



For Immediate Release

June 11, 2015

Contact: Michele Sharp

Director of Communications and Public Affairs

(203) 317-1098

Sharp@chime.org

CHA to Recognize Bristol Hospital and New Milford Hospital With 2015 Community Service Awards

WALLINGFORD – At its 97th Annual Meeting on Tuesday, June 30, 2015, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Bristol Hospital and New Milford Hospital, a member of the Western Connecticut Health Network, with a 2015 Connecticut’s Hospital Community Service Award. Sponsored by CHA and the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the Connecticut’s Hospital Community Service Award recognizes outstanding achievement in community service. Bristol Hospital is being recognized for its Family Wellness Program, while New Milford Hospital is being recognized for its Plow to Plate® program.

Concern about obesity in the community led Bristol Hospital’s Parent and Child Center to create the **Family Wellness Program**, which uses healthy gardening, family exercise, and nutrition education to encourage overall health for low-income families. In less than two years, the program has touched the lives of nearly 150 families, and the obesity rate of the participating families has improved.

There are four parts to the Family Wellness Program: Gardening for Health, Shopping Matters, Family Zumba, and Nutrition Education. Additional physical activity classes for toddlers and preschoolers were introduced for children too young to participate in Zumba.

Body mass index (BMI) data from 33 children and 20 parents showed that two-thirds of the children had a decrease in BMI after participating in the program. Of those children, 70 percent had parents who participated in at least three of the four parts of the program, reinforcing the success of a family-centered approach. Of the participating parents who completed at least three parts of the program, 100 percent had a decrease in their BMI.

Plow to Plate® was created at New Milford Hospital, a member of the Western Connecticut Health Network, in response to astonishing upward trends in obesity and related diseases. The initiative, which advocates healthy food as a direct path to disease prevention while promoting the local agricultural economy, delivers a fully integrated, healthful food service program to patients, staff, and the community. It uses fresh produce from nine local farms.

Plow to Plate® has expanded to encompass important nutrition-based community programs including a “Senior Suppers” program, which provides seniors with a nutritious meal for \$5; a Youth Chef Advocates program, which offers an experiential curriculum teaching high school applicants about nutrition and the food industry; an information table at a weekly farmer’s market; and a Signature Dish Initiative, in which more than 30 establishments serving food – including restaurants, markets, and schools – use menus and signs to communicate the importance of healthy food choices.

A prime example of positive outcomes and community advocacy is a three-year study conducted by Plow to Plate® cofounder, Diane D'Isidori, MD, in collaboration with the United Way. To measure the effectiveness of sustainable health education, in 2012, Dr. D'Isidori measured the BMI of 148 children age four who regularly visited her practice. Data were collected over three years, with the study ending in 2015, when the children were age six. In 2012, 13 percent of the enrollees were considered obese with 24 percent considered at risk. In 2015, 9 percent of the enrollees were considered obese with 19 percent considered at risk; a decline of 4 percent and 5 percent respectively over three years of sustainable health education.



Plow to Plate® staff include: Kerry Gold, Dining Services Director, New Milford Hospital, Unidine Corporation; Michele MacDonnell, RD, Clinical Nutrition Manager, New Milford Hospital, Unidine Corporation; Susan Twombly Community Outreach Coordinator; and Tom Koobatian, MD, Executive Director and Chief of Staff.



Staff from the Parent and Child Center at Bristol Hospital include (from left): Patient Educator Cecilia Garay, MBA; Program Manager Kimberly Carmelich, MPA; and Programs Supervisor Tracy Radden, MPH.

###

About CHA

The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, community health, health equity, and hospital reimbursement.