

**Leadership South Shore
Health & Human Services Day - November 2019**



Leadership



Regional Societal Challenges:

Education Can Lead to Action

The South Shore is known for its abundant natural beauty, access to some of the country's best education and health care institutions and overall as a wonderful place to live, work and play. But under the surface of prosperity and plenty, if one looks, this is a region that is not immune to the societal challenges facing our larger metropolitan areas and the country as a whole. Here too, there is a large demand for social services. During our Health and Human Services Program Day, it was sobering to learn about our regions' needs but also encouraging to see the wealth of organizations that dedicate themselves to meeting those needs.

Our first stop took us to [Interfaith Social Services](#) in Quincy. The center is home to the largest food pantry south of Boston, a robust counseling center, and a thrift store that provides career clothing to those striving to re-enter the workforce and is a source of income for the services Interfaith provides. In addition to the daily services provided by Interfaith, the organization runs quarterly drives to meet the needs of the region's underserved: back to school backpacks, Halloween costumes for kids, a holiday toy drive and an Easter basket giveaway. It was eye-opening for our cohort to learn that there are families in our midst dealing with food insecurity. Interfaith distributes over a million pounds of food to hungry families annually. The food pantry along with the counseling center and the career closet are so important to helping families in our communities.

Equally eye-opening was the education the cohort received regarding the local homelessness issue. Our second stop was [Father Bills & MainSpring](#) shelter and support center. Father Bills was started in a basement by Father William McCarthy and has grown to help thousands of individuals and families. The Quincy shelter we visited provides 75 beds each night, but the demand often exceeds the supply. In addition to supplying emergency housing, Father Bills also provides work training, housing and food assistance, and medical services. To put a face to these statistics, Leadership South Shore had the opportunity to hear from one of the shelter's residents. She and her husband had good jobs but her husband was laid off, they depleted their savings and found themselves unable to pay housing costs. The couple has been living at the shelter for 15 months and with the support of Father Bills, they are slowly finding their way back on their feet.

Our last stop was [A New Way Recovery Center](#). Here we learned that the epidemic of substance use disorder is as prevalent on the South Shore as in other parts of the nation. New Way is a non-clinical community center for recovering addicts to support each in their journey to recovery. The Center strives to eliminate the stigma of recovery as well as to help family members of those in recovery. At New Way, there are several approaches to recovery: coaching, small groups, and education.

Each program day only allows us a small glimpse into each issue we explore. We fully understand that there are many issues beyond the ones we looked at during this year's Health and Human Services Day and that there are so many more organizations diligently working to address these issues.

The role of Leadership South Shore in addressing social issues is vitally important. As we learn about the challenges facing our neighbors we can take small steps to become agents of change. As individuals, we may choose to volunteer our time and talents to organizations, as a cohort we can be collectively involved. Additionally, we can share our new-found knowledge with friends and families and with co-workers, even encouraging our workplace to become more socially responsible.