



Abstract Title: OHC: A community invests in health and wellness

Janice Moreside
Dalhousie University

Introduction/Background

Our Health Centre (OHC) arose out of a need to promote a healthier population in Chester Municipality, NS, which has, among other health challenges, one of the highest rates of obesity and diabetes in Canada (Lunenburg County's Vital Signs, 2013). Recognizing that the provincial government was not in a position to fund a new collaborative health centre, the community took it upon itself to research what resources and supports were important to the population, raise the funds to build the centre, and populate it with health and wellness professionals in keeping with our mission.

Purpose

The Mission for OHC is: *To improve the health and wellness of all people living in the Municipality of Chester and surrounding areas.* This includes not only medical attention, but ongoing education and facilitation of wellness and support programs and services that are collaborative, accessible and inclusive.

Approach or Action

The OHC Program committee, which includes health professionals and representation from the Municipal Recreation Department, consulted with residents throughout the municipality. This provided data regarding Social Determinants of Health, and the Top 10 Health Needs (met and unmet), as perceived by residents of Lunenburg County. (Tell Us Where It Hurts, 2016) The Campaign committee felt strongly that everyone in the municipality should be given the opportunity to donate to the building of OHC, no matter their financial status. In addition to personal, corporate and government asks for funding, fund-raising also included community events (i.e. yard sales, lotteries).

Outcomes

Numerous community members came forward to donate land, project management expertise, architectural, interior and landscape design, etc. A total of 4.2 million dollars was raised: approximately 50% from the community, 30% corporate, and 19% from government (provincial and municipal).

Conclusion

OHC opened its doors in November 2016. The first of several open houses was proudly offered to the community, where all were invited to tour *their* health and

wellness centre. In addition to housing physicians and nurses, mental health/addictions, public health and continuing care staff, OHC houses numerous flex offices that are rented out part time to professionals that we believe will enhance health and wellness in our community. There is a large community room which is used for education, exercise classes, visiting speakers and other wellness related programs. We are currently set to open a walk-in clinic this spring. As many residents and guests do not presently have access to a family doctor, this helps fulfill our goal of improving the health and wellness of all people in our community.

References

Lunenburg County's Vital Signs: Taking the pulse of our county. (2013) Community Foundation of Nova Scotia. www.cfns.ca
Tell Us Where It Hurts: a report on the results of the OHC Programming Team's community consultation project (2016) OHC Programming Team Final report.

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