children. It affects up to 20 percent of children in some local areas. A written asthma management plan can help patients minimize asthma episodes and increase the number of symptom-free days. An asthma treatment plan is important because it tells the parents what to do when the child is feeling well and what to do when the child is sick.

The Easy Breathing[®] program was funded by CT Children's Medical Center with funding from the CT Department of Public Health to increase pediatric primary care providers' adherence to the 2007 National Asthma Education Prevention Program guidelines. By working with local pediatricians, Ledge Light was able to increase the number of children who had written asthma treatment plans.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Putting on AIRS

Putting On AIRS (Asthma Indoor Risk Strategies) is an in-home asthma education program developed locally as an initiative of the New London County Asthma Action Partnership. AIRS is now funded statewide by the CT Department of Public Health.

The AIRS program provides a two pronged approach to improving asthma self-management skills. First, the client works with a Certified Asthma Educator to review the asthma disease process, increase symptom awareness, assess asthma medications and their use, and review the asthma treatment plan. Next, the client works with an environmental sanitarian to look for environmental asthma triggers in the home. At the end of the visit, clients

receive a visit summary including suggestions on easy and inexpensive ways to reduce asthma symptoms and written educational materials on asthma medications and home "environmental trigger" avoidance.

The AIRS program has achieved impressive results in reducing doctors office visits, decreasing emergency room visits and missed days of school and work due to asthma out of control.

AIRS visits are free to all state residents. Residents with asthma in the twenty-one towns of New London County should call Ledge Light to make an appointment. Residents outside of New London County can call Ledge Light for a referral to the

program nearest their home.

Program Outcomes

- 92% decrease in the number of physician office visits for worsening asthma symptoms.
- 100% decrease in the number of emergency room visits.
- 95% decrease in the number of days absent from school or work due to asthma.
- 86% decrease in the number of times a rescue inhaler was used in the last week.

Breast Health Awareness Campaigns

Through a grant from the Connecticut Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Ledge Light performed community outreach to inform women about breast health awareness. Outreach to over 4,000 women in eight shoreline municipalities emphasized the importance of early detection. In addition, 72,000 households received a sticker placed on the front of their newspaper, reminding women to schedule their mammograms. The program coordinator also conducted outreach

throughout the District.

On Sept. 16, 2009 the Breast Health Task Force of Southeastern Connecticut held an art show entitled *In The Pink: A Celebration of Women's Strength, Beauty and Healing*.

The art show ran at the Hygienic Art Galleries in New London and featured art representing the breast cancer experience and healing process. It was the show's

third consecutive year made possible by the Komen Foundation.

The Hygienic Art Galleries donated their portion of art sales from the show to the Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, a comprehensive screening program for medically under served women.

Contact Mary Buckley-Davis at ext. 308 for more information on these programs.

Disease Prevention Through Vaccination

Vaccinations are the best prevention against a number of diseases like chicken pox, influenza, polio and measles, all of which can cause illness or even death. Ledge Light is preventing disease among residents by monitoring the vaccination activity of children. Ledge Light also provided vaccinations to residents during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic.

H1N1 Vaccination Campaign

The onset of the H1N1 influenza in the spring of 2009 posed new and interesting challenges for local public health. When the vaccine was released through the federal government in the fall, the District was ready to conduct a mass vaccination campaign, something Ledge Light had not done before. Through the dedication of our volunteers and staff and the cooperation of our municipal and private industry partners, thousands were vaccinated from the towns of East Lyme, Groton, Ledyard, Lyme, New London, North Stonington, Old Lyme, Stonington and Waterford through the start of 2010.



Staff and volunteers were given vests to clearly identify their role during the clinic.

Clinic Highlights

35 Vaccination Clinics

10,255 Vaccinations

Community Support

Ledge Light received several hundred emails from members of the community that attended vaccination clinics.

My two older children have both received their first doses of the H1N1 vaccine through Ledge Light sponsored clinics, and I would like to let you know that both the registration process and clinics have been very organized and well run. You are doing a wonderful job. Thank you!

I just wanted to say, too, that you all did a great job w/ the clinic! Everything ran so smoothly (I was dreading being there w/ all three kids alone but you all made it so easy!)

I got my flu shot tonight and wanted to say thank you. What an efficient clinic! It took very little time to go through the lines. All the staff were helpful and professional. Thank you for a job well done!

I do appreciate the work ledge light health district has done to help prevent swine flu in our area. This process is well organized and the people I spoke with were very helpful. Thank you for your efforts!



Volunteers Make a Difference at H1N1 Clinics

All the H1N1 vaccination clinics were made possible with the support of volunteers, District staff and community partners. More than 125 volunteers, from a range of professions including doctors, nurses and non-medical professionals, assisted with administering vaccinations, clinic set-up and operations.

Many of the volunteers are members of Ledge Light's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC provides trained clinical and non-clinical volunteers who can respond during a public health emergency. The group is a specialized component of Citizen Corps, a national network of volunteers dedicated to ensuring homeland security.

Ledge Light provides orientation and training to the MRC on a variety of topics. Ledge Light is always looking for volunteers to join the MRC and provide assistance during emergencies. To find out more or join the MRC, contact Kris Magnussen at ext. 331.



Dr. Martin Franco Tolentino trains volunteers and staff for a flu clinic.

Immunization Action Program

Vaccinations are critical in preventing the spread of disease in the community. Many childhood diseases are preventable with vaccinations, but some children are not up to date with their shots.

The Immunization Action Program's goal is to assure that children receive recommended immunizations from medical providers in a timely manner.

A major component of the program is tracking immunization records in the Connecticut

Immunization Registry and Tracking System (CIRTS). All children born in Connecticut are entered in this system at birth, which monitors the child's primary immunizations from birth to 2 years old. Parents can opt-out of the program if they desire. This system allows the Ledge Light Immunization Coordinator to identify children who are late in receiving vaccines, and can generate an immunization record upon request.

When children missing vaccines are identified, attempts are made to locate them and provide

their parents with information about vaccines. Connections to providers for vaccination appointments are made for children that are late with their shots.

Between July 2008 and December 2009, the Immunization Action Program was able to reach almost 500 families with children that were not up-to-date with vaccinations.

Contact Kris Magnussen at ext. 331 for more information.

Preventing Food Borne Illness

Ledge Light's sanitarians are responsible for inspecting food establishments, reviewing plans for new food establishments and ensuring compliance with the Connecticut Public Health Code. They also investigate any complaints associated with food service establishments and investigate all reports of food borne illness.

Food Safety Training Promotes Healthy Habits

Ledge Light conducts routine and complaint-based inspections of local eateries as required by the Connecticut Public Health Code and District Regulations. The primary purpose of these inspections is to ensure that appropriate measures are being taken to prevent food borne illness.

As part of efforts to prevent food borne illness outbreaks in local food service establishments, Ledge Light offers a Qualified Food Operator (QFO) training course called ServSafe®, a nationally recognized food safety and education program developed by the National Restaurant Association. Ledge Light also offers the CAFÉ class, a shorter class developed by District sanitarians to give people a primer on the basics of food safety.

“The health department can't be there every day; each establishment needs someone trained and knowledgeable about safe food handling. The QFO and CAFÉ training classes prevent food borne illness by ensuring food service workers understand proper practices.” said Ryan McCammon, Senior Sanitarian.

The QFO class covers a wide range of material in an eight-hour session. Participants are given a text book prior to class, and the class reviews the material which culminates in a 90 question exam. To receive certification, 75 percent of the questions must be answered correctly. In the QFO class, participants learn about the types of food borne illnesses, approved sources of

food, how to prevent cross contamination, temperature controls, promoting personal hygiene, proper facility design and equipment use, cleaning and sanitation, pest control, and recognizing food allergens. The class also looks at the legal and safety sides of restaurant operation with a section on liability, the responsibilities of management, working with the health department when complaints are filed, planning and designing facilities to support the restaurant's menu, and hazards communication on federal regulation of handling chemicals. QFO classes take place about five times per year.

The CAFÉ class reviews basic food safety information over a three-hour period. The class is held once a month. Although these classes were originally designed for food

service workers, members of the public are welcome to register and learn more about preventing food borne illness in their own kitchens.

The QFO and CAFÉ classes are taught by Ledge Light sanitarians, who are able to share their knowledge of food safety, codes and regulations, and best practices. The material covered in both classes include information that will help prevent the spread of food borne illness.

Contact Ryan McCammon at ext. 301 for more information.



Sanitarian Hillary Lawrence checking for temperatures as part of a restaurant inspection.

Food Workers and Illness: Stopping Food Borne Outbreaks in Restaurants

According to the CT Department of Public Health, food borne diseases cause an estimated 75 million cases of illness and 5,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.

To help prevent some of these cases, Ledge Light has partnered with the CT Department of Public Health to launch a campaign designed to educate food service owners and managers about the risks associated with ill food workers. The campaign messages are displayed on posters and brochures that are provided to all Class III and IV food service establishments.

“The posters are a great way to open up communication between food service management and staff, and between the food service establishment and Ledge Light,” said Katie Baldwin, Ledge Light Sanitarian.

The messages focus on recognizing symptoms of illness and stress the importance of

ensuring that food service workers are excluded from work for the duration of their illness and recovery. The campaign also focuses on the regulatory requirement for food service owners and operators to notify the local health department if one of their employees is suspected to be ill.

Ledge Light recognizes that food service establishments are extremely busy and that their time is valuable. To assure that food service establishments have the tools they need to develop appropriate food worker exclusion policy, we are committed to providing the necessary guidance and expertise to each establishment.

Interested establishments can contact Ryan McCammon at ext. 301 to schedule an overview of their existing policies or to develop new protocols and procedures.

Understanding Food Service Establishment Classifications

The CT Public Health Code divides food service establishments into four different classifications, based entirely on the type of food handling and preparation involved in their menu.

Class I establishments are considered lowest risk because they sell mostly pre-packaged commercial foods and hot and cold beverages. Food preparation is limited to non-potentially hazardous foods (e.g., popcorn, etc.) or potentially hazardous foods heated and served in original package within four hours. At the other end of the spectrum, Class IV establishments are considered to be highest risk because food handling practices include the heating, hot-holding, cooling and reheating potentially hazardous food, which may increase the likelihood of contamination or temperature problems.

The establishment classification determines many things, including how often the restaurant is inspected and how many Qualified Food Operators must be on staff. For more information visit the Regulations and Licensing Section of our website or call Ryan McCammon at ext. 301.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Ill food workers can spread food borne diseases to restaurant patrons.

Ledge Light Health District Public Health Alerts



The FDA, USDA and other agencies regularly announce food recalls associated with potentially hazardous product contamination. Ledge Light works to share information about food recalls with food service establishments and residents through our Public Health Alerts system. Alerts are sent via email and typically include links to the agency announcing the recall for more information. Food service establishments may also receive an automated voice message alerting them to potentially dangerous products.

You can sign up to receive Public Health Alerts on our website at www.ledgelighthd.org. Alerts are also sent regarding products that are recalled because of lead contamination, rabies postings, and disease outbreaks.

Protecting Our Environment

Environmental factors affect the health of the community. Poor conditions can lead to disease outbreaks, respiratory illnesses, or contaminated water supplies. Ledge Light upholds and enforces the CT Public Health Code. Sanitarians review and approve plans for septic systems and wells. The environmental health division also fields nuisance complaints, conducts lead, mold and indoor air quality investigations, monitors shellfish beds and beach water quality, and provides other environmental public health services.

Regulation of Septic Systems

A failing septic system can have a negative impact on an individual's health and the environment. To prevent failures, Ledge Light oversees activities related to septic systems.

All septic systems that handle less than 2,000 gallons per day fall under the jurisdiction of the local health department. The CT Department of Public Health and Department of Environmental Protection handle all septic systems over 2,000 gallons.

Many homes throughout the District rely on on-site sewage disposal systems to treat their wastewater. These systems are composed of a septic tank used in conjunction with a leaching structure. The waste flows from the house to the septic tank, where settling occurs. The solids then accumulate in the bottom of the septic tank, and the liquid is dispersed over a large area of soil, where biological filtration takes place.

Ledge Light is responsible for permitting all activities related to the construction or repair of any subsurface sewage disposal system. These activities include investigating complaints related to failing septic systems, reviewing and approving plans for septic systems, conducting soil evaluations and percolation tests to assure site suitability, retaining records for all new and repaired septic systems, and assuring that any construction activities, or change in use of the property, do not adversely impact the on-site septic system or reduce potential



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Septic tanks need routine maintenance to prevent failure.

repair area.

A failing septic system may cause environmental or health concerns. The sewage may back up into a home or lawn. Ledge Light will conduct an investigation when complaints or questions are received; a sanitarian will work with contractors or engineers to determine the best method of repairing a failing system.

“To avoid septic failure we recommend routine maintenance,” said George Calkins, senior sanitarian. “The State Public Health Code says a system should be pumped every five years to help extend its longevity.”

Contact George Calkins at ext. 330 for more information.

Testing For Lead In Homes

Photo: iStockphoto.com



Lead paint in homes can be ingested by children causing elevated blood levels, which can cause children to suffer from developmental issues.

Southeastern Connecticut is well known for historic seaport communities with stunning colonial architecture. Since many homes were built before federal standards changed in 1978 banning lead-based paint from residential properties, lead can still be found in many local residences.

Lead is a metallic element that can be found in older paints. It can be especially harmful to children because it interferes with growth and development, specifically to the major organs and tissue. Children under the age of 6 exposed to even minor amounts of lead may suffer developmental issues. Lead can affect adults as well, but the long term effects are not as severe.

The primary pathways for lead poisoning is through the ingestion or inhalation of lead particles, usually in the form of lead dust or paint chips. Old lead paint tends to chip and

can be ingested by children either directly or from contaminated soil. Airborne lead dust, usually produced by friction surfaces (windows, stair treads, etc.), can be inhaled or ingested.

Ledge Light receives reports of elevated blood lead levels in children. If blood lead levels are above 10 ug/dl in a child under 6, Ledge Light sanitarians initiate an investigation to identify the source of the lead. If lead is identified in the home, the sanitarians work with the homeowners to develop abatement plans to reduce the possibility of lead poisoning.

In addition to following up on reports of elevated blood lead levels, Ledge Light staff work closely with the staff of the City of New London's Lead Hazard Reduction Program (LHARP), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development. Ledge Light works with LHARP staff by connecting families of children with elevated blood lead levels with the program. District staff also work with local pediatricians to educate them about the new state law requiring all children be tested for elevated blood lead levels.

If a homeowner needs to renovate an area that tests positive for lead, they should find a qualified contractor who is knowledgeable about the Environmental Protection Agency's regulations. They can use techniques such as liquid encapsulation, a process that seals lead paint surfaces and makes them safer.

Ledge Light offers educational materials related to lead-safe work practices and the effects of lead on an individual's health. Staff members can help answer questions from residents regarding lead and any causes of concern for potential lead contamination.

Contact Ryan McCammon at ext. 301 for more information.



Ledge Light By The Numbers

Preventing Food Borne Illness:

In 2010, there were 619 District food service establishments:

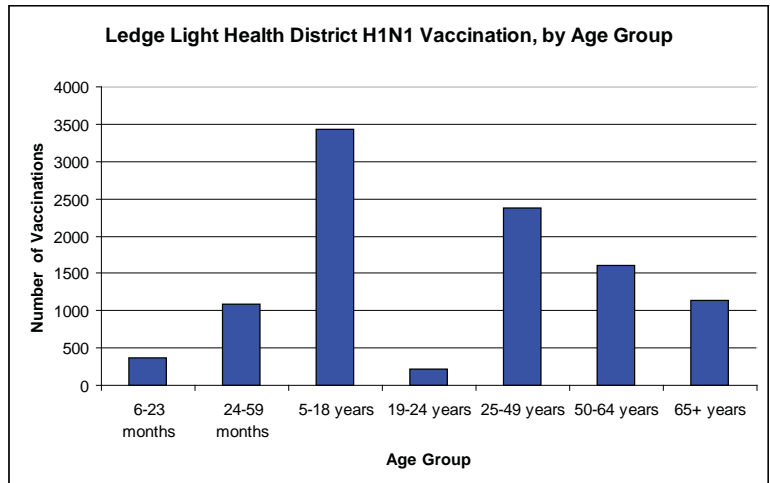
38 Class I	1 Inspection Per Year
58 Class II	2 Inspections Per Year
131 Class III	3 Inspections Per Year
392 Class IV	4 Inspections Per Year

In addition to regular food service establishments, District sanitarians inspect food vendors at temporary events—more than 150 between July 2009 and June 2010. That’s more than 2,300 inspections conducted to ensure that food service establishments are using safe food handling techniques.

In addition, Sanitarians inspect 137 cosmetology establishments and 67 public pools each year. The 67 day cares in the District are inspected every other year and lodging establishments are inspected on a complaint basis.

Preventing H1N1:

In 2009 and 2010, the District provided over 10,000 vaccinations to help control the spread of H1N1 Flu



Preventing the Spread of Communicable Diseases:

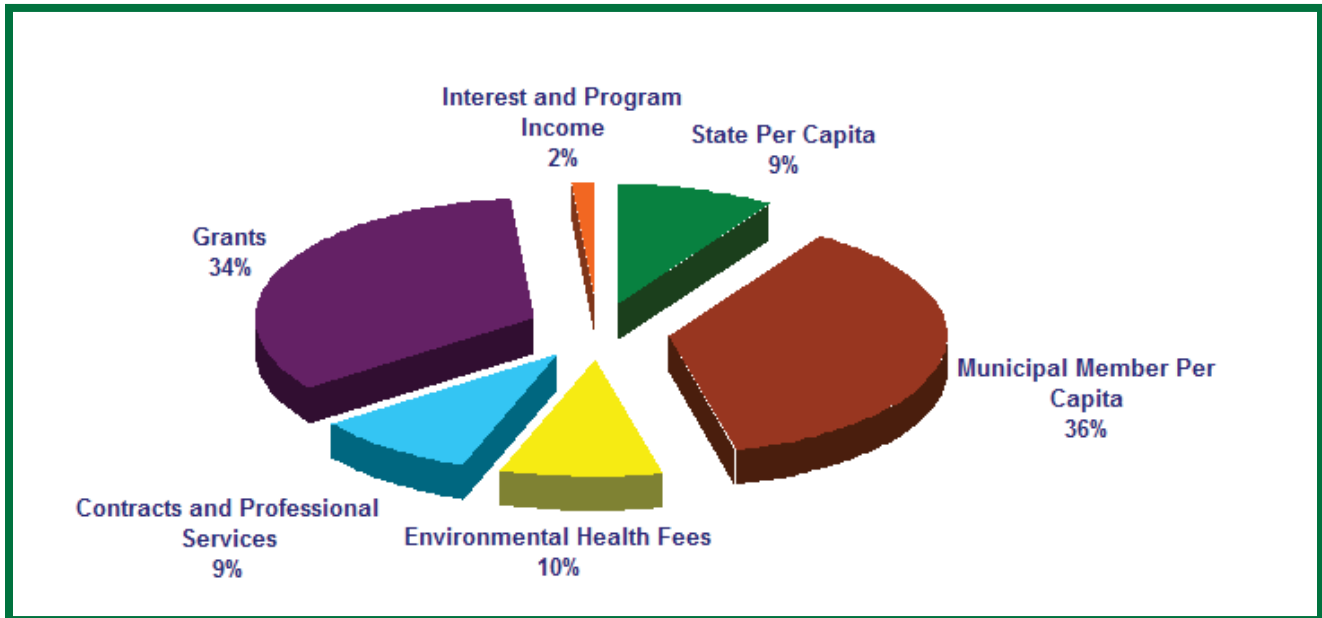
In 2009, Ledge Light’s public health nurse did contact investigations for three resident cases of tuberculosis and followed up on an additional 13 cases of tuberculosis. District staff also did follow-up investigations for three cases of pertussis (Whooping Cough), eight cases of respiratory or gastrointestinal illness in skilled nursing facilities, and 25 cases of food borne illness (15 salmonella, one shigella, one cyclospora, and eight campylobacter).

Preventing Youth Substance Abuse:

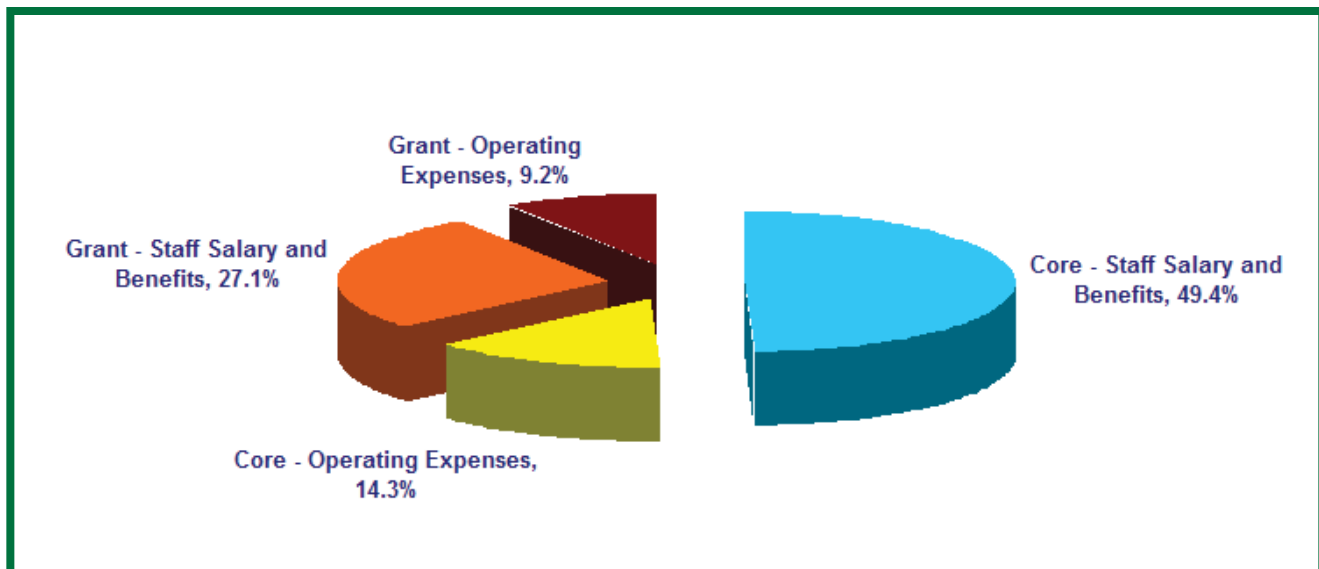
- *120 people attended the Family Day dinner in Groton on September 28, 2009.
- *1,033 students in grades 7–12 completed the Groton Youth Survey in May 2010.
- *300 Groton high school athletes attended a presentation on the effects of alcohol use.
- *5 barrels of prescription medications were collected at the May 2010 Prescription Drug Take Back Event.
- *Recent drinking reported by middle school youth in Ledyard decreased from 25% in 2007 to 4% in 2009.
- *278 Ledyard parents participated in a survey about their perceptions of youth substance use.



FY10 Revenue Sources



FY10 Expense Classifications



Ledge Light Health District

Your Health Department

www.ledgelighthd.org

p. 860.448.4882

f. 860.448.4885



Ledge Light provides professionally managed, comprehensive public health services designed to improve the quality of life, health and safety of its residents. Ledge Light's service area consists of East Lyme, Groton, Ledyard, New London and Waterford, with a service population of over 120,000. Ledge Light is a member of the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Stay connected with us on Facebook and Twitter or sign-up on our website for Public Health Alerts.

Stay Connected with Ledge Light HD



Contact Us

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Ledge Light Health District Offices:

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