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City Neighborhoods to Build on Their Strengths

More than 120 community neighbors and community-based organizations will come together July 8 to focus on the strengths and assets existing in their neighborhoods that can be mobilized toward local health improvement efforts. Funded by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF), the Neighborhood Health Status Improvement project is providing resources, training, and technical support to five local grantee groups who have come together to address the physical, social, and economic factors that contribute to poor health in their communities.

According to John Urban, president of GRHF, “Traditionally, needs-driven programs have concentrated on what is wrong with city neighborhoods, focusing on things like poverty, unemployment, crime and illiteracy, rather than on the positive aspects of communities. The community groups participating in this program will approach the challenge from the asset-based community development perspective, which begins with the concept that every person has abilities and gifts that can be put to good use in making their neighborhood a better, healthier place. The training and year-long technical support will emphasize discovering the assets that already exist in the neighborhoods, and building on those assets to improve the health status of residents.”

Training will be in early July and provided by the Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) of Northwestern University. The training will prepare participants to:

- Assess the many strengths of their local residents, associations and organizations.
- Mobilize their entire neighborhood toward asset mapping, problem solving, and building and supporting a new vision for their neighborhood.

An important ingredient of asset-based-community development is to constantly build and rebuild relationships between local residents, associations and institutions, and
generate awareness of their interdependence and a sense that “people can count on each other”. Deborah Puntenney, the lead training and technical support consultant on the project notes, “Over several decades, we’ve seen this approach produce dramatic results in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the nation. When neighborhood residents recognize themselves as assets, their energies can be unleashed in all sorts of ways to define health priorities and help produce healthier communities.”

The organizations will work collaboratively to identify and mobilize the assets in their neighborhoods, identify health priorities, address broad health concerns, and work from the ground up to improve the health status of residents. The Neighborhood Health Status Improvement grantees include:

- Northeast Bridges to Wellness/Puentes a la Salud - Anthony L. Jordan Health Center
- Healthy Outcomes through Participation, Education, and Empowerment (HOPE) - Ibero-American Development Corporation
- Coaching, Organizing, and Accessing Community Health (COACH) - Charles Settlement House
- Wellness in Our Neighborhood (WIN) - Grace Community Village
- S2AY Rural Health Network - Dundee Neighborhood Health Improvement Project

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Deborah Puntenney of ABCD may be contacted directly for information about the training and for quotes at 847 467-2930.