



Maine
Philanthropy
Center

2017 Funders Forum

Maine Mechanics' Hall (Portland, Maine)

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

8:30 am – 3:30 pm

The Diversity of Advocacy

Funder advocacy can take many forms, as proven by one Maine foundation's recent efforts to reduce lead poisoning. During his afternoon keynote speech at the MPC's 2017 Funders Forum, Tony Cipollone, president and CEO of the [John T. Gorman Foundation](#), outlined how his organization collaborated with nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies to address health problems stemming from lead exposure.

According to Tony, [Healthy Androscoggin \(HA\)](#) - a grassroots coalition of individuals seeking to improve health and well-being in their local communities - approached the John T. Gorman Foundation after receiving funding to expand lead screening outreach efforts in Lewiston. Working in conjunction with HA, the Foundation used its resources to help educate business leaders, city officials, funders, and government representatives about lead poisoning and its harmful effects. Other community stakeholders, including additional nonprofits and medical organizations, eventually came on board, and a new collaborative was born.

Committed to reducing elevated lead levels and asthma rates among children, the collaborative understood that it needed to do more than address negative post-exposure health outcomes. Rather than simply *responding* to lead-related illnesses and conditions, it needed to proactively attack the problem of lead at its roots. Thus, the collaborative's members worked with municipal and state authorities to promote programs and policies that increased child screening rates for lead poisoning in Lewiston by more than 60%, won the city over \$3 million in Lead Hazard Reduction funds, and garnered close to \$1 million in CDC funds that bolstered Healthy Androscoggin's work in Lewiston's ethnic communities. But even with those achievements, there is still [much more work to do](#).

Jenn Gray, Director of Advocacy for the Maine Philanthropy Center, appreciated Tony's talk because it showcased the fact that there are many ways for funders and nonprofits to engage in advocacy. "When people hear the word 'advocacy,'" she said, "they often immediately think of governmental lobbying. But in reality, there are myriad channels available to help improve public policy and strengthen civil society."

As Tony emphasized, The John T. Gorman Foundation took an advocacy step by focusing on an important problem close to home. It then engaged the work in collaboration with partner nonprofit organizations and municipal and state agencies. According to Jenn, "Tony presented a great example of inter-sector work that will positively affect many lives. He showed that success can be achieved when organizations address pressing problems and collaboratively leverage each other's expertise."