



MEDIA RELEASE

Portage Health Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 22, 2019

[Hancock, MI] The Portage Health Foundation (PHF) has taken a proactive approach to support the mental and behavioral health (MBH) needs in the four-county (Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon) community. They have released targeted request for proposals (RFP) in the last few years to help drive support, expansion, and sustainability for MBH programming.

In 2018 PHF released a second call for proposal focusing on MBH. Two programs were awarded from this RFP that support youth MBH services in the community. The two programs were in partnership with Omega House and Friends of the Porkies (FOP).

Omega House hospice received a Portage Health Foundation grant to expand its new Community Grief Alliance. This grant will be used to support young people and families who are grieving from the death of a loved one or grieving from a difficult life transition. The project focuses on grief counseling, parent and child education, and training for professionals.

“We hope that young people, who are grieving, will help us build this special trail as a form of healing,” says Michael Lutz, Executive Director of Omega House. Trained grief counselors at Omega House use an evidenced-based, contemporary approach to grief when supporting families, children, and adolescents. A key component of this approach is acceptance and mindfulness-based coping skills that help young people now and as they grow. “Addressing young people’s bereavement is a critical element of growing a health community. Grief is a definitely a public health issue. And we’re so grateful for the generous support of Portage Health Foundation which will help us care for grieving kids and their parents,” says Sarah Cheney, Omega House grief counselor and founder of this new grief program.

The second project with FOP—Increase Youth Resilience through Outdoor Experiences—which integrates science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum into outdoor recreation activities, meets during school and incorporates school field trips for experiential learning. This program

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gets kids outside the classroom, in nature, while still learning. The intent of the program is to support kids with their MBH by getting them outdoors and active.

“The Outdoor Adventure Program had great kickoff events with kids and parents in January,” said Carol Maass, Vice President for FOP. “It was exciting to see the kid's artwork and writings about outdoor adventures. Seeing how excited the kids are to get outdoors to the Porkies to learn new skills was rewarding. Sharing outdoor experiences with the next generation through this program is going to be great.”

“These types of projects are vital to supporting the youth in our community,” said Chelsea Goodreau – PHF Marketing and Communications Coordinator. “Both of these programs bring unique services and programs to the community that provide wrap around support and care to our young people.”