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*Nutrition for Health*

## How to Fund New Wellness Programs and Initiatives: Out of the Box Solutions

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Wellness programs for youth and adults have been shown to have a positive impact upon health, reduce obesity, and change unhealthy habits. A successful program, however, needs individuals in the community who will champion for the program and partners who have an interest in improving the health of children. These programs also require funding. The tightening of school and municipal budgets of late are forcing school and town officials to be creative and resourceful in seeking “out of the box solutions” to fund your wellness programs.

Health-focused foundations such as Harvard-Pilgrim, Nemours, and Anthem and area hospitals are a potential funding source for student and educational staff wellness programs. In Maine, a school employee wellness partnership among the Maine Teachers’ Association, their Health Benefits Trust, Occupational Medical Group, and the Anthem Foundation has generated preliminary positive results in use of sick leave, reductions in Workers’ Compensation, and other staff health-related issues. Also in Maine, the successful 5-2-1-0 program was supported by the Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital in Portland, Maine.

Not-for-profit organizations -- the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and others -- support school/student wellness programs through national and local initiatives. The YMCA incorporates training and support from the CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Children Health) Program to prepare high school students and adults for wellness programs in the classroom and after school.

Summer residential and day camps, recreation departments, and community business may be able to share their facilities during non-peak times. A partnership with a town recreation program can expand funding opportunities, access to facilities, and personnel support for wellness programs for students. Community businesses such as karate schools, ski shops, golf courses, bowling alleys, and the like will often volunteer their time and resources to work with students, teachers, and schools. Companies, especially those associated with health, food, beverages, and pharmaceuticals, have an interest in building healthy communities and many of them commit resources to help communicate health messages to children.

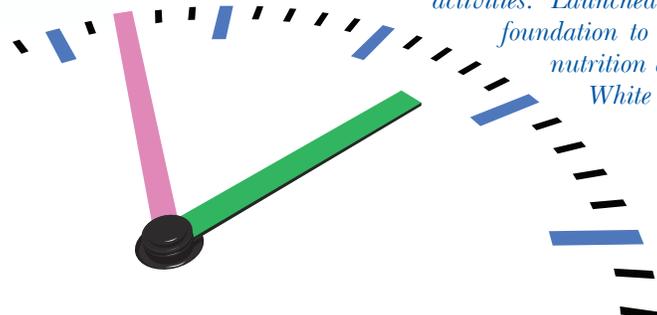
Reach out to people resources. School and community “champions” help provide the impetus to explore new and creative ways of securing funding for wellness initiatives. A grants professional in the community may be willing to work pro bono assisting schools and school districts to locate grant funds and write proposals. A key staff member who is well-respected by others can serve as a motivating force or mentor to others who are interested in incorporating new wellness initiatives.

Think creatively and “out of the box” to identify solutions for funding new wellness programs and initiatives. The excitement generated around these new opportunities can be contagious!

*Mr. Abramson is Superintendent of Schools for RSU #38 and a former YMCA CEO living and working in Maine.*

*Dr. Finn is CEO of the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition, which is dedicated to teaching children the important concept of energy balance. In teaching lifelong wellness habits children must learn that what they eat and what they do must be in balance.*

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