

*educate • close the gap • innovate*



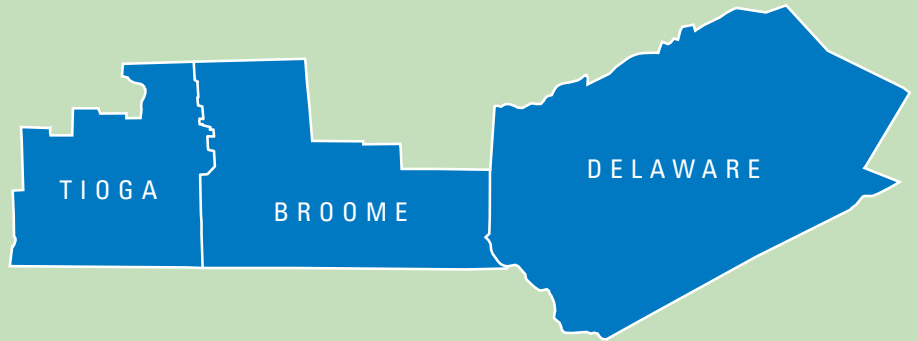
*of South Central New York, Inc.*





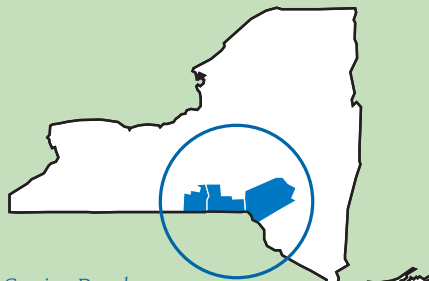
of South Central New York, Inc.

P.O. Box 416  
Whitney Point, NY 13862  
Phone: (607) 692-7669  
Toll free: (888) 603-5973  
[www.RuralHealthNetwork.org](http://www.RuralHealthNetwork.org)



### Mission Statement

The mission of the Rural Health Network of South Central New York, Inc. is to promote and improve the health of rural communities and strengthen each community's capacity to respond to health needs by reducing barriers and improving access and use of health and human services through advocacy, communication and partnerships.



*Serving Rural  
Broome, Tioga and  
Delaware Counties*

### Our Vision of Success

The Rural Health Network of South Central New York works toward optimal individual and community health and wellness, which are supported by:

- Individuals and families with adequate and affordable health insurance;
- Accessible, efficient and collaborative health and human service delivery systems driven by best practice models;
- Reduction in health disparities for the most vulnerable populations;
- Strong community norms for healthy lifestyle choices and optimal physical and mental health.

Our vision of success is predicated on the strength of the Rural Health Network of South Central New York, its commitment and participation of our stakeholders (Board, staff and community partners working together), and the availability of resources required to achieve desired results.



## Leadership Message

Those of us who work in health and human services spend much, if not most, of our time addressing needs and deficiencies: illnesses, poverty in all its forms, and related pain and suffering. Sometimes this approach makes complete sense. Famine, epidemics, and natural disasters all require an immediate response to meet urgent human need. So do individual health crises.

But what about our long term work to improve health, quality of life, and wellness? When there is not an immediate need, should we be organizing our work only around deficiencies and symptoms?

*Acknowledging the strengths of an individual or community generates energy and spirit.*

Increasingly, as organizations and communities work to help others, they are following a different strategy, focusing on assets and strengths. There is something hopeful about such an approach—something life affirming. Simply acknowledging the strengths of an individual or community generates energy and spirit.

Organizing our work around our strengths does not have to mean taking an all-or-nothing, naive approach. It's not a matter of simply counting our blessings, or working to increase our assets without seeing what's wrong in the world around us. Instead, as we come to recognize our assets, we can tap them to meet needs.

One example of how this can work is the Rural Health Service Corps (RHSC), a program that the Rural Health Network initiated in December 2005. Our young adults are an important asset, but one that is growing increasingly scarce, as recent New York State out-migration statistics for this age group confirm.

Providing a challenging one-year or six-month national service opportunity for Southern Tier residents ages 18–25, the RHSC encourages young people to make a short term, and often a long term, commitment to living, serving, and working in rural New York State.

In 2006, the first five Rural Health Service Corps members provided 3,111 hours of service. These dynamic young people worked on projects and programs in areas ranging from rural transportation to prescription assistance and health education. Clearly, tapping the assets of youthful energy, passion, and learning benefits our rural residents and communities.

Another example of an asset-based approach is to build on the agricultural capacity and potential of our rural region. Supporting local, sustainable agriculture, we provide the foundation for a more regional and healthy food system. Why wouldn't a Rural Health Network get involved in making the connection between a fundamental rural asset—agriculture—and working with this resource to help address the epidemics of obesity and related chronic disease that compromise our health and productivity?

This approach to promoting wellness in rural communities via the food system is being replicated throughout the United States and is gaining momentum through initiatives such as the Convergence Project, a collaboration between the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Society Program, Kaiser Permanente, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As the Kellogg Foundation explains on its Food & Society web site, the Convergence Project "...seeks to weave a strategic convergence in and among three strands of an emergent movement: active living, healthy eating and healthy food systems." By supporting agriculture in our rural region, to grow and process healthy, nutritious foods for consumption locally, we reap a harvest of economic, community,

social, environmental, and personal health benefits.

In 2006, The Rural Health Network helped introduce these emerging food system changes to a diverse audience through the Growing Health Forum held in Binghamton, N.Y. Two hundred people attended, representing the health, human service, and education professions as well as agriculture, food businesses, and farm service agencies. The Forum featured all local foods prepared by local restaurants and caterers. A distinguished panel of experts, drawn from New York State Farm to School programs and from the medical and agricultural fields, shared a vision of how and why re-claiming our agricultural production and food system is important to health on all levels.

We are excited about shifting the focus in much of our work to build on the existing and inherent strengths in our rural communities.

Sincerely,



Natalie M. Thompson  
President



John (Jack) C. Salo  
Executive Director



# educate

## The Rural Health Network of SCNY EDUCATES...

In 2006, we continued to help community members gain knowledge they can use to help them lead healthier lives.



*"This program woke me up to my bad eating habits and how important exercise is. I learned a lot from this program."*

—Delaware County  
Simply Health Graduate

*"Thank you. It was the incentive I needed. I am exercising more and choosing more fruits and veggies."*

—Tioga County  
Simply Health Graduate

### Broome County Steps to a HealthierNY

We provided a second year of service to rural Broome County communities under contract with Broome County Steps to a HealthierNY. As part of this work, we offered 14 "Lunch & Learn" programs at primary care facilities and other health service locations, where participants learned how to reduce chronic disease through health lifestyle changes. Staff also helped introduce and support both programming and Train the Trainer sessions for Broome County's Mission Meltaway, an eight-week healthy weight management education program.

### Simply Health

Building on the success of Mission Meltaway in Broome County, in 2006 the Rural Health Network implemented a similar program for residents in Tioga and Delaware Counties. "Simply Health" is a nine-week, community based wellness program designed to help participants live a healthier life by eating better, increasing their physical activity, and reducing stress. In its first year, Simply Health completed three programs, serving a total of 48 participants. Of those participants, 36

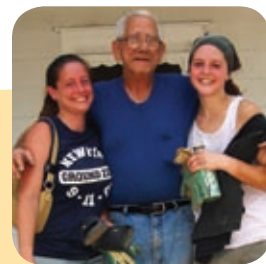
graduated (75% graduation rate), and 25 of those graduates (69%) improved in one or more health indicator measurements (blood pressure, weight, body mass index, and/or waist measurement). Nine Simply Health programs are planned for 2007. Simply Health is available to the general public, workplaces, and organizations.

### GHOSTS

While working at the Rural Health Network as interns, two students from Binghamton University's Decker School of Nursing developed a creative educational tool that patients and clinicians can use to help identify risk factors for chronic disease. "GHOSTS" (genetics, hypertension, obesity, stress, toxins, and sedentary lifestyle) has been developed into posters and brochures.

### KRAMES™

We distributed 1,516 KRAMES™ Health Information Sheets through nine sites, including schools and primary care offices. These sheets cover topics such as flu, head lice, and dental caries.



## The Rural Health Network of SCNY SUPPORTS OUR COMMUNITIES...

The past year brought several important opportunities to join with our neighbors in community-wide efforts:

### June 2006 Flood

Rural Health Service Corps members and staff from the Rural Health Network of SCNY helped families in Harpursville (Broome County), Nichols (Tioga County), and Walton (Delaware County) recover from the devastating flood of June 2006. We provided 70 hours of hands on service during June and July 2006, helping six families with cleanup.

### Whitney Point Relay for Life

Staff of the Rural Health Network have participated as a team in the Whitney Point Relay for Life since its inception. The relay celebrates survivorship and supports the American Cancer Society. In 2006, we also worked with the Whitney Point Central School District to offer the Relay for Life Health Challenge, a health education competition held during the relay.

### Cover the Uninsured Week

Rural Health Network staff participated in three rural outreach events for Cover the Uninsured Week, May 1–7, 2006. Our staff also assisted with the WBNG Cover the Uninsured Phone-a-Thon.

# close the gap



## Tioga County Active Living Partnership

The Rural Health Network of SCNY continued to participate in the Tioga County Active Living Partnership. In 2006, the partnership distributed the Trails of Tioga map. It also laid plans for a regional conference on developing community walking and biking trails, which the Partnership held in the spring of 2007.

## Rural Health Network Website

We continued to update and improve our website in 2006. For example, we added: the intake application for residents who need help obtaining health insurance, prescription medication, or vision services; the application for the Rural Health Service Corps; and the resource guide, "Options for Vision Services in the Southern Tier." The site received an average of 25,565 "hits" per month, for a total of 306,779 in 2006. The Rural Health Network website can be accessed at: <http://www.ruralhealthnetwork.org/>.

## The Rural Health Network of SCNY Helps CLOSE THE GAP...

Many rural residents still find it hard to gain access to health care. Closing the gap between residents and affordable, high quality health care is central to the mission of the Rural Health Network of SCNY. In 2006, we provided the following services to our rural residents:

### Tioga County Transportation Directory

During a summer of service, Rural Health Service Corps member Jarrett Greene collected all the information needed to create a web-based transportation directory for Tioga County. Residents who need transportation to health care facilities can use this directory to find the services that work best for them. We plan to add web-based transportation directories for Broome and Delaware Counties in 2007 and 2008. To view the Tioga County Transportation Directory, visit the Rural Health Network of SCNY website at <http://www.ruralhealthnetwork.org/> and click on the link beneath the yellow bus.

### Southern Tier HEAL NY Grant

In 2002, the Rural Health Network of SCNY helped bring together United Health Services and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital to develop the Patient Health Information Network, a shared information technology resource. Based on this early partnership, these two major health systems started planning to apply together for a grant under HEAL NY, a state program to improve health care information services. They were approved for funding in 2006. One important component of the Southern Tier HEAL NY program was a forum sponsored by the Rural Health Network on improving access to health care by using software that determines patient eligibility.

### Facilitated Enrollment

In 2006, the Rural Health Network laid the groundwork for becoming a Facilitated Enroller under contract with Mothers and Babies Perinatal Network. We started performing this role in January 2007, helping rural residents apply for Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and other publicly funded health insurance programs.

*"I received all of the medications that I applied for, thank you so much for all of your help."*

*—Uninsured rural resident assisted by RHN in applying for free prescription medication to help manage asthma, high blood pressure and Parkinson's Disease.*

### Vital Statistics

Here are some of the ways in which the Rural Health Network helped close the health care gap for rural residents in 2006\*:

- **Total Number** of individuals assisted in accessing health services: 1,041
- Number of **new individuals** assisted in accessing health care services: 775
- **Total Number** of individuals assisted who we confirmed received prescription drugs to manage chronic conditions: 159. Wholesale value of medications applied for: \$188,230.96.
- Number of **new individuals** assisted who we confirmed received prescription drugs to manage chronic conditions: 103. Wholesale value of medications applied for: \$121,935.52
- Number of **new individuals** enrolled in vision services (exams, eye glasses) programs: 111. Estimated value of services and products received: \$19,425. This represents a 34% increase over the number of people served in 2005.
- **Number of individuals** in need of health insurance and referred to public and private health insurance programs: 246

\* 2006 represents reports run in the date range of 02/01/06–01/31/07

# innovate

## The Rural Health Network of SCNY INNOVATES...

Taking advantage of the rich resources available in our own communities, we expanded or launched several creative new programs in 2006.



### Rural Health Service Corps

Created by the Rural Health Network of SCNY in late 2005, the Rural Health Service Corps (RHSC) taps the energy of young adults from all over the Southern Tier to help promote and improve the health of rural residents. Members who take part in this AmeriCorps National Service program gain the opportunity to serve the community—and learn from the experience—for up to a year.

The first RHSC member, Lea Hodges, led a pilot program to make the Network's Prescription Assistance Program more effective. Working with the large health

systems and private primary care practices in our service area, Ms. Hodges implemented changes that allowed the Rural Health Network to take over much of the work when patients apply for free prescription medications. This means better service for patients and a lighter work load for staff at many primary care practices.

Danielle Moore, the second member to enroll in the Rural Health Service Corps, lent her time and talent to several health education efforts. She prepared educational materials for the Simply Health program, trained staff and partners on the use of KRAMES™ Health Information Sheets and Food Pro™ Software, assisted with "Lunch and Learn" Programs at primary care sites, and developed the Whitney Point Relay for Life Health Challenge.

Rural Health Service Corps members provided 3,111 hours of service in 2006.

### Regional Community Food Project

The Regional Community Food Project (RCFP) promotes and helps implement policies and practices that will lead more people to consume nutritious, locally produced foods. The aim is to create food-secure communities and improve the quality of life in South Central New York State.

RCFP began in late 2005, when several organizations involved in Farm to School efforts in the Southern Tier asked the Rural Health Network to help them write a grant proposal. Those discussions soon led to a more formal collaboration. Since October 2005, a diverse group of farmers, farm organizations and U.S.D.A. staff, health professionals, dietitians, Cornell Cooperative Extension staff, public school administrators and food service directors,

and food bank and food pantry leaders has been meeting each month to exchange information and explore ways to work together.

RCFP conducts marketing and educational efforts to promote local agriculture; serves as an advocate with elected officials and charitable foundations; supports members' work to bring locally-grown foods into the schools; and provides a forum where members from different professions can share ideas.

Among other activities, the RCFP promotes the use of locally produced, nutritious food as the cornerstone of community health. This cross-sector collaboration works to build on the rural asset of sustainable agricultural capacity and production to improve health on all levels, and to strengthen the rural economy. The Rural Health Network of SCNY provides facilitation services and administrative support to RCFP.



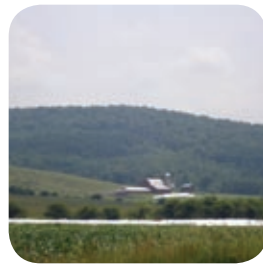
*"The most rewarding aspect of AmeriCorps has been the understanding that I am helping others. Whether I'm facilitating a wellness program, ... planning a conference on trail development, analyzing a person's food diary, or staffing a health fair, I know I'm providing a service that may change a person's life. The satisfaction of helping others and serving my country, all while advancing my career, could not have been achieved had I passed on the opportunity to serve in AmeriCorps."*

—Rural Health Service Corps Member, Erin Signor

### Growing Health

Complementing the work of the Regional Community Food Project, the Rural Health Network of SCNY hosted "Growing Health: A Forum on Local Food and the Opportunity to Nourish Self, Families & Communities" at the Binghamton Regency Hotel on October 18, 2006. Two hundred attendees enjoyed a meal of foods and beverages grown or produced by more than 30 farms and food-related businesses in the area. Eleven local

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restaurants and caterers and the Oneonta Job Corps Culinary Arts Program created exquisite appetizers, soups, salads, main dishes, and desserts, all from local ingredients. Health and human service professionals shared ideas and information with farmers, food producers, and others representing the food system.

After the meal, a panel presented information on the connections between food, local production, and health. The presenters included: Jennifer Wilkins, Ph.D., Cornell University; Richard H. Wu, MD, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital; Billie Best, Regional Farm & Food Project, and Raymond Denniston, Johnson City School District.

*“Growing Health provided an opportunity for those in the fields of health and human services to meet and begin a dialog with farmers, and food related businesses on the many ways that locally produced food can help build health, wealth and community.”*

—Jack Salo, Executive Director, Rural Health Network of South Central New York

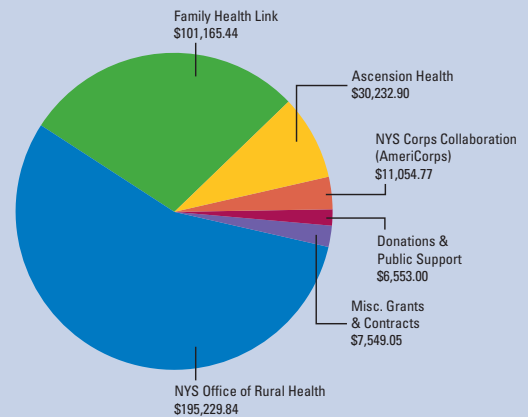
**Neighbors Helping Neighbors**

Started in late 2006, the Neighbors Helping Neighbors project uses local volunteers to help residents access health care and other vital services. Focused on the communities of Richford, Berkshire, and Spencer, it seeks to replicate the success of the Community Care Network of Nichols, which provides advice and technical assistance to this new initiative.

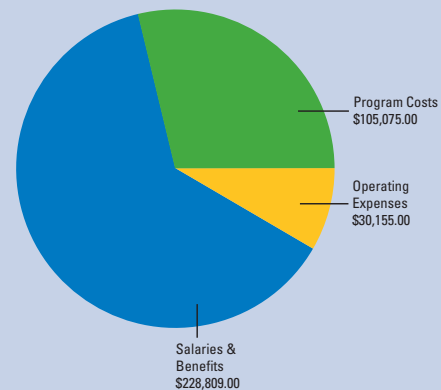
As a partner in Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the Rural Health Network works with the project’s lead agency, Tioga County Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP). The Rural Health Network provides facilitation, planning, training, and information technology services, primarily for the Richford-Berkshire community.



**2005–2006 Revenue  
Total: \$351,785.00**



**2005–2006 Expenses  
Total: \$364,039.00**







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Tioga and Delaware Counties



**Check out our web site at [www.ruralhealthnetwork.org](http://www.ruralhealthnetwork.org) to see how the Network can benefit you or your organization in our quest for building healthy lifestyles.**

#### **Board Members 2006**

Natalie Thompson - *President*  
Shawn Yetter - *Vice President*  
George Spencer - *Treasurer*  
Anne Wolanski - *Secretary*  
Diane Albrecht  
Larisa Gryczko Avellaneda  
Lucy Bianco  
Rev. Willem Bodisco-Massink  
Thomas Briggs  
Patricia Fell  
Cookie Henehan  
Heidi Kolwalchyk  
Pamela Stewart Fahs  
Hans Peeters  
James Savage  
Ruth Shenk  
Lynn Verduin

#### **Staff:**

Karen Amshay, *Health Promotion Associate*  
Christine Berwald, *Director, Health Care Access*  
Penny DeFavero, *Office Manager*  
Beverly McLain, *Customer Service Representative (Resigned October 2006)*  
Joanne Murray, *Administrative Assistant*  
Joy Olson, *Director, Health Promotion*  
Jack Salo, *Executive Director*

#### **Rural Health Service Corps Members:**

Jessica Duncan, *Primary Care Program Specialist (06-07 Program)*  
Jarett Greene, *Transportation Project Coordinator (05-06 Program)*  
Lea Hodges, *Primary Care Program Specialist (05-06 Program)*  
Danielle Moore, *Health Promotion Associate (05-06 Program)*  
Erin Signor, *Health Promotion Associate (06-07 Program)*