

### **Community Hearth Project (Maine Quality Forum): Case Study**

The Maine Quality Forum is a state agency dedicated to supporting higher quality, more accessible healthcare for the citizens of Maine, including the underemployed and the underserved. The Quality Forum is funding and co-developing the Community Hearth project with Second Curve. We were called in to work with them as an outgrowth of efforts in Maine over the last five years to work with providers, patients, and hospitals to gather reliable data on the provision of care across the state. These efforts have succeeded to the point where Maine has a growing database of this kind; now, the challenge is to assist constituents to use this information consistently and well to improve health care outcomes throughout the state.

The Community Hearth is one of several related projects pointed toward this overall goal. Named after the image of friends and neighbors sitting and talking by the fireside, the basic concept of the Hearth is to energize and activate local communities toward proactive, preventative, and community-based care, using the analogy of self-help groups and local social networks to facilitate the effort. Thus far, we are talking with three communities in Maine to organize demonstration projects; these projects will be run as case examples-in-progress in the Spring, 2006. These seedling efforts are focused on three themes, or areas of interest:

- Integration of behavioral/mental health and health care/primary care systems, using childhood depression and teen suicide as the focal concerns;
- Alignment of existing health care delivery systems and approaches with non-traditional, holistic health care approaches; and
- Linkage of existing health care delivery systems with faith-based communities and outreach efforts.

Outcomes of the Hearth project should include:

- Development of a robust social network of 4-5 leading edge projects in integration of behavioral and mental health systems, with metrics, approaches, lessons learned, and identified best practices;
- Growth of local, regional, and state-wide efforts to align existing health care delivery systems and approaches with non-traditional, holistic health care approaches; and
- Emerging connections, relationships, and energy across the behavioral/mental health care delivery systems and the faith-based, community health outreach efforts of local councils of churches.

Outputs of the Hearth project should include:

- A “story to tell”- growth of three demonstration sites, as well as networks of related sites;
- Development of community activation metrics which can be linked to more familiar measurements of health care efficacy; and
- A reliable, transportable method, model, and case example of using the Hearth approach to foster similar outcomes and outputs elsewhere.

We believe the Hearth will become a living laboratory, a seedbed of innovation which identifies, and connects, emerging successes in evolving from First toward Second Curve orientations across the entire health care space. We include providers, patients, hospitals, businesses, insurers, risk managers, and state governments in this space; we also include practitioners of holistic healing, citizens, community groups, churches, local governments, and representatives of the underserved and underemployed. From this combination, and from an effort which is simultaneously visionary, pragmatic, and ethical, we believe new and concrete images of a Second Curve can emerge.