



**For Immediate Release**

## **Maine Nonprofits Receive Wellbeing Grants from Community Health Options**

**LEWISTON, MAINE, May 23, 2023** – Eleven small Maine nonprofits have received more than \$50,000 in funding through Community Health Options' Wellbeing Grants to support projects that promote physical and mental health across the State of Maine, the company announced today.

"We're privileged to play a small part in these initiatives," said Kevin Lewis, president and CEO of Health Options. "From helping to buy Fat Tire bikes for an outdoor program to supporting cancer patients and addressing substance abuse disorder, it's incredible to see the life-changing work Mainers do for their neighbors."

Community Health Options laid the financial groundwork for these grants when it created its Community Benefit Expenditure program in 2019. It began awarding grants in 2020, working with the Maine Community Foundation to administer the funds.

Among this year's grant recipients is Portland's **Side x Side** program, supporting stipends to pair teaching artists with third-grade teachers to build kids' social skills through music, movement and journaling in a program that will reach 80 students.

"We believe the best education has creativity at its heart. We work to develop engaging learning opportunities that expand curiosity, foster inclusivity, promote well-being, enabling students to thrive," said Beth Wilbur Van Mierlo, Side x Side's executive director. "We're honored to be the recipient of this 2023 Wellness Grant and thrilled with the Community Health Options partnership."

Grantees also include:

- Somerset County's **Main Street Skowhegan**, for Fat Tire bikes and repair tools supporting an outdoor program for county residents.
- The **Beth Wright Cancer Resource Center** in Ellsworth, supporting the cost of an oncology mental health trainer, along with computer tablets for cancer patients' use.
- The **Kittery Land Trust, Inc.**, supporting exercise and outdoor activity for its Roots pre-school program.
- Bath's **Midcoast Youth Center**, supporting free youth summer field trips, along with homeless youth outreach and workforce development and connections to medical, dental and mental health care.
- The **Larry Labonte Recovery Center** in Rumford, supporting Naloxone administration training to save lives, and community education to reduce stigma and increase treatment of substance use disorder.

- Carrabassett Valley's **Adaptive Outdoor Education Center**, supporting caregiver retreats through a nature-based healing program.
- The **Maine Coast Fisherman's Association**, supporting health screening and wellness promotion among Maine's commercial fishing professionals.
- **The Androscoggin Land Trust**, to support its Camp Gustin project, which in part is building an accessible trail system and camp site to expand access to the outdoors to those with limited physical abilities.
- **Waldo County Bounty**, under fiscal sponsorship of the Unity Barn Raisers, supporting the supplies needed for local volunteer-led food pantries.
- **Inland Woods + Trails** in Bethel, supporting the restoration and creation of trails in Western Maine, including new hiking and snowshoeing trails, as well as parking and amenities like signs and picnic tables.

In addition to the money distributed through its Wellbeing Grants, Community Health Options is continuing its partnership with National Fitness Campaign to build Fitness Courts® across Maine. To learn more about National Fitness Campaign, please visit the [Maine Statewide Campaign](#) website.

### **About Community Health Options**

[Community Health Options](#) is the only Maine-based, nonprofit, Member-led health insurer, providing comprehensive health plans for individuals, families and businesses. Community Health Options offers a robust network of 48,000 healthcare providers in New England, along with plans with U.S. national coverage for individuals and businesses.

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