

# "We want to thank you!"



## Summary

Behavioral Health is one of the focus areas in tobacco prevention that has been a struggle to reach during the pandemic. Inspired by a collaborative conversation with Southern Maine Health Care's Alexa Christie, Healthy Communities of the Capital Area launched a "Thank You Grant" program that has created opportunities not only in behavioral health, but all across our communities.

## Challenge

Smoke-free and tobacco-free policies can make the biggest difference in our communities to change the perception that smoking is a normal adult activity, and to create supportive environments for adults who are trying to quit - making it one of US CDC's evidence-based interventions we focus on the most. However, given the global pandemic, many community partners have been overwhelmed and unable to prioritize creating or updating a policy, especially those in the healthcare setting. SMHC was able to partner with a local Behavioral Health organization due to offering a frictionless mini-grant - a tactic HCCA was very impressed with and had to try!

## Intervention

We reached out to behavioral health, healthcare, municipal, youth-serving entity, workplace and multi-unit housing partners with an offer of a \$350 "Thank You" grant for creating or updating their tobacco policies to meet the model standards established by the Maine Center for Tobacco Independence - no application required. The email subject line, "We want to thank you for supporting tobacco-free environments!" was included to celebrate both the recipients and the importance of creating and maintaining tobacco-free and smoke-free organizations and campuses. We had offered mini grants in the past year of up to \$1,000 but had no takers! People simply did not have the capacity to fill out an application, given the current crisis.

## Results

HCCA received an immediate positive response! The program is still ongoing, but we've had 10 takers already -- including two Behavioral Health agencies:

- Free ME From Lung Cancer
- Berry's Stationers
- Fusion of Windsor Farmers Market
- The Healing Place
- Conscious Art Therapy
- Temple Academy
- Harold Alford Youth Center
- Augusta Boys and Girls Club
- Albion Public Library
- Kerish Benttinen Counseling Services



"I appreciate all that you're doing for us small businesses. Keeping my work environment healthy is important, and with your assistance, I am now sure that it is done properly."

MICHAEL GIROUX  
BERRY'S STATIONERS



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Department of Health and Human Services