

Anchored in Our Community



UMass Memorial Health Care – committed to improving the environmental, financial and physical health of the people of Central Massachusetts.

September, 2019

◆ FROM THE DESK OF ERIC DICKSON, MD

President & CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care



One year into our commitment to Anchor Mission and our four pillars – local investing, hiring, purchasing and volunteering – are taking form and taking off, as you’ll read in this issue. Making an impact on the social determinants of health (SDOH) is motivating our internal teams, and they’re gaining inspiration from the community partners that have been tackling SDOH for years.

UMass Memorial employees have told me how appreciative they are to be included in our Anchor Mission work, and as one said, “nothing has been as important” as this work. There’s no doubt it will leave an indelible mark on us and our community. Yet, with such a rich history of outreach at our organization, what’s different about Anchor Mission?

The answer is twofold: first, it’s different in our effort to make this part of our strategy and consciously apply our long term economic and intellectual power to lift up our community; and second, it’s different in our effort to specifically address chronic inequity in our community and the enormous impact that can have on health.

One way this inequity is measured is life expectancy. In Massachusetts, life expectancy at birth is 80.7 years, while in the entire United States, it’s 78.5 years. But in Worcester, there can be a gap in life expectancy of over 11 years between different neighborhoods within the very same zip code! One Worcester neighborhood, for example, has a life expectancy of 71.6 years, which is lower than many third world countries, including Albania, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Libya. When people see these statistics that reflect the real lives of their neighbors, they are moved to make things right.

As members of the health care profession, we need a shift in mindset as we challenge ourselves to address the nonclinical factors that affect health. While our daily work is essential, it’s a fact that the provision of health care services contributes only about 20% to an individual’s health over their life. Social determinants of health, on the other hand – housing, food, transportation, education, employment, environment – contribute a remarkable 60% to one’s health.

Inequities in all or any SDOH can literally cut a life span. Through our Anchor Mission work, we will work outside our hospital walls and within the areas around us to improve the SDOH for our neighbors living in these communities.

If you’d like to get involved in this work, please feel free to reach out to Doug Brown or Cheryl Lapriore. For those of you already involved, thank you for your commitment. ◆

ANCHOR MISSION STEERING COMMITTEE

◆ CO-CHAIRS

Douglas Brown

President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals and Chief Administrative Officer

Cheryl Lapriore

Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff, Chief Marketing Officer, and President of UMass Memorial Health Ventures

◆ COMMUNITY BENEFITS DEPARTMENT

Monica Lowell

Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

To provide feedback or request more information, email communications@umassmemorial.org.



UMassMemorial
Health Care

◆ LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE HIRING STARTS WITH KEY POSITIONS



It was a busy summer for the UMass Memorial Health Care team dedicated to the Anchor Mission pillar, Local Hiring.

The team, co-chaired by Suzanne Stinson, associate vice president of budget, financial management and business development, and Alan Weston, vice president of human resources, hosted a planning summit with community employment partners and launched a pilot designed to start filling vacancies in five key positions within the organization by September 30.

“If we do the work upfront to match local residents to our entry-level positions and prepare them for success, they can grow into UMass Memorial”

The whirlwind of activity was well worth it. It signified the first phase in a mission to develop a pipeline of qualified staff, assist people in developing their career within UMass Memorial and work toward the long-term goal of shared prosperity. With the assistance of organizations including, Ascentria Care Alliance, MassHire, Worcester Adult Learning Center and Worcester Community Action Council, the team identified groups of potential employees – based on where they reside or their demographic group – and began to address the barriers that may hinder them from applying for or sustaining a position at UMass Memorial.

“Barriers like lack of transportation can dissuade potential applicants from even applying for the positions we’re focused on filling,” explained Stinson. “If we do the work upfront to match local residents to our entry level positions and prepare them for success, they can grow into UMass Memorial, bring continuity and help us continue to build an experienced, dedicated staff.”

For each of the targeted positions – catering associate, driver/material handler, houseworker, patient equipment transporter, patient care assistant – the group asked essential questions and established steps to not only recruit an individual, but also ensure they realize the job satisfaction that promotes retention.

According to our hiring team, by answering these and other questions, performing “thorough candidate assessment and vetting, and offering appropriate pre-employment training from both the community agencies and UMass Memorial,” a sustainable, local hiring initiative is off to a strong start. ◆

◆ BUYING LOCAL IS OUR POLICY

The Anchor Mission pillar, Local Sourcing, aims to create jobs and buying power in the communities UMass Memorial Health Care serves by increasing the organization’s purchase of goods and services from local businesses that lift up areas affected by social disadvantage and inequality. The goal is to spur residents to put part of their new or increased earnings toward improving their health and wellness.

“This is redirecting our system’s tremendous spend structure. We can change the flow of dollars back into our region so it can flourish,” said Frank Smith, associate vice president and associate general counsel, who with Edward Bonetti, senior director of materials management, oversee the health care system’s vendor contracting and co-chair the Local Sourcing team.

The team’s first step is to establish a policy that outlines the processes and procedures that will drive the effort and encourage UMass Memorial employees and departments to learn about it, inform it and, ultimately, practice it. (See policy below.)

“The policy is general now because it’s intended to establish a foundation to build on, to start our organization thinking about how we could do this,” said Smith.

“At the same time, we’re identifying and categorizing the goods and services that will have the most positive impact for our communities,” said Bonetti. “So far, most are in scope, so that’s many opportunities.” ◆

◆ POLICY ANCHOR MISSION - LOCAL SOURCING AND PURCHASING



UMass Memorial Health Care has made a commitment to support businesses that reside within the communities served by our health care organizations, with a particular priority given to those businesses demonstrating support (in the form of hiring practices or otherwise) for socially disadvantaged communities or neighborhoods and/or those suffering from the effects of pervasive inequality. This includes purchasing from small, minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-owned businesses. UMass Memorial Health Care will proactively support the growth of purchasing spend associated with the businesses that reside within the communities we serve. ◆

◆ FINANCIAL COUNSELORS HAVE PATIENTS COVERED, WITH CARE

UMass Memorial Health Care is committed to providing quality services to everyone, regardless of their financial situation. Our skilled team of financial counselors assist patients with limited or no health insurance, or low incomes, enroll in plans such as MassHealth and Connector Care. By working with these patients, the financial counselors play a vital role in helping a more vulnerable population gain access to health care.

“I love what I do as a financial counselor. I’m fulfilling my purpose in life, to help patients. It’s so rewarding,” said Luciana Kessler, a supervisor on the growing team of 30 financial counselors responding to the demand for their services and the growth of the health care system.

“On average, our financial counselors complete 1,085 health insurance applications for 2,060 people per month,” Kessler noted.

Kessler described team meetings where manager, Denise Connolly, who joined UMass Memorial as its first financial counselor 30 years ago, reads the messages people send describing what a difference the counselors have made in their lives. A checklist of some of the team’s responsibilities reveals why:

- ◆ Identify newly admitted patients that have no or limited coverage and bring applications to their hospital rooms; speak with social workers about patient needs. Do the same in emergency rooms.
- ◆ Work with case managers to ensure health insurance coverage prior to discharge so patients are better able to set up transportation and home health services.
- ◆ Respond to referrals of non-insured individuals from community organizations, MassHealth and word of mouth.
- ◆ Enroll patients who lose employer-provided insurance due to accident or illness for medication, specialist or treatment coverage.
- ◆ Volunteer at local free clinics to enroll insurance-eligible individuals and families.
- ◆ Check patients’ outstanding balances; identify assistance programs to help them pay for past and future care.
- ◆ Connect with outpatient clinics to reduce the number of self-pay patients by enrolling them in coverage.
- ◆ Assist with applications for food assistance programs and follow-up materials enrollees receive. ◆

◆ GAINING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE: INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH CONNECTOR INFORMATION

Information and online application:
www.mahealthconnector.org
Telephone: 877-623-6765

MASHEALTH INFORMATION

Website: www.masshealthchoices.com
Customer Service: 800-841-2900

UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE FINANCIAL COUNSELING SERVICES

Telephone: 508-334-9300

Central Business Office

306 Belmont Street, Worcester, MA 01604
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Burbank Campus

275 Nichols Road Fitchburg, MA 01420
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Clinton Campus

201 Highland Street, Clinton, MA 01510
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Leominster Campus

60 Hospital Road, Leominster, MA 01453
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 5 pm

UMass Memorial Medical Center Hahnemann Campus

281 Lincoln Street, Worcester, MA 01605
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

UMass Memorial Medical Center Memorial Campus

119 Belmont Street, Worcester, MA 01605
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

UMass Memorial Medical Center University Campus

55 Lake Avenue N., Worcester, MA 01655
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 5 pm

UMass Memorial – Marlborough Hospital

157 Union Street, Marlborough, MA 01752
Monday – Friday: 8 am – 4:30 pm

◆ COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

STAY FIT AND CHAT A BIT – UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital teams up with Fitchburg Family Practice, Fitchburg State University (FSU) and NewVue Communities to offer a monthly *Walk 'N Talk* program that invites community members to come out, get some exercise and, at the same time, grab the ear of one of our physicians or caregivers to discuss a wide range of topics from diabetes to nutrition to healthy aging. This popular program simultaneously encourages physical fitness and health education, and typically attracts 15 to 20 walkers with a rotation of primary care physicians and other caregivers. Walkers enjoy routes around Riverside Park and the FSU campus, and are invited to use the university's indoor track during inclement weather.



HEALTHY PROMISES – “I pledge to avoid smoking cigarettes ... I pledge to wear a helmet ... I pledge to brush my teeth every morning and every night.” To help students gain a better understanding of safe behaviors, **UMass Memorial – Marlborough Hospital** often participates in Wellness Fairs at the local schools. One popular educational activity is encouraging students to make a Wellness Pledge and post their healthy promises on a Wellness Pledge Board.



Pictured, Christina Babinski, Marlborough Hospital volunteer, left, and Gloria Pascual, director of Volunteer Services at Marlborough Hospital, right, staff a table at the Richer Elementary School's Wellness Day where they helped students complete this fun and important task.



GARDEN GIVES BACK IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE –

To address a shortage of employment opportunities for inner-city youths, the **UMass Memorial Medical Center** Human Resources and Community Benefits departments support youth jobs at the Worcester Regional Environmental Council's (REC) YouthGROW urban agricultural program at the Grant Square Community Garden. Located in the distressed Bell Hill neighborhood, the garden was developed by REC in collaboration with our Community Benefits Department and the City of



Worcester in 2010. The garden generates 500 to 700 pounds of produce yearly that is distributed via the “Veggie Mobile” to 15 food-insecure areas in Worcester, including three in Bell Hill.

Hospital support also helps the city leverage state funding for an additional 15 paid youth positions at the garden annually.



SEEING LEADS TO UNDERSTANDING – To help our employees better understand some of the hurdles residents have to overcome in combatting social determinants of health factors, the Community Benefits Department leads educational tours that focus on economically challenged neighborhoods in Worcester. Additional neighborhood tours soon will be held in North County and Marlborough. The tours highlight how our work can impact some of the disparities among the various areas of the city while pinpointing opportunities for growth.

Pictured, staff visit a first-time homeownership project in the Piedmont Main South neighborhood coordinated by Worcester Common Ground, a community development corporation that targets abandoned lots and buildings in this blighted area.



◆ UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE

UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 13,000 employees and 1,700 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. Our member hospitals and entities include UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial – Marlborough Hospital, UMass Memorial Medical Center and UMass Memorial – Community Healthlink, our behavioral health agency. With our teaching and research partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, our extensive primary care network and our cancer, diabetes, heart and vascular, orthopedic and surgery programs, UMass Memorial delivers safe, high-quality and compassionate care. Visit www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org.

To find a physician in your community, call 855-UMASS-MD (855-862-7763). ◆