

SOCIAL CAPITAL/ENVIRONMENT

Social capital or asset-based community development are strategies and resources the community uses to "build from the inside out"¹. Individual capacities, voluntary associations and various institutions are the foundation of social capital. Social capital is an indicator of the strength and health of a community and there is strong evidence that a community's social capital is associated with improved health status. The latest scientific research confirms a direct association between community or social connection and health: the more cohesive the society, the better the health statistics.² Indicators that we have chosen to measure social capital in our community are based on the literature and include: mentoring and volunteer programs, arts and cultural associations, voter turnout, land trusts, walking trails and youth protective factors, such as community rewards for positive involvement.

In Greater Franklin County, individuals contribute in many capacities to social capital, such as the Visioning process, the Youth to Youth Program and Maine Wood Use Recovery. There are also opportunities for the more marginalized citizens, such as the mentally ill, to become more active participants in the community. In 2003, the HCC launched a series in the Franklin Journal that helped promote awareness and destigmatize mental illness. In the series, local individuals discussed their mental condition, hopes and dreams. The community response was tremendous and plans are being made to provide more opportunities for the mentally ill to contribute to the community.

Greater Franklin County also has many volunteers. In the largest school district, MSAD 9, there are approximately 1,500 volunteers, more than half the number of students in the district--2,700. There are more than six mentoring programs, which not only involve adults but also students from the University of Maine at Farmington. The Foster Technology Center Mentoring Program has 47 mentors who are professionals representing a wide-range of occupations. The direction of the mentoring program is career focused with an emphasis on service to the community.

However, there are some weaknesses in Greater Franklin County's social capital foundation, including the loss of jobs in the wood products and shoe

¹ McKnight J and Kretzmann J. Building Communities from the Inside Out. A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 1993.

² Evans R, Barer M, Marmor T, deGruyter A. Why are Some People Healthy and Others Not? The Determinants of Health of Populations. 1994.

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industries and the environmental hazards associated with these industries. There is also a low percentage of residents who attain a college degree, 18.4%. Increasing college enrollment and job opportunities, while protecting the environment, would greatly improve social capital in the HCC Service Area.

Another shortcoming is that few people participate in selectmen meetings. The average number of people in Greater Franklin County who participate in twice-monthly selectmen meetings is four. According to several people in the area's town offices, there is a "trend to leave these meetings in the hands of the selectmen, who have been voted into office." Attendance at annual town meetings, however, is greater. In the largest town of Farmington, town meetings are usually attended by 150 citizens. However, there have been cases when controversial issues drew much larger crowds; approximately 1,200 people attended the Farmington town meeting concerning the building of a local Wal-Mart. Registered voter turnout was not high during the last state Referendum. During the May 2003 Referendum, 20% of the registered voters in Franklin County turned out to pass with the narrowest of margins the 2003-2004 budgets for the schools. Very few registered voters in Jay (12%) also turned out to vote for the twenty-year tax break for International Paper Company, a leading employer for the Jay/Livermore Falls area which pays about 70 percent of Jay's taxes. Eighty-two percent of the voters approved of the tax break.

There is also a need to engage youth in the community. Approximately 40% of the 10th grade students in Franklin County report that they are not strongly attached to their neighborhoods and over a quarter of the 10th grade students would not be able to ask their parents for help if they had a personal problem. Youth and adult involvement is critical in developing social capital. The Great Maine Schools Project is one step in the right direction. Mt. Abram High School intends to become a true community high school. It plans to keep its building and amenities open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for community use and will encourage adults to take classes if they want and allow them to take the school bus if personal transportation is a problem.

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Youth Mentoring and Volunteer Programs in Greater Franklin County

SAD 9 School District: 1500 volunteers

Betsy O'Donal, the director of volunteers for the largest school district in Franklin County reports that at SAD9, "The community is very participatory in the schools, 1500 volunteers! Huge number of volunteers for a district that consists of 8 schools and 2,700 students. The total number of hours volunteers work is approximately 20,000 hours a year. The community is also blessed with neighbors that are very helpful. A professor at University of Maine at Farmington has even conducted research on the neighbors in this area that make it such a participatory and helping community."

(contact: Betsy O'Donal 778-3707)

GirlsTalk & Teen Voices: 60 mentors

Mentoring programs between the University of Maine at Farmington and Kingfield Elementary School youths. The program is designed to raise aspirations, build self esteem, emphasize personal responsibility and create an environment that fosters a strong commitment to the community.

(contact Laurie Tranten @ 265-4132)

Pathway Partners: 55 mentors

A mentoring program serving MSAD #58, which consists of mainly one-on-one relationships spanning 2-4 years. Mentors and proteges are matched based on career interests, hobbies, and personality traits.

(contact Kristen Brown @ 678-2455)

PALS – Positive Adults Lending Support: 32 mentors

This program pairs caring adults with middle school youths and is based on career, interests and aspirations. The program is highly regarded by all the students, staff and volunteers and is open to everyone, not just "at risk" youths. The program plans to continue into high school.

(contact Betsy O'Donnel @ 778-3707)

SAD #9 Buddy Program (K-3): 8 mentors

Serves Mallet School and Cascade Brook School in Farmington by pairing adult mentors with first, second and third grade youths in a non-academic manner. (contact Betsy O'Donnel @ 778-3707)

Electric Grange Network: 35 mentors

This program offers art programs and a safe environment for youths.

(contact Anna Mosher @ 585-2299)

Foster Technology Center Mentoring Program: 47 mentors

This program matches students attending Foster Technology Center with professionals representing a wide range of occupations. The direction of the mentoring program is career focused with an emphasis on service to the community. (contact Ann DeRaspe @ 778-3562)

Big Brothers/Big Sisters: 53mentors (majority are juniors and seniors in Jay and Livermore High School

On site based mentoring where juniors and seniors mentor elementary school students who may be at risk in the future. Guidance counselors determine those elementary school students which may benefit. The high school students, according to Roy Gedat, "make better volunteers than the adults. The schools, especially Jay High School, are very supportive." (contact Roy Gedat @ 743-7035)

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Youth Mentoring and Volunteer Programs in Greater Franklin County

Franklin Community Health Network: 200 volunteers

A locally controlled nonprofit, integrated network of rural health – care providers, created by Franklin Memorial Hospital in 1991. The network now includes five affiliates:

- Evergreen Behavioral Services
- Franklin Memorial Hospital
- Healthy Community Coalition
- Pine Tree Medical Associates
- Western Maine Physicians Hospital Organization

(contact Jan Hannaford @ 778-6031)

University of Maine Cooperative Extension – Franklin County: over 340 people involved

4 – H/Youth Development: 155 youths involved in school programs, 4-H club programs

Gardening and Nutrition: Master Gardner Program, Home Horticulture

Family Living: 186 in 11 Extension Homemaker Groups, Senior Companion Program

(contact Terry Berry @778-4650)

Arts and Culture

Upcountry Artists-Over 100 visual arts members present monthly programs and annual arts and crafts fair at Sugarloaf Mountain. There are also numerous art galleries in Franklin County which sell local art, such as the *SugarWood Gallery* (an artists' cooperative), and *Mainstone* (designs jewelry using the famous fine gems and minerals of Western Maine).

UMF music, theatre and visual art departments

Foothill Arts—Summer art camp, school residencies, community arts projects

Arts Institute of Western Maine-Sponsors chamber music concerts that feature local musicians

Sandy River Players—Community theatre group

Home to Pulitzer-prize winning poets and writers

MSAD 9 Orchestral Strings Program—Largest and best in the state, all third graders learn to play the violin

Moonlight Madness Arts Festival—July arts festival in Farmington, features local artists, music

Franco-American Festival “Terre pis Ciel”-Festival in Jay that celebrates Franco-American culture and ancestry

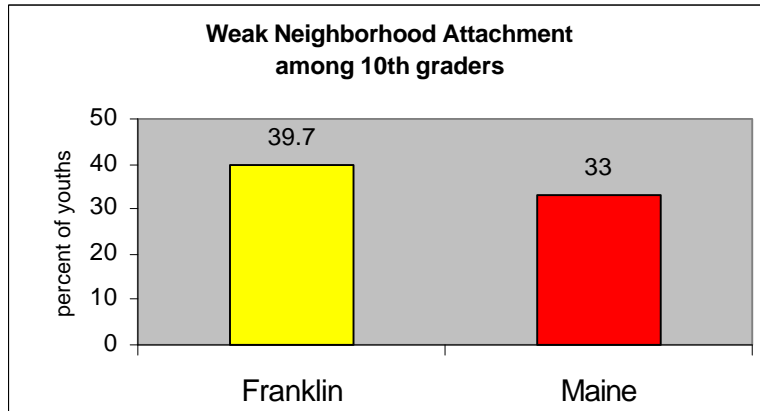
Wilton Blueberry Festival—Annual event in early August, features artists, parades and blueberries.

Made in Franklin County-Showcases best craftspeople and farms

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Graph 52

Weak Neighborhood Attachment

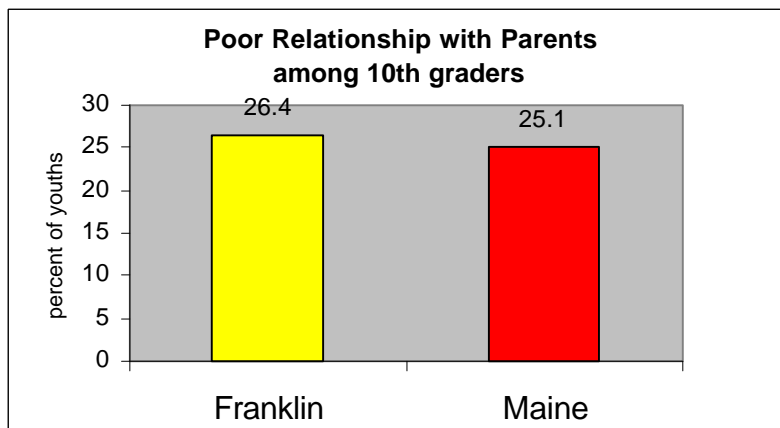


❖ Source: Maine Office of Substance Abuse, MYDAUS 2002.

Approximately 40% of 10th graders in Franklin County would not miss the neighborhood they now live in.

Graph 53

Poor Relationship with Parents



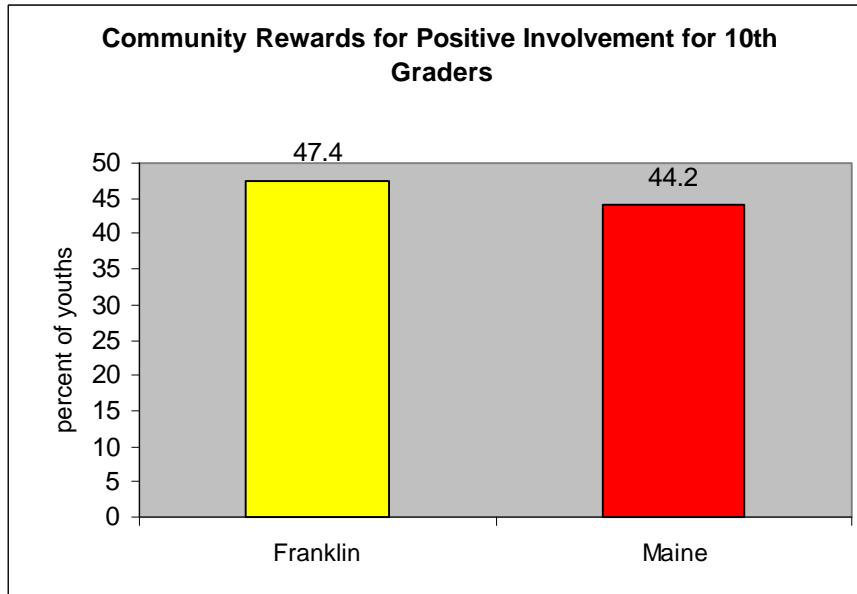
❖ Source: Maine Office of Substance Abuse, MYDAUS 2002.

26% of the 10th graders in Franklin County are not able to ask their parents for help if they have a personal problem.

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Graph 54

Community Rewards



❖ Source: Maine Office of Substance Abuse, MYDAUS 2002.

47% of 10th graders in Franklin County believe that they are acknowledged or rewarded if they contribute to the community.

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Environmental Risks Affecting Social Capital

Water Bodies with Impaired or Threatened Water Quality

These are all water bodies that have both a significant value from both a regional and statewide perspective and have water quality that is either impaired or threatened to some degree due to water pollution from surrounding land use activities.

Greater Franklin County

Rivers & Streams

Carrabassett River

Lakes

Brettuns Pond, Livermore

Dodge Pond, Rangeley

Flying Pond, Vienna

Haley Pond, Rangeley

Moose Hill Pond, Livermore Falls *

Mount Blue Pond, Avon *

Parker Pond, Vienna

Parker Pond, Jay *

Quimby Pond, Rangeley

Varnum Pond ³ , Wilton *

Wilson Pond, Wilton

* A source of community drinking water.

❖ Source: State of Maine Watershed Management Committee of the Maine Land and Water Resources Council, 1998.

EPA Designated Hazardous Waste Sites⁴ in Greater Franklin County

International Paper Co. Androscoggin Mill (IP), Jay, ME

IP-Old Sludge Disposal, Jay, ME

Kingfield Wood Products, Kingfield, ME

Flo-Jo Contracting, New Sharon, ME

❖ Source: Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection, Uncontrolled Hazardous Substance Sites Program, June 2003

³ Varnum Pond added a 3.2 million filtration system in 1993. However, the Pond is still on the most recent list of 1998.

⁴ Designated as CERCLIS (Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Information System) or potential Superfund Site. According to CERCLIS and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, "a site reassessment start is needed at IP--more investigation needs to be done to fill in data gaps at the heavily licensed facility."

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Conservation of the Environment: Building on Social Capital

Land Trusts and Foundations

Land trust: A non-profit corporation directly involved in protecting natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural, historic or cultural property.

Webb Lake—160 acres owned

Rangeley Lakes Region-1,800 acres owned, 6,860 under conservation easement

Vienna Woods – 142 acres owned

New Vineyard – 276 acres under conservation easement

Androscoggin Land Trust—450 acres owned, 1,670 acres under conservation easement

Clifford Woods—55 acres in Farmington

Area adjacent to Mt. Blue State Park –20,000 acres

Small Woodland Owners Associations

Maine Farmland Trusts

New England Forestry Foundation

Maine Audubon

Forest Society of Maine

Natural Conservancy

Walking Trails and Parks of Western Maine

Bonney Woods—9 acres in Farmington

Flint Woods—56 acres in Farmington

Cascade Falls

Daggett Rock

Fitness Trail, Titcomb Mountain Ski Area

Kineowatha Park

Mt. Blue State Park, Railroad bed from Farmington south

Washburn-Norlands Living History Center

Rangeley Lakes

Angel Falls, Small Falls

Bald Mountain Trail, Round Top Trail

Cascade Stream Gorge Trail

Hatchery Brook Trail, Mountain Pond Trail

Plaza Rock, Spencer Pond Trail

Wilhelm Reich Museum Walking Trails

SugarLoaf

Crocker Mountain Circque

Popular Stream Falls, West Mountain Falls