



# Valley CARES

## Quality of Life Report 2010

### Summary Report



A Community Initiative of the Valley Council for Health & Human Services  
*Tracking quality of life in the Valley  
to build a better future for all our residents*

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*For a list of individual indicators for each topic, please see Appendix A of the full report.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- The Valley Community Foundation
- The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
- The Valley United Way
- The Katharine Matthies Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee
- Naugatuck Valley Health District
- Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center
- Birmingham Group Health Services, Inc.
- Griffin Hospital
- The WorkPlace, Inc.
- Valley Council for Health & Human Services Member Agencies

In addition, we would like to thank the many individuals who assisted in the creation of this report by gathering and sharing information, photographs, and ideas, including Yasemin Kavak (Research Assistant, Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center) and representatives from:

- Valley Council Taskforces, Committees, and Member Agencies
- Valley Town Governments, Regional Councils of Governments, and Valley Service Providers
- State of Connecticut Departments and Agencies



# The Valley Council for Health & Human Services

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SERVICES

## INTRODUCTION

The **Valley Council for Health & Human Services** is a partnership network of non-profit health and human service agencies serving the residents of the Lower Naugatuck River Valley. Our mission is to improve quality of life by working collaboratively to identify and respond to community needs. In order to better fulfill our mission, in 2007 the Council began planning an initiative to track key indicators of community wellbeing, now named **Valley CARES (Community Assessment Research & Education for Solutions)**.

The word **cares** has several different meanings. Frequently, we use it to describe how we nurture or look after the things we value. We also may use the word **cares** to refer to our concerns or worries in life. The **Valley CARES** initiative is about each of these meanings of **cares**.

*What do Valley residents value as important contributors to their wellbeing and quality of life? What are they already doing to nurture the things they value? What are the cares or concerns that need to be addressed in order to build an even better quality of life for all Valley residents?*

The **Valley Council** is delighted to offer the first **Valley CARES Quality of Life Report** to the Valley community. We hope it will serve as a resource to help make our Valley an even better place to work and live than it already is.

The Valley CARES Taskforce, with the input of Council members and community partners, guided the creation of this report and all aspects of the Valley CARES initiative. We invite you to become involved by reading the report, celebrating the Valley's strengths, and joining us in the search for solutions to community challenges.

## THE VALLEY CARES TASKFORCE

Current and past Taskforce members include:

- Beth Patton Comerford, MS, Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (Taskforce Co-Chair)
- Mary S. Nescott, MPH, Birmingham Group Health Services, Inc. (Taskforce Co-Chair)
- Heidi Zavatone-Veth, PhD, Valley Council for Health & Human Services (Valley Council Coordinator)
- Karen N. Spargo, MA, MPH, Naugatuck Valley Health District
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- Tara Rizzo, MPH, Griffin Hospital
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If you can't measure something,  
you can't understand it; if you can't  
understand it, you can't control it; if you  
can't control it, you can't improve it. □

~ H. J. Harrington

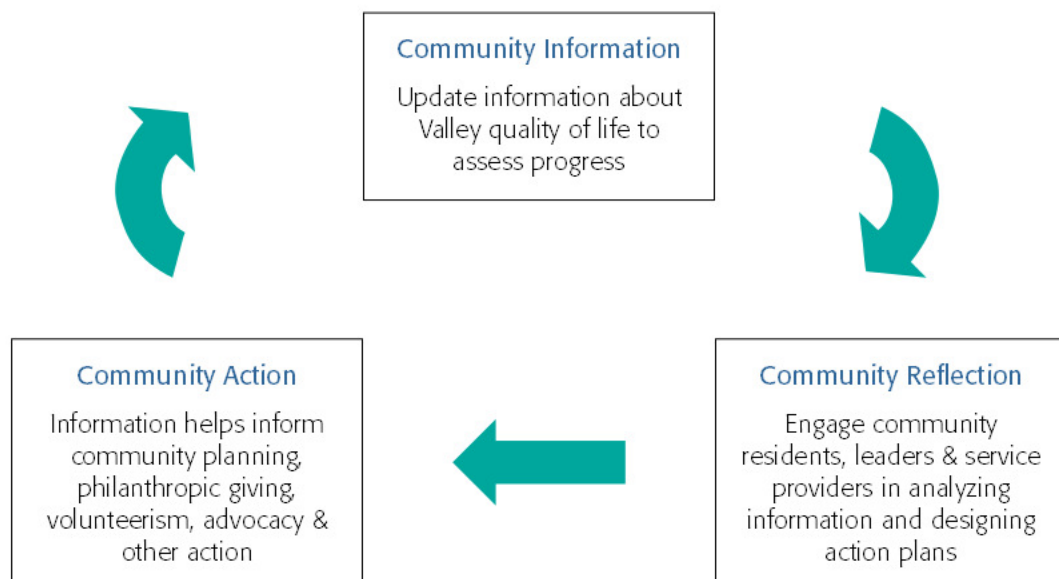
## VALLEY CARES GOALS

**Valley CARES** draws on lessons learned from past Valley community assessment efforts and the many successful community indicator projects throughout the United States and world. Its main goals are:

1. To track information about quality of life so that the Valley community can see what aspects of community life have gotten better over time and what areas may need improvement.
2. To share information about Valley quality of life with community service providers, leaders and residents so that they can become involved in figuring out how to build an even better future for our residents.

The long-term goal is not to compare the Valley to other communities but to serve as a yardstick for measuring progress within the Valley over time. We hope that this information will become a resource for all who care about the Valley and its residents.

The challenge for us as a Valley community will be to find ways to connect what we know about people's cares with a vision for how to improve the community and a roadmap for getting there. We imagine an on-going process of feedback between community information, reflection, and action.



The Valley CARES project provides current information about the state of our well being in the Valley. This vital information will encourage community involvement and help us address our priority needs.

~ James E. Cohen  
President/CEO  
Valley Community Foundation





## THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS AND REPORT

□ Indicators alone probably make little difference but [...] when combined with effective planning, advocacy and action, all based on a community vision, they can make a major difference. □

~ David Swain

Community indicators are one way to measure the quality of life in a community. For this first Valley CARES Report, we have included indicators for 8 areas that contribute to community wellbeing. The **summary** version of the report provides an overview of the key findings for each quality of life area. The **full** report provides greater detail for each of the indicators as well as sources for additional information and areas in which we would like to improve our understanding.

This first Quality of Life report is a starting point in an on-going effort to create an indicators report that provides a useful snapshot of life conditions in the Valley. The Taskforce selected the indicators based on several factors including: the current availability of reliable information, the likelihood that the information can be tracked over time, and the relevance of the information for community action.

Many of the indicators in this report come from information gathered and analyzed by public and private agencies in the region and state. Staff from the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center compiled the secondary-source indicators data. In order to fill gaps in existing information, the Valley CARES Taskforce also commissioned a community survey of 400 randomly selected residents of the 6 Valley towns. (Appendix B of the full report gives further information about the indicators data collection process and its limitations.)

## PARTICIPATE IN THE SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

Indicators on their own cannot fully explain why a community changes or what should be done to make improvements. The next step will be community involvement in analyzing the indicators and designing potential solutions to identified challenges. We invite you to visit the Valley Council website for updates on ways to share your ideas, input, and energy for building an even better Valley.

Go to [www.valleycouncil.org](http://www.valleycouncil.org) for links to:

- *Summary report (electronic)*
- *Full report (electronic)*
- *Community survey results*
- *Ways to get more information about Valley quality of life & share your ideas for community improvement*

Collecting local data to inform the community about issues of concern and opportunities is vitally important to The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. It's one of the reasons why we are proud to support the Valley CARES project, which is a model that we hope will be replicated for the benefit of other towns in our service area. The data produced can be used to not only guide community leaders in their planning and civic engagement efforts but also to help our donors make wise philanthropic decisions.

~ Priscilla Canny

Senior Vice President, Grantmaking & Strategy  
The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and President, Data Haven

## THE VALLEY COMMUNITY

### GEOGRAPHY

The towns located in the Lower Naugatuck River Valley have been shaped by a common geographic location along key waterways and transportation routes in south central Connecticut. They share a history rooted in the waves of immigrants who settled in the region to work in its manufacturing centers. While there is no universal agreement on a definition of “the Valley,” this report follows a common local understanding by including 6 municipalities in its definition: Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton.

Although the Valley’s residents often describe a sense of common identity, governmental agencies and non-governmental service providers carve up the Valley region in different ways. These many understandings of the Valley community make it more difficult to gather information about the Valley and to coordinate community planning for the region.



### THE VALLEY POPULATION

Between 2000 and 2009, the Valley population increased by almost five percent, reaching an estimated 103,754 residents (Sources: US Census 2000; CERC 2010-2009). According to a recent Demographic Snapshot Report, the population growth rate is expected to slow in the upcoming years (Claritas 2009).

Valley Population by Age Group  
2009

	Valley	Ansonia	Beacon Falls	Derby	Oxford	Seymour	Shelton
Age Group	# Residents (%)	# Residents	# Residents	# Residents	# Residents	# Residents	# Residents
< 18	23,689 (23%)	4,170	1,345	2,583	3,173	3,596	8,822
18-64	65,517 (63%)	11,496	3,788	7,954	8,226	10,137	23,916
65+	14,548 (14%)	2,742	572	1,995	1,160	2,224	5,855
Total	103,754	18,408	5,705	12,532	12,559	15,957	38,593

Source: CERC





In addition to increasing in population size, the Valley community is undergoing changes as new immigration alters the mix of ethnic and linguistic diversity among residents. For example, the percentage of Hispanic residents grew to a total of 6% of the Valley-wide population by 2009 (CERC 2010).

### Valley Population by Ethnicity/Race

2009

	Valley	Ansonia	Beacon Falls	Derby	Oxford	Seymour	Shelton	CT
Ethnicity/ Race	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
White/European American	90%	83%	93%	86%	94%	91%	92%	79%
Black/African American	4%	9%	3%	5%	2%	3%	2%	9%
Asian Pacific	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Native American	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Multi-Race/ Other	4%	6%	2%	6%	2%	3%	4%	8%
Hispanic (of any race)	6%	10%	4%	11%	3%	5%	6%	12%

Source: CERC

The Valley community includes residents with a diversity of national origins and native languages. A 2009 Demographic Snapshot Report estimates that 9% of Valley residents speak an Indo-European language, almost 4% speak Spanish, and 1% speaks an Asian/Pacific Islander language (Claritas 2009). The students enrolled in programs at Valley Regional Adult Education (VRAE) in the 2009-2010 fiscal year came from over 60 countries, showing the increasing ways the global community is represented in the Valley community.

### Students Enrolled in Valley Regional Adult Education

2009-2010

Country of Origin	% VRAE Students
United States	38%
Poland	7%
Ecuador	7%
Albania	4%
Columbia	4%
Puerto Rico	3%
Vietnam	3%
Mexico	3%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2%
Guatemala	2%
Additional Countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Belarus, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Congo, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Kosovo, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia	<2% each

Source: Valley Regional Adult Education





## Creating a Community Context that Enables Residents to Thrive

### Definition for the Valley

*A community that provides all residents with access to affordable housing, transportation, and economic opportunities that will enable them to create a good quality of life*

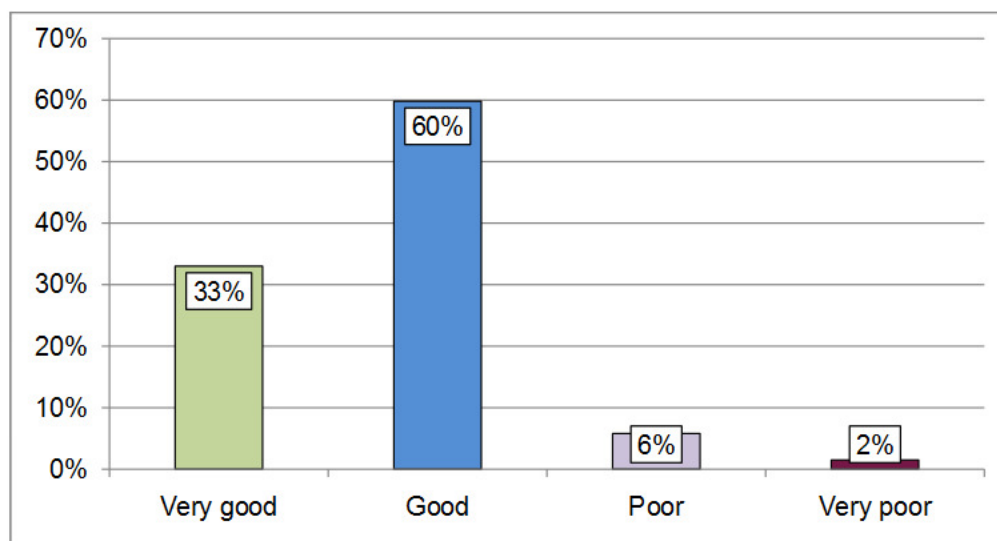
## How Are We Doing? ▢ An Overview

### QUALITY OF LIFE

The vast majority of Valley residents describe their quality of life in a positive way, but some community members do not share in this sense of overall wellbeing.

- 93% of Valley residents surveyed view their **quality of life** as good or very good, while about 8%—close to 1 out of every 10 residents—said that their life quality is poor or very poor.

How is your overall quality of life?



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey

### HOUSING

Housing affordability has become an increasing concern in the Valley, although the economic recession has led to a recent drop in home prices.

- Between 2000 and 2007, **home prices** in the Valley rose at a faster pace than household incomes putting home ownership out of reach for more people; the recent drop in housing prices may not be enough to make homes more affordable in the current economic climate.
- There are 853 governmentally-assisted **affordable housing units** for the elderly and 1,300 units for families in the Valley. A 2004 study of housing affordability in the Valley found a substantial gap between the availability and the need for affordable housing options for residents.



For our community to be truly healthy, we must all work together to assure that every resident has equal access to the basic building blocks that construct a good quality of life.

~ Karen N. Spargo,  
Director of Health, Naugatuck  
Valley Health District

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation needs continue to have a significant impact on quality of life in the Valley. Long commutes and limited public transportation options shape many people's daily lives and their access to work and services.

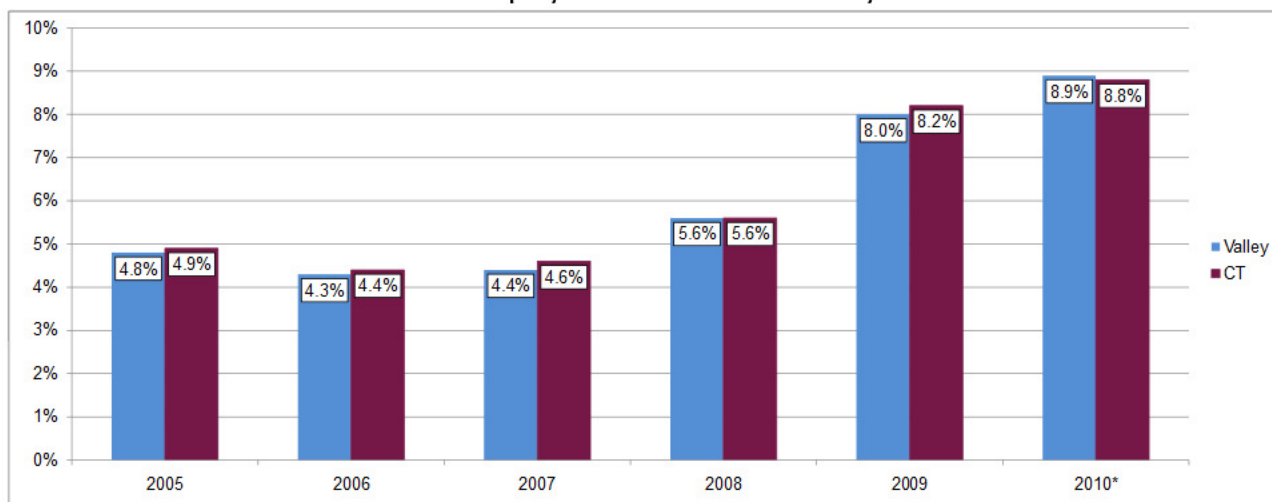
- When asked about their **commuting patterns**, a quarter or more of residents in Valley towns said in 2000 that they commuted 30 minutes or more to work; a minority of workers (11–15%) reported riding to work in a non-single occupancy vehicle such as mass transit or a car pool.
- Recent studies highlight the need to improve public transportation options in the Valley. The number of **mass transit** rides provided by the Valley Transit District (VTD) dropped between 2008 and 2009, due in part to reductions in state funding. Fixed route bus service in the Valley towns continues to be limited.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Even though Valley income levels rose over the past decade, increasing numbers of residents do not have access to the economic opportunities needed to build a strong quality of life.

- **Median household income** levels increased since 2000, but Valley towns differed considerably in whether their income levels fell above or below Connecticut's median of \$68,055 in 2009.
- The **unemployment rate** in the Valley has risen substantially since 2005, reaching an annual average of 8.0% in 2009 and almost 9% through September of 2010, with even higher levels in some towns.

Unemployment Rates in the Valley



Source: CT Dept. of Labor

- Although the current federal definition of poverty underestimates the percentage of residents facing economic hardship, the Valley's **poverty rate** in 2000 was 4.7% of the overall population. At that time, 10% or more of children were living in poverty in several Valley towns. It is likely that the poverty rate has risen sharply in recent years, as is true in the state.
- The percentage of **families qualifying for free or reduced price lunch** in Valley school districts increased in the past decade, an indication of growing economic hardship. In 2007–2008, about 2 out of 10 Valley public school children (19%) met the income requirement for free/reduced price lunch. In some districts, the level reached 40% or more of students.



## Ensuring Education & Training for Long-Term Success

### Vision for the Valley

*A community that provides access to high quality education and training opportunities for its residents from early childhood throughout adulthood*

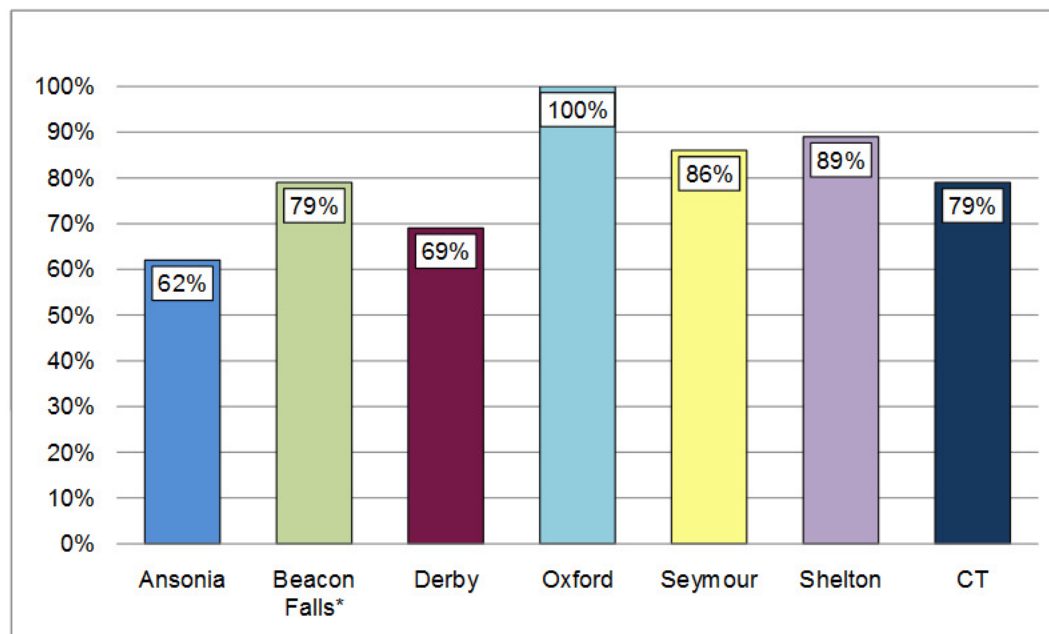
## How Are We Doing? □ An Overview

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Many Valley children benefit from early childhood education opportunities, yet some families may face challenges in accessing these resources.

- When asked if there is sufficient **childcare and preschool availability** in the Valley, 59% of parents with children under 18 living at home who participated in the Valley CARES survey reported that there are enough services. However, 32% of those parents indicated that they did not know if there are enough childcare and preschool resources.
- In 2007, the number of Valley children enrolled in the **Care 4 Kids childcare assistance** program (703) was higher than in previous years. However, we do not know enough about the gap between current enrollment levels and the need for childcare assistance within the community.
- The percentage of kindergartners with **preschool experience** has been increasing in some Valley towns. Yet, in the 2007-2008 school year most of the Valley school districts had not reached the state goal of 90% preschool experience. In 4 out of the 6 districts, the percentage of kindergartners with preschool experience was at or above the state level.

Percentage of Children Entering Kindergarten with Preschool Experience



Source: CT Dept. of Education; \*Beacon Falls in Regional District 16





Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.

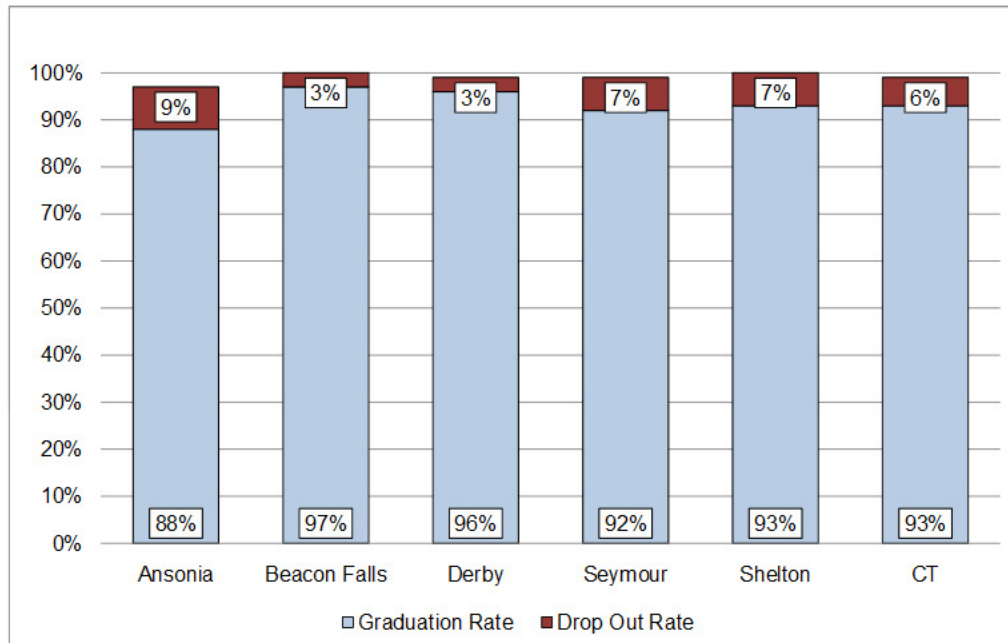
~ Marian Wright E delman

## PUBLIC SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

While school performance is close to the state level in many Valley districts, a sizeable number of students do not meet Connecticut's targets for elementary learning and high school graduation.

- The percentage of 4th graders meeting the state goal in **reading performance**, a strong indicator of school readiness and success, ranged between 40% and 60% in Valley school districts in the 2007-2008 school year compared to a state level of 56%.
- While the state is currently working to improve the measurement of **high school graduation and drop out rates**, 2007-2008 data show that 4-year high school graduation rates in most Valley school districts reached or exceeded the state rate. Nevertheless, between 3% and 9% of students in the Class of 2007 dropped out of school.

Cumulative 4-Year High School Graduation & Drop Out Rates



Source: CT Dept. of Education; Oxford data not available

## POST-SECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

While many Valley adults continue education and training after high school, access to college education, adult education, and job training continues to be difficult for some in the Valley community.

- When asked about their **post-secondary education plans**, between 73% and 89% of Valley high school graduates said they planned to pursue further education, which is increasingly important in improving people's opportunities for obtaining employment.
- According to 2009 statistics about **adult educational attainment**, the percentage of adults 25 and over who have Bachelor's degrees was lower in the Valley than in the state, ranging between 20% and 35% for the Valley towns compared to 36% for Connecticut.
- When asked about **adult education & job training availability** in the Valley, 42% of residents surveyed stated that there are enough adult education services while 46% said they did not know. 28% of respondents said existing job training services are sufficient but 51% did not know.

# iving the Natural Environment



## Vision for the Valley

*A community that conserves its natural resources so that the environment is safe, clean, and available for the enjoyment of residents for generations to come*

## How Are We Doing? □ An Overview

### LAND USE & QUALITY

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The Valley's natural environment and its residents benefit from land that has been dedicated as open space within the 6-town region. Due to the Valley's manufacturing history, some of its land may require environmental remediation in order to make it safe for new development.

- The Valley region has an estimated 5,594 acres of **open space**; this accounts for close to 8% of the Valley's total acreage but land dedicated to open space is not evenly distributed across the Valley towns.
- A 2004 State of Connecticut inventory identified 21 **Brownfield sites**, land that may be contaminated with hazardous substances, within the Valley. Additional sites are included in the Department of Environmental Protection's list of potentially contaminated sites.

### AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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The Valley's agricultural resources influence quality of life for residents through their impact on the local food supply and the physical environment.

- According to the 2007 Agricultural Census, there were 55 **farm operations** located in the Valley zip codes. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture Farmland Preservation program lists 3 farm sites in the Valley that participate in this state program to slow the loss of Connecticut farmland; additional farm conservation efforts are sponsored by towns and other organizations.
- The Valley currently has 3 **farmers' markets** (Derby, Seymour, & Shelton) and one **community garden**.

### ENERGY USE

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Valley residents and businesses rely to a large extent on non-renewable energy sources that contribute to environmental pollution, but there are some efforts to change these energy use patterns.

- As was true for the state of Connecticut, the most commonly used **home heating fuel** source among Valley households in 2000 was fuel oil, followed by natural gas, electricity, and liquid petroleum gases.
- Each of the three transit services that provide bus service in the Valley has plans to purchase **low emissions public transit vehicles** in the upcoming years in order to reduce diesel emissions and thereby improve air quality and public health.





Be good to the land and the land  
will be good to you.

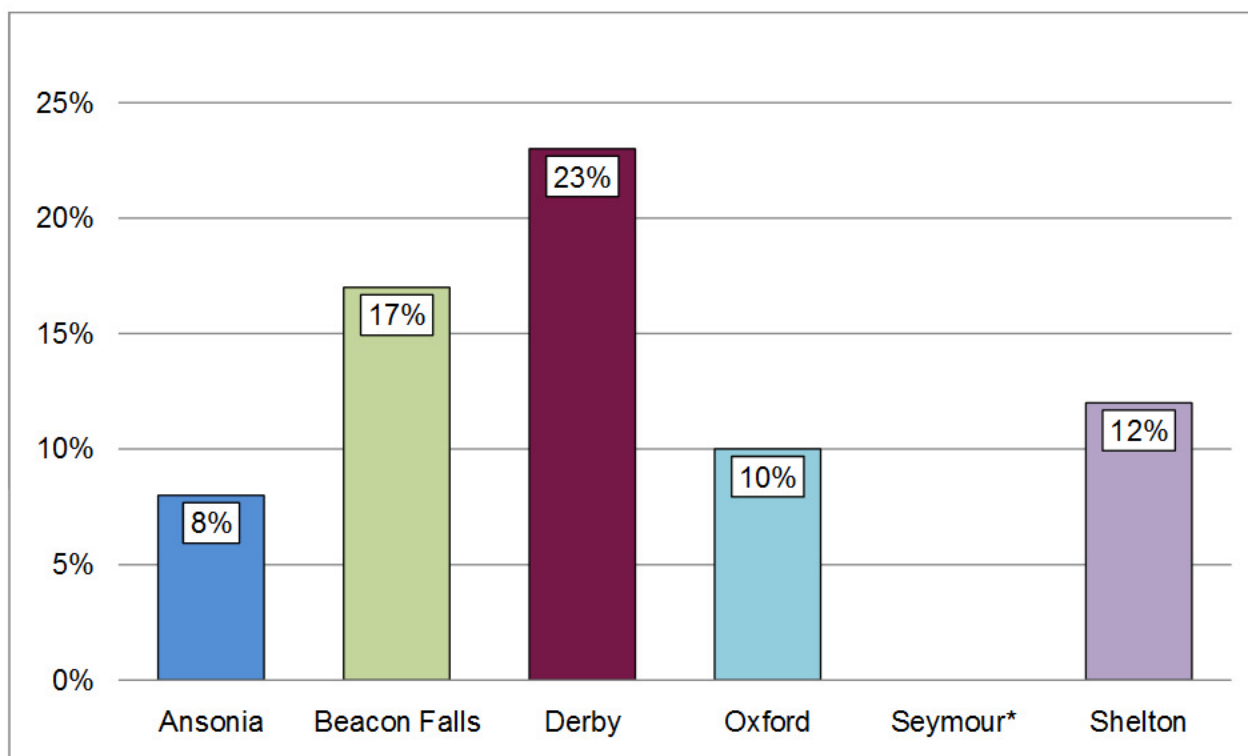
~ Phillip James Jones  
Founder of Jones Family Farm

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION MEASURES

Many Valley residents are taking measures to conserve resources and the natural environment, yet local towns, businesses, and organizations can further improve their conservation efforts.

- When asked about **household conservation measures**, Valley survey respondents most commonly reported recycling (87%), followed by reducing home energy consumption (54%) and growing or purchasing food locally (21%). Additional residents stated they drove less or purchased a more fuel efficient vehicle (15%), reduced use of harmful chemicals (11%), and enrolled in a clean energy program or purchased alternative energy products (5%).
- In 2009, Valley towns recycled less than a quarter of the solid waste they generated, with most towns falling considerably below that level. Thus, the Valley's **municipal recycling rates** fell well below the state's goal of a 40% rate and below the 25% statewide rate.

Percentage of Municipal Solid Waste Recycled



Source: CT Dept. Environmental Protection; \*data not reported for Seymour



## Keeping Residents Safe

### Definition for the Valley

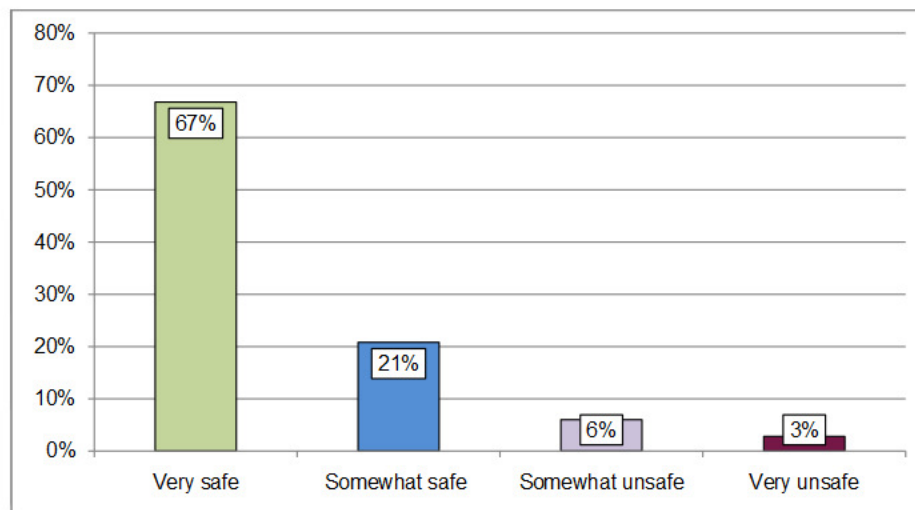
A community that ensures that residents feel safe within their homes and their neighborhoods and that provides residents with knowledge, tools, and services to protect themselves from violent and accidental injury

### Community Safety: An Overview

The Valley region is safer than in the state as a whole, but not all residents feel safe in their neighborhoods.

- In 2006, the Valley's **total crime rate** of 1,621 crimes per 100,000 fell considerably below the state crime rate, however there are substantial differences in crime rates across the Valley towns.
- When asked about **neighborhood safety**, 88% of residents surveyed reported feeling somewhat or very safe walking in their neighborhood in the evening, but nearly 1 in 10 residents felt somewhat or very unsafe.

#### How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood in the evening?



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey

### SAFETY IN THE FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

Although rates of violence against community members like women, children, and the elderly are not higher in the Valley than in the state, some residents still suffer from violence caused by people they know and with whom they live.

- Although cases of family and domestic violence are typically underreported, 519 **family violence incidents** were reported in the Valley in 2008. Close to 900 Valley residents used **domestic violence services** provided by a local program (The Umbrella).
- In 2008, the state reported 164 cases of substantiated **child abuse & neglect** and 15 cases of **elder abuse & neglect** in the Valley; the actual frequency of such abuse may be higher.



The safety of the people is the  
supreme law.

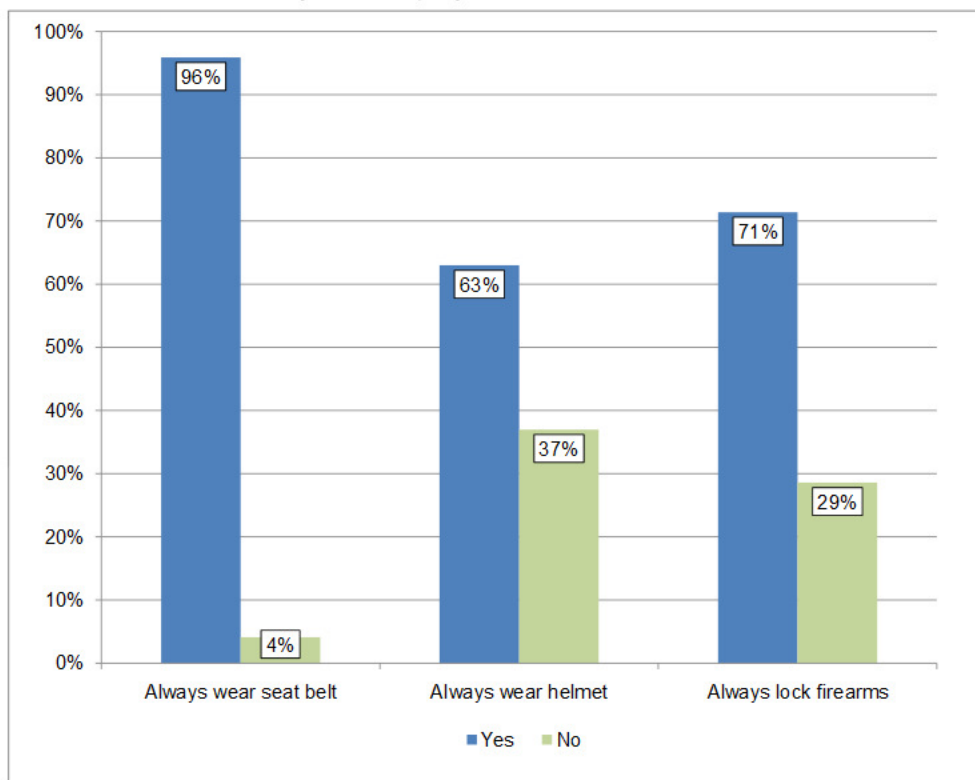
~ Cicero

## ACCIDENTAL INJURY

Valley residents take measures to prevent accidental injury, but more can be done to avoid injuries related to the use of motor vehicles, bicycles, and firearms.

- In 2007, there were over 700 **motor vehicle accidents** with a reported injury or fatality that occurred in Valley towns, showing that motor vehicle accidents continue to be an important preventable cause of injury and death in the region.
- When asked about their **injury prevention practices**, 96% of residents surveyed indicated that they always wear a seatbelt. Of those who provided valid responses to questions about helmet use and firearms safety, 63% said they always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or motorcycle and 71% said they always lock firearms in a secure location.

Reported Injury Prevention Practices



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey



## Improving Emotional and Social Wellbeing

### Valley CARES for the Valley

*Community that promotes the emotional and social wellbeing of residents by evaluating and addressing mental health concerns, reducing risk factors such as substance abuse, and ensuring access to quality mental health & social services*

### An Overview

#### SERVICE NEEDS

Community members with mental health concerns appears similar to that in the state and nation, emotional health issues affect quality of life for many residents.

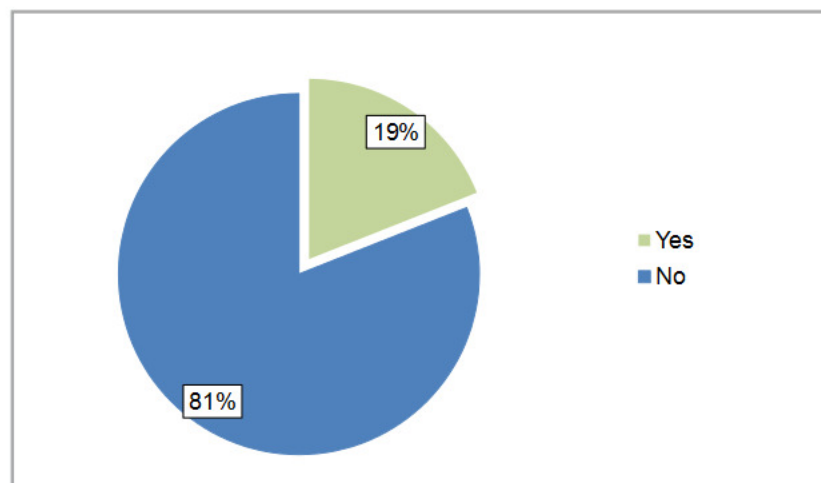
- **Community awareness of service resources** is considerable, with 68% of residents surveyed stating that they were somewhat or very aware of where to find assistance. Nevertheless, 20% of respondents said that they were not at all aware of where to turn for help for family needs.
- In the 2009 calendar year, the **top community service requests** to the 2-1-1 Infoline from the Valley United Way region included requests for help with utilities/heat, housing/shelter, and public assistance. Requests for these services increased from the previous year, as did those for food and financial assistance. Outpatient mental health care, substance abuse services, and health supportive services also ranked in the top 10 service requests.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

While the proportion of Valley community members with mental health concerns appears similar to that in the state and nation, emotional health issues affect quality of life for many residents.

- Nearly 1 in 5 Valley adults surveyed (19%) reported experiencing **emotional distress** that affected their ability to function in the past year. In a 2009 survey, 17% of Valley middle and high school students said that they had felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in the past year.

**Experienced mental health issues that affected ability to function for more than 2 weeks in past year**



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey

- For the period from 2005 to 2007, the Valley's age-adjusted death rate from **suicide** (9.2 suicide deaths per 100,000) was higher than the rate reported for the state (7.4 suicide deaths per 100,000).





Most of us spend more time taking care of our physical health than our mental health even though the two go hand in hand.

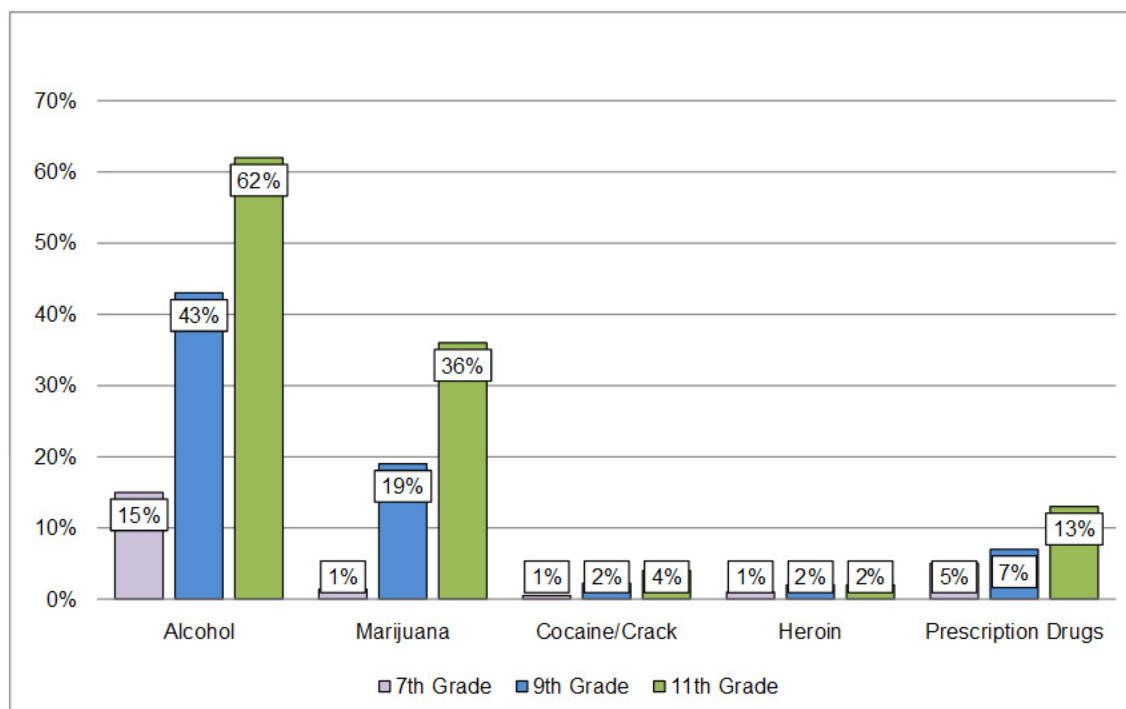
□ Mental Health of America

## SUBSTANCE USE & ABUSE

Substance use and abuse continues to have a significant impact on the emotional and social wellbeing of many Valley adults and young people.

- When asked how serious of a problem **illegal drugs** are in the Valley, 82% of residents surveyed stated that illegal drugs are a somewhat or very serious problem.
- The number of **substance abuse related hospital visits** to Griffin Hospital demonstrates the personal and financial impact of substance abuse. In the past 3 years, about 3% of emergency room visits were substance abuse related, with close to 1,000 such visits per year. In the 2009 fiscal year, about 12% of all inpatient hospitalizations were related to substance abuse.
- When asked about the **social & health concerns facing schoolchildren**, survey respondents with children under 18 at home most commonly identified drugs (49%) and bullying (26%). Parental concerns about bullying are supported by the 2009 Valley Substance Abuse Action Council (VSAAC) student survey in which 45% of Valley middle and high school students reported that they had been bullied at least once.
- Surveys of Valley middle and high school students demonstrate that **youth substance use** is common, particularly in the case of alcohol and marijuana. For most substances, usage rates increase markedly between middle school and high school.

Percent of Middle & High School Students Reporting Substance Use in Past 12 Months



Source: Valley Substance Abuse Action Council

# Improving Community Health

## Goal for the Valley

Community members have access to quality health services as well as the knowledge and resources to obtain healthy lives

## An Overview

### PRENATAL CARE, BIRTH, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Valley residents experience a healthy start in life. We can improve further, especially in the areas of infant birth weight and childhood lead screening.

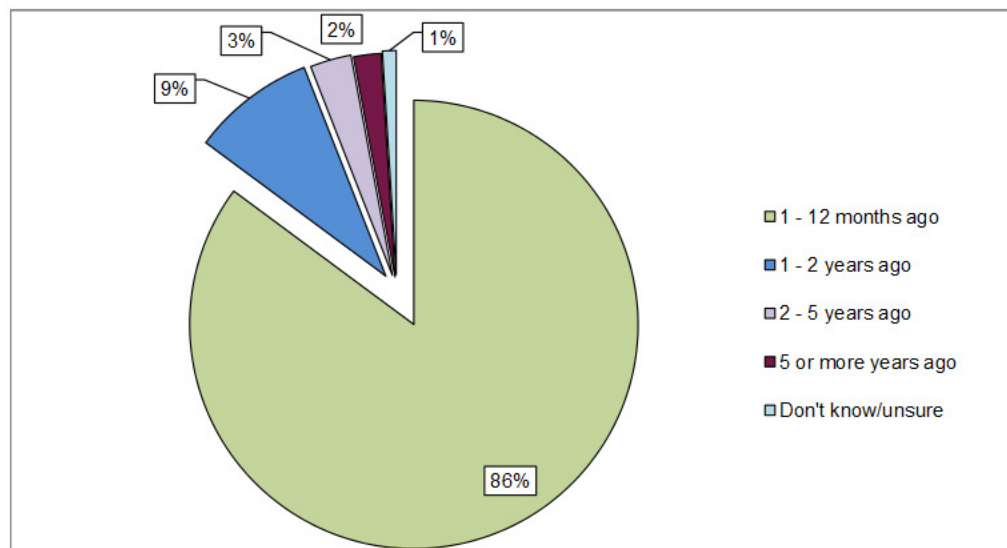
- In 2006, 90% of mothers received adequate **prenatal care** and the risk of **infant death** was lower in the Valley than in the state of Connecticut overall.
- 6% of the Valley infants born in 2006 had a **low birth weight**, putting them at higher risk for disability and death. This percentage is higher than the Healthy People 2010 target rate of 5%.
- While nearly 9 out of 10 Valley two year olds had up-to-date **childhood immunizations** in 2008, nearly two-thirds of Valley children under 6 had not received **lead screening** tests as of 2009.

### ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE, HEALTH SCREENING, AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Most Valley residents report using health services, while smaller percentages have difficulty getting access to health care due to lack of health insurance, financial challenges, and other obstacles.

- 5% of Valley residents surveyed reported they had no **health insurance coverage**, a lower percentage than statewide estimates of the uninsured.
- Use of breast **cancer screening** among women surveyed was high, but 26% of respondents eligible for colon cancer screening said they had never undergone a colonoscopy.
- 95% of residents surveyed reported **use of primary health care services** in the past 2 years.

#### How long has it been since your last routine check-up?



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey



Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.  
~ World Health Organization

## HEALTH AND ILLNESS

While most residents surveyed consider their health to be good, considerable numbers have common health conditions that may contribute to the leading causes of death in the Valley.

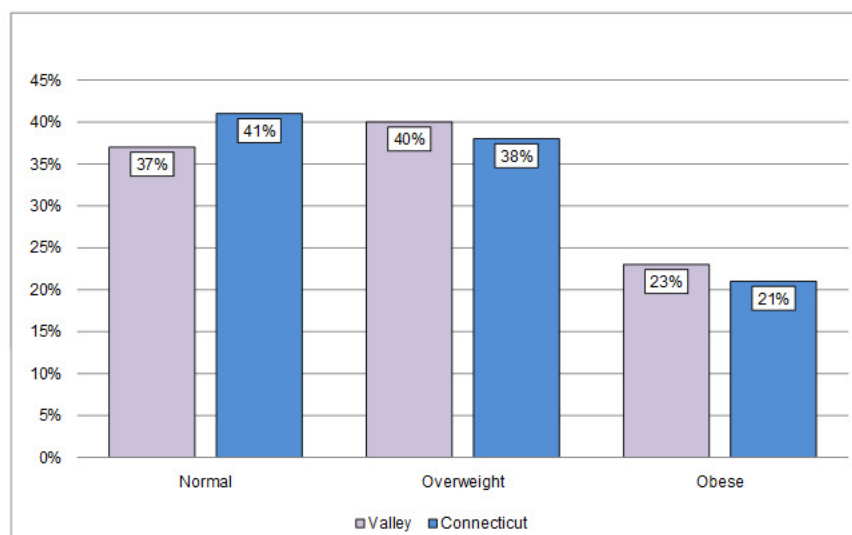
- Over 90% of survey respondents rated their **overall health** as good or very good, yet substantial percentages also reported a **health condition or risk factor** such as high cholesterol (37%), arthritis (28%), high blood pressure (27%), or diabetes (14%).
- Rates of **HIV/AIDS**, and **sexually transmitted diseases** are lower in the Valley than in the state. The rate of **asthma-related emergency visits** varies by Valley town but is lower than Connecticut's rate.
- The Valley's rates of **heart disease and cancer deaths** remain high, exceeding the Healthy People 2010 targets. The 2006 cancer death rate was also higher than the state's rate.

## HEALTHY BEHAVIORS AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Many Valley residents report that they practice health-promoting behaviors. However, there is room for improvement, especially in the areas of smoking, home radon testing, body weight, and physical fitness.

- 13% of Valley Adults surveyed reported currently **smoking**; just under half of those said they plan to quit. In 2009, 40% of 11th grade students in Valley public schools reported having smoked.
- 57% of survey respondents said that their homes had not undergone **testing for radon**, a naturally occurring gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Over 30% of respondents stated that they did not have a **carbon monoxide detector** in their homes or were unsure if they did.
- In 2007-2008, less than half of Valley public school students passed the **children's physical fitness** tests.
- Most residents surveyed reported that they usually practice **healthy eating habits**. However, only 30% said that they get 30 minutes of moderate **physical activity** 5 times or more per week.
- Survey results suggest that over 20% of Valley adults have a **body mass index** that is considered to be in the obese range, similar to the obesity level found in a 2009 statewide survey.

Adult Body Mass Index



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey, CT BRFSS



## g Arts, Culture, and Recreation

### on for the Valley

community that provides its residents with opportunities for meaningful participation in arts, culture, and recreation activities



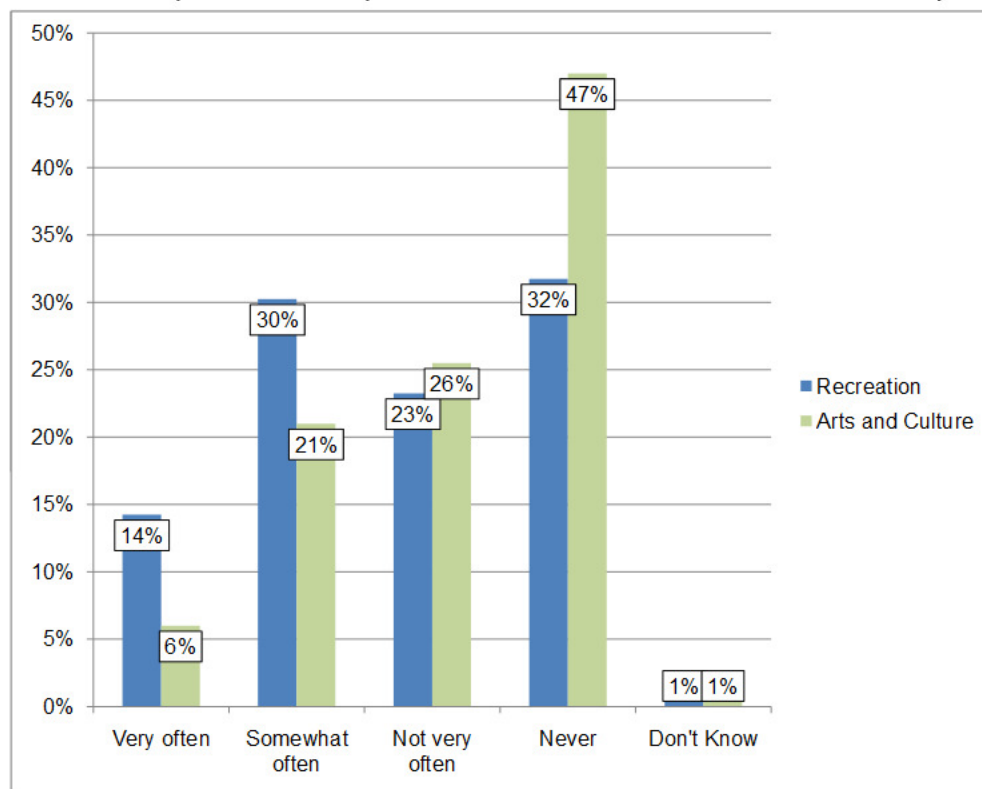
## How Are We Doing? □ An Overview

### ARTS, CULTURE, & RECREATION RESOURCES

The Valley region enjoys many resources for arts, culture, and recreation activities, but not all residents utilize them frequently.

- The Valley is home to 45 municipal and state **public parks**; all of the Valley towns also have **walking trails**.
- In 2000, an arts and cultural inventory identified a wide variety of **arts and cultural resources** in the Valley but this inventory has not been updated in the past 10 years. At that time, the Valley's arts and cultural resources included 11 arts organizations, 172 individual artists, 28 performing groups, 17 performance venues, 7 visual arts venues, and numerous festivals.
- When asked about their **use of arts, culture & recreation resources** in the Valley, 44% of residents surveyed reported that they used local recreation resources somewhat or very often in the past year. A quarter (27%) said that they used arts and culture resources in the Valley somewhat or very often.

How often have you used Valley arts, culture, & recreation resources in the past year?



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey



People who cannot find time for recreation are obliged sooner or later to find time for illness.

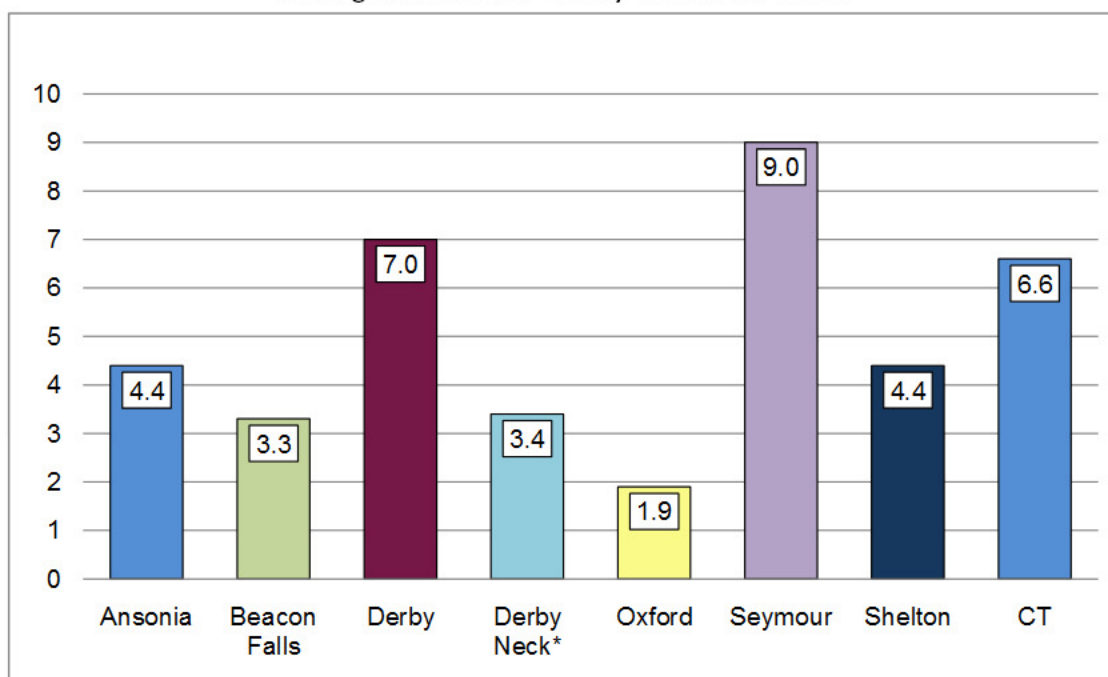
~John Wanamaker

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Many residents utilize the diverse resources provided by the Valley's public libraries, which now include computers with Internet Access and educational programs for adults and children.

- The **availability and use of library resources** has grown in the Valley as it has in the state. In 2008-2009, the average number of library visits increased in most libraries, though the rates varied by town. Computer use and program attendance have also grown in many Valley libraries.

Average Number of Library Visits Per Person



Source: CT Public Libraries-A Statistical Profile; \*Derby Neck is a regional association library



## Building Community Relations and Engagement



### Foundation for the Valley

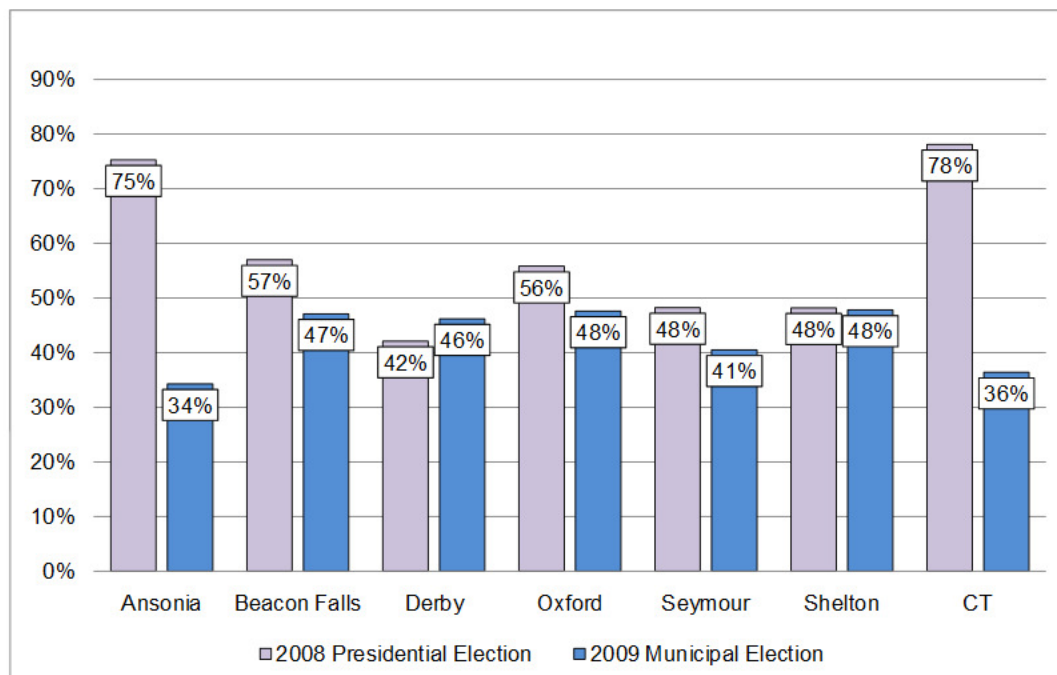
*Building a strong community that fosters positive relations among its diverse members and encourages residents to participate in improving quality of life for all*

### Community Overview

Substantial numbers of Valley residents do not participate in the political process.

- In 2009, **voter registration** levels ranged between 53% and 69% of residents in Valley towns, leaving a sizeable percentage of community members ineligible to participate in elections.
- Fewer than half of registered voters **voted in elections** in the 2009 municipal races. Higher percentages of eligible voters participated in the 2008 presidential elections, although the Valley's national voting rate fell below the statewide level.

Percentage of Registered Voters Participating in Recent Elections



Source: CT Office of the Secretary of State

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Although officially recognized hate crimes are not common in the Valley, residents expressed some concern about ethnic and race relations in the community.

- In 2007, the Valley had 6 reported **hate crimes**, based on religious and racial bias.
- While 14% of residents surveyed stated that **ethnic discrimination and racism** is a big problem in the Valley, close to half (46%) viewed it as a small problem.





Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

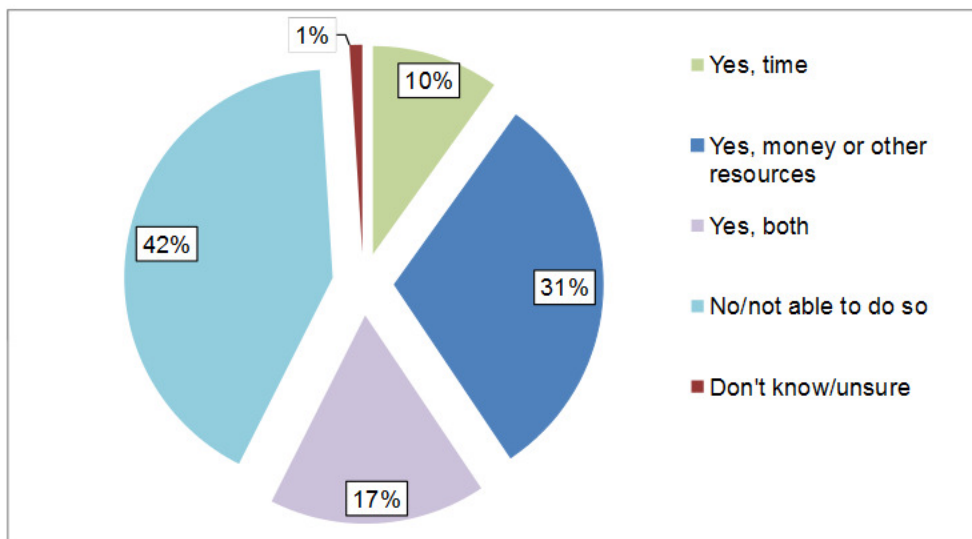
~Margaret Mead

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Many Valley residents actively engage in their community by obtaining information about community resources and by giving to local organizations.

- Valley residents surveyed reported that the **community information sources** they most often utilize are the Internet (35%), television news (31%), newspaper stories (23%), and friends, neighbors, or relatives (13%).
- When asked about their **charitable giving and volunteerism**, more than half of residents surveyed said that they gave time, money, and/or other resources to organizations working in the Valley during the past year.

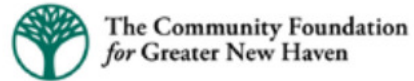
Given time or donated money to charitable organizations in the Valley in past year



Source: Valley CARES Community Survey



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Valley Council for Health & Human Services

*Building Partnerships to Strengthen Community Services*

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