



26 June 2008

To the Orton Family Foundation:

On behalf of the FIVE-TOWN HEALTH ALLIANCE (5THA), I would like to convey our strong support for your "art and soul" project and to recommend the town of Starksboro as a project site. The FIVE-TOWN area with a population of approximately 9,000 includes the towns of Lincoln, Bristol, Monkton, New Haven, and Starksboro. It is a place rich in healthy resources, yet struggling to make them accessible to all members of its growing population.

Healthy individuals possess the creativity and display the community engagement necessary to plan for a future supportive of health in its broadest sense. Improved nutrition through community agriculture, expanded means of communication and education through the arts, fitness and awareness of environment through outdoor programs, and seminars on alternative energy – all contribute to the cycle of individual health, influencing community health, and finally global health. Yet, this is the work of individuals whose good health permits them the time, energy, and creativity to look beyond basic needs of housing, food, transportation, and income. Poor health, defined in any of a variety of ways, can limit the participation of those who live at or near poverty level. At this challenging economic time, a growing number of our neighbors are left out of the conversation regarding the future of their community through some lack of resources that threaten their physical or emotional health.

Northern Addison County, including the Five-Town area has been designated a 'Rural Physician Shortage Area,' by Governor Douglas. There has been no dentist in the Five-Town area for over five years. Many in our area are either uninsured or under-insured. Therefore, Senator Sanders, the Community Health Center of Burlington, and a large group of area residents have come together to open a comprehensive community health center located in Bristol and serving all residents of

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#### **Steering Committee**

Roger Barkin, DDS *Ripton*  
Elissa Close, NP *Starksboro (CHAIR)*  
Bill Coon *Starksboro*  
Susan Randall Davis *Monkton*  
Jinny Duncan *Bristol*  
Rachel Edwards, MS, LAc *Lincoln*  
Rebecca Tolmach Elder *Starksboro*  
Anne Galante, MD *New Haven*  
Christopher Kiely, LAc *Lincoln*  
Linda Harmon *Bristol*  
Nancy Marnellos, MSW *Lincoln*  
Rev. Dechen Rheault, CMT *Lincoln*  
Kate Simmons, MBA, MPH *Bristol*

community

integration

wellness

prevention

and the Five Town area. A fully integrated model of care is planned that will offer affordable medical, dental, behavioral, and complementary therapies to all members of our community, regardless of age or ability to pay.

The Steering Committee of the 5THA is comprised of individuals with interest or experience in a wide array of health related fields. We support community projects that acknowledge the full spectrum of health: from medicine to education and community, environment and spirituality, nutrition, fitness, and the arts. Communication and expression through the arts helps to erase the lines that separate one individual from another based on economic background, providing for greater civic engagement. Likewise, improving access to health care for all community members helps to assure that basic health needs are not a barrier to full citizen participation. The Five Town Health Alliance is eager to support the Orton Foundation's "Arts in Civic Engagement" project and selection of the town of Starksboro as a project town. We look forward to being a partner in the planning process and are committed to assuring that improved access to health care will enable all interested community members to fully participate in this exciting project.

Healthy communities begin healthy families and a healthy community is a creative one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Close", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elissa Close, CHAIR

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