

**General Membership Meeting  
February 4, 2016**

**9:35 a.m. – 10:35 a.m.**

SERHO, 1736 Purchase Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740-6821

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**Members present (13): Chasity Armstrong-Menard, Barbara Acksen, Nancy Bonell, Gail Brennan, Arthur Briggs, Rachel Davis, Rayana Grace, Jay Kenney, Kerry Mello, Maria Mendes, Debra Paulino, Amy Sylvia, Gloria Villalobo.** *If your name does not appear on this list and you attended the meeting, please contact [gnballies@gmail.com](mailto:gnballies@gmail.com).*

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**Minutes**

**Call to Order and Member Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chair, Barbara Acksen, who welcomed new member introductions, as well as round table introductions of those in attendance. New members included:

- Rayana Grace (Youth Development Director, YMCA Southcoast)
- Debra Paulino (Community Outreach Representative, BMC HealthNet)

**Presentation: *Changes and updates to the New Bedford WIC program (Gloria Villalobo)***

Gloria Villalobo, Community Coordinator for the New Bedford WIC office, gave a presentation on the changes and updates to the WIC program. She said WIC provides low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five with nutritious, supplemental foods. The program also provides nutrition and breastfeeding education and referrals to health and social services. She said the program has caught up with the times to make it easier for mothers and their young children to receive healthy and nutritious foods. She said an electronic system, called WIC EBT, has replaced paper food checks and vouchers with a card for food benefit issuance and redemption at authorized WIC grocery stores. The card, which works like a debit card, is accompanied by a mobile app that can be installed on any Smartphone. She said the WICShopper app simplifies shopping by identifying the correct products to purchase before heading to the register. WICShopper can load the participant's real-time benefits, allowing them to know with certainty that they can purchase the products in their basket with the benefits on their card. Furthermore, she said WIC food packages have aligned with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, with new foods being added. Contrary to what one may think, she said fathers can also receive WIC benefits if they meet the income eligibility requirements. Ms. Villalobo also distributed brochures and handouts about the WIC program.

## **Business meeting**

### **Meeting minutes – approval**

**January 7, 2016** – Kerry Mello moved to approve the report as amended (name change for organization to Southcoast RAPPP), Arthur Briggs seconded, with no discussion all members present approved the January minutes.

**Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer's report was tabled until the next meeting because Jean DeCoffe was away at an all-day conference on child development.

## **Standing Committee reports**

**Health Access** – Gail Brennan reported that the next Health Access meeting would take place on Thursday, February 18, at 9:30 a.m. She said the group is looking for potential candidates from the Greater New Bedford area for the MotherWomen Group Facilitator Program and this would be a major topic of discussion at the meeting.

**Health Equity** – Kerry Mello reported that the Capacity Building Cancer Disparities group is about six months into the work action plan, focusing on colorectal cancer screening and increasing the rate of doing basic screening. She said statistics show that less than 50 percent of people get a colonoscopy and less than 20 percent do a basic screening. She said they have at least nine community health workers involved in the community and they are starting to see amazing results. She cited Ana Loaiza, of the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, for doing a lot of faith-based outreach. She said she has been getting 70 percent of people who take the kits send them back in. She already had a few positives and those people are referred for further testing. In the upcoming weeks, a few forums will take place in the community to educate targeted audiences about colon cancer. The grant ends in late June.

## **Other Business**

### **Updated on youth concerns discussion**

Barbara Aksen said the discussion on youth concerns that took place at the January 7<sup>th</sup> General Membership meeting was productive. She presented the information to the Steering Committee and they were very excited about it. In the upcoming weeks, they will work to bring together a larger group so people can talk about this further and hopefully come up with a direction for everyone to follow.

### **Meeting Location Search**

Barbara Aksen noted that GNB Allies is still looking for a new place to hold its meetings since SERHO is closing. She said the group is exploring other locations and the ideal location would be able to accommodate at least 35 people comfortably and have ample parking. Some of the locations suggested by members included office space at YMCA Southcoast, Department of Mental Health, Gifts to Give Inc., Southcoast Women's Center, and the Nemasket Group in Fairhaven. Members were encouraged to send any additional suggestions to [gnballies@gmail.com](mailto:gnballies@gmail.com).

## Member Announcements

Members are always welcome to provide handouts for others and to share upcoming events.

- Rayana Grace noted the first Spring Session for youth at the YMCA Southcoast begins on February 22 and runs for eight weeks until April 17<sup>th</sup>. The new session includes volleyball, swimming, dance, karate, and tumbling among other activities. Financial assistance is available for families who qualify.
- Ms. Grace also noted the New Bedford YMCA is holding a Mardi Gras Party fundraiser on Saturday, February 27, 2016 from 7 to 11 p.m. This 21+ event features the Craig DeMelo Band, cash bar, heavy hors d'oeuvres and a lot of surprise. For more information about the spring session and the fundraiser, visit [ymcasouthcoast.org](http://ymcasouthcoast.org) or call 508-997-0734.
- Chasity Armstrong-Menard noted the Family Recovery Project, in partnership with the Massachusetts Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative, is hosting an Opioid Crisis and Family Training at Rachel's Lakeside in Dartmouth, MA, on March 30, 2016, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event will feature a number of presenters and will include a sit down lunch. Registration information will be available soon at [adcare-educational.org](http://adcare-educational.org).
- Ms. Armstrong-Menard also noted that there will be training on Understanding DCF (Department of Children & Families) for providers in the community on child welfare services at Fort Tabor in New Bedford, MA, on April 26, 2016, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration information will be available soon at [adcare-educational.org](http://adcare-educational.org).
- Ms. Armstrong-Menard also noted that the Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) Committee in Fall River meets on the fourth Thursday of the month at United Neighbors of Fall River at 12:30 p.m. She said they are working on getting medical professionals and anyone who works with pregnant moms and their babies information about substance exposure in newborns. If you're interested in attending or know of someone, please contact Ms. Armstrong-Menard at [chasitya@dmahealth.com](mailto:chasitya@dmahealth.com).

## Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on March 3, 2016 @ 9:30 a.m.