



THE BULLETIN

WINTER 2020



**Nourishing
Community**

Maine Seacoast Mission
seacoastmission.org

OUR MISSION

Rooted in a history of compassionate service and mutual trust, the Mission seeks to strengthen coastal and island communities by educating youth, supporting families, and promoting good health.

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seacoastmission.org

DESIGN BY Z STUDIO

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Health outcomes—such as how long and how well we live—are 80 percent determined by factors not directly related to medical care.

Social Determinants of Health—such as access to healthy foods and supportive social networks—make all the difference.

The Maine Seacoast Mission's recipe for supporting health and well-being includes:

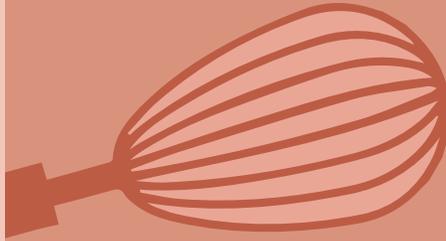
EDUCATING

- EdGE Afterschool and Summer
- Youth Mentoring
- Island Transition Program
- Student Pathways
- College and Career Readiness
- Scholarships
- Adult and Family Learning



CONNECTING

- Facilitated Community Conversations
- Community Meals
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Social Activities
- Family Events
- Outreach Services
- *Island Reader*
- Chaplaincy



REPAIRING

- Housing Rehabilitation
- Interior Storm Windows Provided

STABILIZING

- Community Resource Coordinator
- Good Neighbor Fund
- Family Engagement Program
- Youth and Adult Financial Literacy



NOURISHING

- Food Pantry
- Farm Share
- Weekend Backpacks
- School Food Cupboard
- Community Garden
- School Snacks
- Summer Meals
- Senior Food Bank

STRENGTHENING

- Nursing
- Telemedicine
- Eldercare Network
- Counseling
- Health Education
- Care Coordination



Cover: From Matinicus to Machias, Sunbeam steward and Downeast resident Jillian creates food that nourishes people and builds communities. Photo by Tristan Spinski.

Message from the President



Everyone has beloved family recipes. They are magical, blessed things. My grandmother made the most wonderful biscuits—rolling them out by hand and using an old snuff container to cut them round before skillet frying them in lard. From her pigs. If the smells did not wake you, Grandma would make the second batch loudly enough to hear in the back room where all the beds were.

My family would visit Grandma in Minor Hill, Tennessee for weeks each summer and on extended holidays. She may not have had running water, but there was always flour for snuff-tin biscuits and her pie safe was always full of the densest pecan cakes you've ever had. Food is magic and recipes are the spells.

This issue of the Mission Bulletin is dedicated to "Nourishing Community." In it you'll find stories of Mission chefs of every kind cooking up belonging, resilience, and aspiration. This issue of the Bulletin is a pantry stocked with hope, faith, and love. But it also contains a big dash of reality.

The truth goes down hard: food insecurity for our service area is the highest in the state; overdose deaths in Washington county are nearly twice the state average; and over twenty percent of Downeast middle schoolers have considered suicide. From addiction to access, these data are

alarming. And yet, we live in hope because we live in community.

It has been said that addiction is a disease of isolation, and that the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, but connection. For one hundred-plus years, the Maine Seacoast Mission has been cooking up the remedies for isolation: connection, community, love, and belonging. With your partnership and support we will be cooking up and handing down our recipes for generations more.

Last August the Mission proudly unveiled a new recipe for our Downeast Campus Programs that was adapted from the highly successful Canadian Food Centre Model. The main dish? A hearty Family Engagement Program focused on coaching and supporting Downeast EdGE families and communities so that EdGE kids have the best start possible. The ingredients are simple, wholesome, and undeniably powerful: good food and good people in equal measure. Mix together to nourish community, increase dignity, reduce isolation, and just plain help.

We all have powerful associations with food alchemy—from Mom's mac-n-cheese, to Uncle's bean-hole beans, to Grandpa's pierogis. Food brings us together. Food is the universal solvent, the great convener, the family watering hole on the over-programmed savannah. A family recipe has the magic to win against the game controller or the cell phone. To stop us in our tracks. To make us look up. To breathe. Not always, but sometimes. Often. Together.

We in the Mission community have a beautiful spread before us and a beautiful family with whom to share it. And we are grateful. Let's eat.

For the Mission!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Zavodny". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John Zavodny, President

Creating a Recipe for Success: A Family Food Center

The saying goes “we are what we eat.” At the Seacoast Mission, the life-giving power of a healthy meal or snack is at the forefront of our daily work. While food insecurity in our communities remains unacceptably high, we have made progress on many fronts as we work with partners in our community to tackle the issues. Our new family food center model builds upon our mainstay services—providing access to basic food needs and nutrition education—by engaging families more fully and working with our community partners more systematically. The result? Families get more and healthier food and are introduced to other community resources.

Basic ingredient: Access to healthy foods

Food pantries have evolved over the years. The food is healthier and the settings more pleasant. The Mission’s Cherryfield campus

pantry is a welcoming place for families struggling to put food on the table. It stocks a wide range of fresh food and kitchen staples, and is laid out like a general store. It offers nutritious food such as meat, dairy, eggs, whole-grain breads, and fresh fruits and vegetables. It strives for more local and organic produce. Open every Tuesday and Thursday, and enthusiastically supported by community volunteers, the Mission pantry logs over 4,000 visits each year and nourishes many households from Steuben to Columbia Falls.

Recognizing that long distances and limited transportation options are significant barriers to access in a rural service area, we and our partners have expanded direct food access in schools through weekend backpack programs at five elementary schools and daily school cupboards at three schools.

These allow students to take food home to their families. Snacks are provided to students in EdGE afterschool programs. A pilot program is testing this idea with full meals. It’s vital fuel for growing bodies and brains!

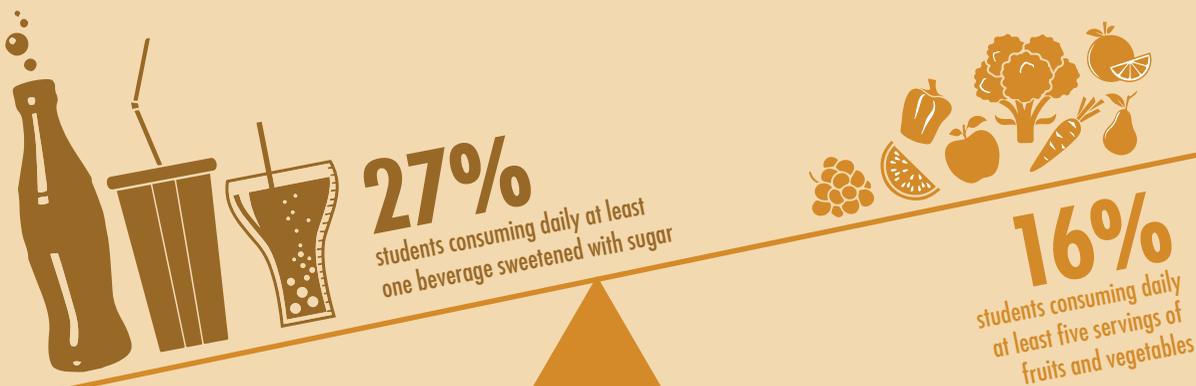
Fresh local produce is provided through Farm Share markets at several

Recipe

FAMILY FOOD CENTER
FROM THE KITCHEN OF:
Maine Seacoast Mission

INGREDIENTS:	DIRECTIONS:
Healthy foods Nutrition education Connection to resources	Help children and families get fresh foods and connect them to other resources that support health and well-being. Serves from Steuben to Columbia Falls.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DIETS OUT OF BALANCE IN WASHINGTON COUNTY



schools, serving 250 students with 8,150 pounds of organic produce. Accessible community gardens thrive at the campus in Cherryfield and the Incredible Edible Garden in Milbridge, providing about 6,000 pounds of produce each summer. The weekly Downeast Table of Plenty gathering every Sunday at the Weald Bethel Community Center provides not only a healthy meal for the community but also the opportunity to take home fresh produce donated by local providers.

**Cooking instructions:
A fresh approach**

The American diet is still recovering from the encroachment (near takeover) of overly processed foods into our daily bread, so to speak. In recent years, largely due to the recognition of obesity as a public health crisis, healthy pushback is on the rise. The Mission and its partners aspire to shift family eating habits away from highly processed, nutritionally deficient foods and toward fresh fruits and vegetables, instilling habits of good nutrition and healthful living that will last a lifetime, a key to breaking the cycle of multi-generational poverty.

Eating well means being able to cook, so that’s what the Mission is teaching. The Cooking Matters curriculum, developed by Good Shepherd Food Bank, teaches EdGE youth in afterschool and summer



Above: Megan appreciates EdGE support for her family’s goals. Below: With hard-working staff and volunteers, the Mission distributes 159,000 pounds of food a year.

TEEN OBESITY RATES

HANCOCK
COUNTY
TEENS

32%
are overweight or obese



WASHINGTON
COUNTY
TEENS

34%
are overweight or obese



Recipe, continued

programs. Family food-related activities include a recent spirited and educational Family Food Feud and hands-on experiences using community gardens as classrooms, as well as a source of fresh produce. Cooking and nutrition classes are offered to adults at the Mission's community center, such as the Harvest Table Cooking Class served up by the Women's Health Resource Library, a key partner in our work.

Connections: Expanding the recipebook

The Mission has been operating a food pantry since the 1980s and has never stopped seeking ways to increase its capacity to improve the well-being of families. The contributing factors to food insecurity are typically complex involving financial, behavioral, and societal issues. Thus, in addition to increasing access to food and putting more resources into nutrition-related educational programming, the Mission listened to community stakeholders through a strategic planning initiative to identify additional ways to address the challenges and barriers which

hamper individuals, families, and communities from reaching their full potential.

Food is a basic need but also a powerful draw for creating opportunities for engagement and connections. Visiting the food pantry, weeding the garden, or dropping in at the Table of Plenty are all barrier-free entry points - and invitations to engage with Mission staff or with any number of local resources, including the volunteers who animate our food-related activities, peers, and educators. With an intentional community food center approach—an effective model employed in many low-income communities throughout Canada—we can move beyond satisfying basic food needs toward connections that nourish stronger family and community ties. 🌱

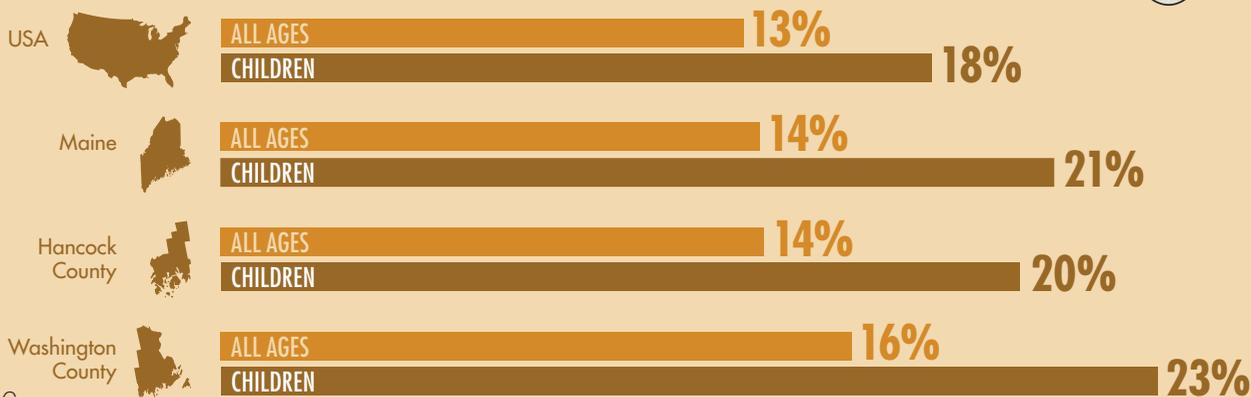
Recipe

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

FROM THE KITCHEN OF: Steward Jillian

INGREDIENTS:	DIRECTIONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-1/2 c. all-purpose flour 1/2 c. whole wheat flour 1/8 c. ground flax seeds 1 tsp. baking soda 1 tsp. salt 3/4 c. brown sugar 1/2 c. granulated sugar 2 large eggs 1 tsp. vanilla 2 c. chocolate chips 1-1/2 c. chopped nuts 	<p>Preheat oven to 375° F Sift or whisk together flours, flax seeds, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, cream together butter and sugars for a few minutes, then add eggs and vanilla and mix for a few more minutes until creamy. Add flour mixture to butter mixture and beat until just incorporated. Mix in morsels and nuts.</p> <p>Drop rounded tablespoons onto greased or parchment-lined baking sheets and bake for 9 to 11 minutes. Remove and cool completely on racks before filling cookie jars.</p> <p>Please eat with some warm with milk straight away! Yum.</p>

FOOD INSECURITY RATES



From Food to Fellowship



The Mission has a powerful motivation for strengthening communities: people with strong social relationships are 50 percent less likely to die prematurely than those without. Our mission is defined by a sense of place and, foremost, by the people who live there. Our activities build on the innate strengths of these communities but are grounded in the realities of Downeast. Living on an island means a doctor visit can be an expensive, overnight disruption. Living in a small coastal town means everything is a half-hour drive—or more—on poorly maintained roads.

Everyone brings something to the table

From the outset, the Seacoast Mission has focused on services supporting isolated populations, from the unbridged islands to the downeast coastal communities of eastern Hancock and Washington counties. Extensive research has linked isolation with negative health outcomes on par with other well established risk factors, including physical inactivity, obesity, substance misuse, and limited access to health care. The mortality risk associated with social disconnection is on par with smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day or excessive drinking, more harmful than not exercising, and twice as harmful as obesity.*

*Holt-Lunstad, others (2015): Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.

In Mission lore, probably nothing is more iconic than the image of the *Sunbeam* arriving at an island. What happens next is the timeless magic of community. It's everyone gathering for an all-island breakfast or dinner. It's access to physical



Sunbeam Captain Mike Johnson extends a welcoming hand.

TOP HEALTH PRIORITIES IN HANCOCK AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES



Fellowship, continued



Bonnie, DETOP founder, is always ready with a smile.

and therapeutic health care, in-person or via telemedicine. It's hosting community conversations around tough issues. It's time and space for learning, confidence-sharing, counsel, inspiration, pastoral care, Christmas gifts, and, poignantly, bringing folks home in that final moment of need for the solace of family and friends.

The Mission strives for locally driven, sustainable solutions to the challenges of limited employment opportunities, poor housing, under-funded, under-staffed schools, and social isolation. And those gathered to help include residents, nonprofits, businesses, philanthropists, schools, and government agencies. What's effective in creating a thriving, connected community?

Vigorous volunteers

Try to walk into a Downeast Table of

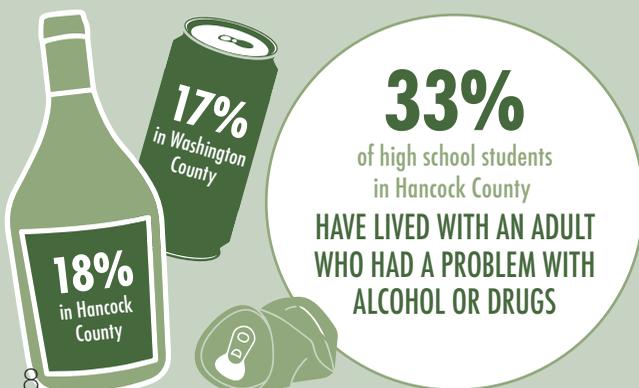
Plenty (DETOP) on a Sunday afternoon at the Mission's Weald Bethel Community Center without feeling welcome. It would be a challenge. Food and fellowship have defined the event since its inception ten years ago. Every week, 75 to 100 locals gather and enjoy a meal—and sometimes entertainment—prepared by a rotating group of volunteers. The food matters, of course, but most attendees would likely cite the camaraderie as the reason they return week after week. It's a multi-generational, socio-economically diverse group, full of personalities that together weave the fabric of a strong community. An attendee at a recent DETOP said, "I like it here; everyone is smiling. It's not like that out there."

The power of partnership

Bonnie Johnson, DETOP founder, notes, "It's clear how much we all need each other." This approach extends well beyond food. The Mission's housing rehabilitation program is another example of partnership in action. Repairs and renovations range from painting to insulating to roofing. Each summer, hundreds of volunteers from church and community groups across the U.S. spend one or two weeks Downeast and make a huge difference in our families' lives. The Mission collaborates extensively with Downeast Community Partners, a large nonprofit that provides heating assistance and weatherization services. It

SUBSTANCE MISUSE

ADULTS DRINKING EXCESSIVELY



OVERDOSE DEATHS

PER 100,000 POPULATION



can take the next steps in safety and comfort for many downeast homes.

Marianne, a hardy Mainer, was used to doing things on her own. "You don't want to be a burden," she says, "but it can be scary to ask for help. As you get older, you start to feel left out." Housing Rehab staff and volunteers put energy efficient windows and doors on her home and built a ramp for her walker, allowing her to reconnect to her community. "They're my angels of mercy," she says.

A whole family approach

Children thrive when their families thrive in a thriving community. With over 30 percent of the area's high school youth reporting three or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), it is clear that we need a lot of "counter ACEs" to support the well-being of our children and youth so they can find their paths to healthy, fulfilling lives.

The Mission's Family Engagement Program works with families whose children are in the Edge program,

providing wraparound services that take into account the needs and hopes of both children and parents. It connects them with relevant social, educational, and financial resources, including free family activities at the Downeast campus, parenting workshops, and the Good Neighbor Fund. That fund, as one parent said, "helped me to prioritize immediate financial need, while at the same time allowing me to plan for future needs. I am extremely grateful for this fund and for the opportunity to create a better future not only for myself, but for my family as a whole." 🌱

Recipe COMMUNITY

FROM THE KITCHEN OF: Steward Jillian

INGREDIENTS:	DIRECTIONS:
Through Table of Plenty, with its simple format of sharing a meal with neighbors, I have learned the riches of community.	So, we thought to put a big, easy-to-read sign-up sheet on the wall of our dining room listing the various weekly chores. And right away people that had been attending the suppers signed up for jobs and rolled up their sleeves and community supper camaraderie blossomed.
In the beginning it was a small core of us trying figure out how to pull off a meal week after week. Whew! We needed more help.	Being part of everyone working together weekly feels like magic. But it is simply that we all belong with our individual gifts. "Yes" is my good answer when someone asks, "Can I help?"

"Yes" is my recipe for community.

LACK OF SUPPORT

ADULTS REPORTING THEY RECEIVE INSUFFICIENT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ALL OR MOST OF THE TIME

20%
in Washington
County

16%
in Hancock
County

23%

of middle school students
in Washington County

HAVE SERIOUSLY
CONSIDERED
SUICIDE



VOICES OF HOPE PLANNED GIFTS

Maine Seacoast Mission was founded when two Mount Desert Island pastors and brothers, Alexander and Angus MacDonald, first sailed a small sloop called the *Hope* to islands and lighthouses along the Maine coast, intent on relieving the isolated conditions often found there. As a pastor in Bar Harbor, Angus had connections with many of the wealthy rusticators of Mount Desert Island. He asked for their help in funding the *Hope* and its charitable endeavors, and the Maine Seacoast Mission was born in 1905. This legacy of compassionate service continues today, generously supported by generations of families who value our coastal and island communities.

ADD YOUR VOICE OF HOPE

Join the **Maine Seacoast Mission Hope Society** and provide a legacy of hope for generations to come.



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UPCOMING EVENTS 2020



Sunbeam Award Gala

Friday, August 14, 2020

5:30–9pm

Bar Harbor Club

The Sunbeam Award Gala is Maine Seacoast Mission's signature fundraising event. Each August, hundreds of community members and business leaders gather for cocktails and dinner at the Bar Harbor Club. Together we honor individuals and organizations that have made a difference for good in our coastal downeast and island communities. A heartfelt evening!



Open Tennis Tournament to benefit EdGE

Saturday, September 12, 2020

8am–4pm

Northeast Harbor Tennis Club

Our Open Tennis Tournament and Silent Auction raises funds for Ed Greaves Education (EdGE). The event provides vital support for EdGE's youth development programs in eastern Hancock and Washington counties. Local businesses and individuals sponsor four-person teams for morning and afternoon matches of exciting, competitive tennis.