

Health Care Reform in Northern NH

By Kathleen Kelley



Katie Kelley and Harriet Baldwin discuss Health Care Reform at a panel discussion on the subject held at the Randolph Town Hall on August 11. This event was sponsored by the Randolph Church Benevolence Committee. Photo by Angela Brown.

Health reform will provide a significant and guaranteed investment in health centers to expand access in the Northern NH communities. However, health centers will require tools to preserve their successes under American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA), respond to new challenges under health reform, and reach thousands of people who remain without access to primary care, because health insurance coverage does not equal access.

Sustainable Funding for Growth: The enacted health reform package creates an \$11 billion trust fund over five years, \$9.5 billion of which will allow health centers to expand their operational capacity to serve new patients and expand to provide oral and behavioral health services.

Investment in Health Center Infrastructure Needs: Health centers will need \$10.5 billion to sustain or upgrade existing facilities over the next 5 years. Overall, health center access to capital funding through public and private sectors must improve to ensure that health centers have the space and capacity to reach patients

Investment in Workforce Needs: ARRA and health reform made substantial investments in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). Randolph resident Dr. John McDowell, first came to this region under the NHSC in 1974. The national shortage of primary care providers will likely be exacerbated with the implementation of health reform, and health centers will need new support to recruit and retain needed providers.

Rural Physician Training Grants will help medical colleges develop special rural training programs and recruit students from rural communities. This "grow-your-own" approach is one of the best and most cost-effective ways to ensure a robust rural workforce into the future.

Fee Schedule Improvements – The physician fee schedule payment formula will be updated by adjusting for geographic variances and better account for rural disparities. This includes a hold-harmless provision, which prevents unintended consequences of under payment. Additional payments to hospitals in counties particularly with the lowest Medicare spending will provide additional payments to offset disproportionately low rates.

Small Business Tax Credit

This will create tax credit for small businesses who offer health insurance for their employees. The credit would be equal to 50 percent (35 percent for tax exempt employer) of an eligible employer's requirement set forth by the bill through the exchange or a suitable alternative.

Access to Low Cost Medicine

The 340B Drug Pricing Program, through which CCFHS provides over \$2,000,000 of free medicine in the Northern, NH region, will soon give AVH as a Critical Access Hospital access to low cost drugs to better serve their patients. The Medicare prescription drug donut hole will be filled in over time. In 2010, Medicare beneficiaries who go into the donut hole will receive a \$250 rebate. They will receive a pharmaceutical manufacturers' 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs in 2011 and 75 percent coverage for all brand name and generic drugs, phased in to fill the donut hole by 2020.

Quality, Affordable Health Care for All Americans

- Bars insurance companies from discriminating based on pre-existing conditions, health status, and gender.
- Provides Americans with better coverage and information they need to make informed decisions about their health insurance.
- Creates health insurance exchanges – competitive marketplaces where individuals and small business can buy affordable health care coverage.
- Offers premium tax credits and cost-sharing assistance to low and middle income Americans, providing families and small businesses with the largest tax cut for health care in history.
- Ensures access to immediate relief for uninsured Americans with pre-existing conditions on the brink of medical bankruptcy.
- Creates a reinsurance program in support of employers who offer retirees age 55-64 health coverage.
- Invests substantially in Community Health Centers to expand access to health care where it is needed most.
- Empowers state insurance commissioners and the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct annual reviews of new plans demanding unjustified, egregious premium increases.

The Role of Public Programs

- Expands eligibility for Medicaid to include all non-elderly Americans with incomes at or below 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
- The federal government will pay 100 percent of the cost of covering newly-eligible individuals for the first three years of the expansion, will decrease its contribution incrementally from 2017 to 2019, and then will pay 90 percent of costs in 2020 and beyond.
- Maintains current funding levels for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through fiscal year 2015.
- Increases payments to primary care doctors in Medicaid.

Improving Medicare

- Provides new, free annual wellness visits, and eliminates out-of-pocket copayments for preventive benefits under Medicare.
- Provides better chronic care, with doctors collaborating to provide patient-centered care for the 80 percent of older Americans who have at least one chronic medical condition.

Preventing Chronic Disease and Improving Public Health

- Promotes preventive health care at all ages and improves public health activities that help Americans live healthy lives and restrain the growth of health care costs over time.
- Eliminates cost-sharing for recommended preventive care, provides individuals with the information they need to make healthy decisions, improves education on disease prevention and public health, and invests in a national prevention and public health strategy.

Improving Access to Innovative Medical Therapies

- Establishes a regulatory pathway for FDA approval of bio-similar versions of previously licensed biological products.

Community Living Assistance Services and Support (CLASS)

- Makes long-term support and services more affordable for millions of Americans by providing a lifetime cash benefit that will help people with disabilities remain in their homes and communities. CLASS is a voluntary, self-funded, insurance program provided through the workplace. For those whose employers participate, affordable premiums will be paid through payroll deductions. Participation by workers is entirely voluntary. The Congressional Budget Office confirms that the program, which has been revised from earlier versions, is actuarially sound.



Bill and Barbara Arnold were honored for their outstanding volunteer efforts at the Randolph Mountain Club's 100th anniversary annual meeting. Randolph Mountain Club member Peter Bowers, left, and newly elected RMC President John Scarinza teamed up to make the presentation of a life time membership. Photo by Edith Tucker.



Autumn Brown and Danielle Cotnoir Square dance at Sugar Plum Farm on August 21.



Jacqueline and Dudley Laufman are joined by Paul Cormier to provide music for the RMC square dance at Sugar Plum Farm on August 21. Photo by Angela Brown.



Nineteen-year-old Hannah Minifie, an annual Randolph summer visitor and sophomore at Denison College in Granville, Ohio, sold this ceramic rabbit to an arts enthusiast at the annual Randolph Art Show on display in the Cross Meeting Room of the Randolph Town Hall this past summer. Photo by Edith Tucker

Scott Lang is a former Jefferson resident who now resides in PA. He writes essays based on hiking and life in northern New Hampshire. This essay placed in the top 10 at the Annual Waterman Fund Contest. Scott is a volunteer trail worker for the AMC. He returns to the area each summer spending his time hiking and working on trails. A series of his essays will be found in a soon to be published New England Peak Experiences compiled by Carole Stone White.

A Wild Pursuit

Part 1 of 3

By Scott Lang

Life teaches us that for any given word, thought, even action, each individual will have their own interpretation. For some, the concept of "wild" is defined as a three-year old running through the house, bouncing around like some unwieldy, supercharged bumper car. Others see "wild" as a white-knuckle flight on a frenzied amusement ride, the kind of wild where we get a taste that we want again and again and to achieve it we will go to incredible lengths of exertion.

My parents wanted me to grow up with the element of natural wildness. It's the reason why they built a log cabin in the middle of the woods of northern New Hampshire. There we were, north, but west of the Presidential Range. Shoot straight east, across reclusive terrain, and you would smack right into Jefferson Notch Road. In order to see the home one would have to fly over it. Here in the woods along with the creatures within, we were free, wild and free. It was not until many years later I realized that what was normal to me was considered wild to others. Encounters with wildlife, be it coincidental or planned, were common. I will never forget one in particular. It was a fall morning. I was walking down our gravel driveway en route to our bus stop. It was not just your typical misty New England fall morning; it was shipwreck-producing fog. I can still picture the slight bend in our driveway. As I approached, I felt a presence. I was not alone. I knew, *I just knew*, it had to be a moose. I stopped. I felt, as much as I heard, him take a step or two. With those meager strides I could now make out the silhouette, darker than the fog itself. It was a bull. It was also the rut season. We were both charged up at this point, albeit for different reasons. It was not the biggest bull I'd ever seen but all that prior exposure meant nothing right now as I'd never, ever been this close to one before. There was a rippled snort. I could picture his lips rattling up and down. It reminded me so much of the horses I cared for over so many summers. If this was a stand-off it was only so because I didn't know what else to do. To flee would only postpone the trampling. To fight, well, the outcome is a foregone conclusion, is it not? Another step or two on his behalf and he was gone. I could hear his massive bulk snapping and breaking vegetation. I guess there was no reason for him to stay. I imagine he left both satisfied and disinterested.



Broad Wing Hawk sightings were frequent throughout the fall and summer of 2010. Photo by John Lamoreux 4/26/10

After the adrenaline rush I thought to myself, well, that was not so bad, as I repeatedly looked over my shoulder. When I returned home that day his tracks were clearly visible and reminded me of my appreciation that this graceful beast had benevolently extended to me a lease on my young life. Often I get so caught up when relating this as my mind takes me back to the scene, I forget the thought of anyone listening. When I come back to reality, I have often noticed some mouths a bit ajar; yes, wild indeed. Others who visited our cabin found their own definition of wild. You see, we did not get a flush toilet until 1986. It was an anniversary present to my parents. But, that's another story for another time.

It is all too easy to associate wild with something uncharted, untamed, or unknown. Hence, the eye of our mind whisks us aloft over remote forests and valleys; it sweeps high above the mountains and dives down into shadow cloaked glades. It speaks a whisper of desolation, seclusion, of a sort of hinterland. Then it screams at us in a voice that is not acknowledged by the ear, but by the mind, and we hasten to follow. We want to see it, feel it, a baptism of reverie. We will go as far as we can to attain it without any regard of finding our way back, and when we arrive, how good it feels. However, we cannot create that which is wild. Let us say I decide not to mow my lawn. I am going to just allow it to grow in whatever way it wants. That is hardly a wilderness. The earth is just doing what is normal without a care of my intentions. It does so with forces well beyond my pitiful attempts to create something wild. When we separate ourselves from that which is cultivated, that which is truly wild requires as much our state of mind combined as the physical location we seek. As a young child, I went into the woods full of eager expecta-

tion, energy, adventure, and freedom. When those forces converged somewhere deep in the forest my own definition of wild began to form. Perhaps it is a bit like your own.

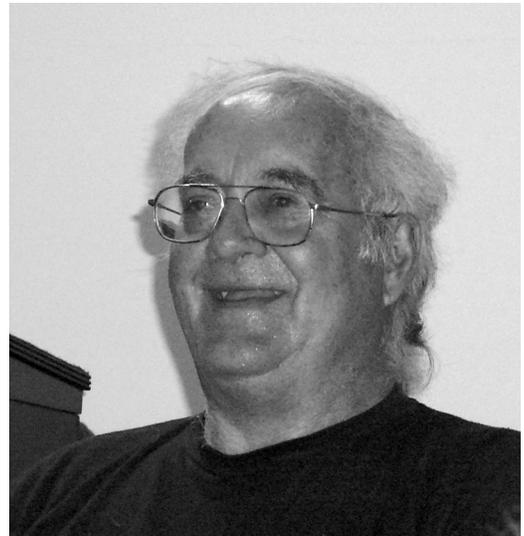
The question is what is it we seek in the wild? We are looking for an environment devoid of what is common. For many, our lives quietly slip into the repetitive, mundane, even dull. When our existence seems meager we want to put the everyday behind. We will cross a desert, paddle to a remote island, climb a peak just to be able to drop into the depths of the other side and disappear into a wooded secrecy. We strive to lose sight of anything man-made, each step taking us farther away from the droning hum of activity we are accustomed to. It fades to a hush, a final gasp, then it dies completely. We want to secure a place, where along with time and space, we too lose sense of perception. We seek peace, solitude, and meaning. For all we have seen and done on the daily scene we realize that true peace comes from the things over which we have no control. We stuff our packs and walk for hours, days, weeks, some for

months and years. For what? A wind driven rain in a speechless forest? A soft, yet penetrating sunrise that awakens us without effort? A mossy carpet of which every inch is new to us? Maybe it is the challenge. A test of our abilities. Do we still have them? Can we survive in a land stripped naked of comforts? Or maybe we lust for a time of focus? To make us complete? Yes, indeed, perhaps all of these. We forsake all we have worked and struggled for and let it go, without a care or regret. That is what we want. Like some ancient conjurer, we bleed ourselves free of every vestige of civilized life in an attempt to appease our melding with the wilderness. It is our personal rite, with only the sky, trees, and rocks as our witnesses. As hikers, we chase the natural, wild state as if it were our holy grail. It beseeches us with its calming influence and rugged approach, a pursuit of absorption. The justification being that the harder it is to get there, the less likely we will be disturbed or even found. We jealously guard its location, keeping it to ourselves or a few trusted friends. After all, it is our own personal Eden.

On Sunday, August 22, members of the Randolph Church, led by Jim Baldwin, honored caretaker Larry Martin with a plaque and gift. The plaque read:

THANK YOU, LARRY MARTIN

50 years ago, a seventeen year old Randolph boy named Larry Martin got a job on the maintenance staff of the Randolph Church. Today we mark the fiftieth year of Larry's unbroken service to this church, a record unlikely to ever be surpassed. Nor is there any end in sight, for Larry, still robust at age 68, does not talk of retirement. Thank you Mr. Martin for helping us keep this historic church and its grounds one of the loveliest places in Randolph and in all of Northern New Hampshire.



Larry Martin is honored for 50 years of service at the Randolph Church. Photo by Leslie Morneweck



The Ravine House historical marker is unveiled by Jim Baldwin and Jean Malick. Approximately fifty people joined Jim Baldwin and the Randolph Foundation for the unveiling of a state historic marker commemorating the site of the Ravine House. It took Jim approximately four years to get signatures on a petition, write a proposal and raise enough money to put the marker in place. He was able to do this with the help of donors and the Randolph Foundation. Photo by Leslie Morneweck

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They can now be mailed, faxed or hand delivered to the town clerk. The State Primary Election is Sept. 14, 2010 and the General Election is Nov 2, 2010. Polls for both days are open from 11 to 7 pm.



The Adams family enjoy the Library's new outdoor garden and Wi-Fi access. Photo by Dede Aube



John Micucci marvels at the Randolph fire truck at the annual Fireman's Pancake Breakfast which was a great success, serving around 120 people. The sausage and eggs were donated by the Lancaster Jiffy Mart and the bacon donated by Lancaster Subway. Maple syrup was donated by local sugarers Parker, Arnold and Scarinza.



Art Show enthusiasts take time to enjoy the annual Art Show held at the Randolph Town Hall.