WHA Helps Clear Path as Wisconsin Health Care Leaders Blaze New Trail
“Results” summarizes Association’s 2012 accomplishments

Wisconsin hospitals and health systems faced steep challenges in 2012, but that didn’t deter them from their missions to provide high-quality, high-value, patient care in communities across the state.

The Wisconsin Hospital Association also remained engaged, working to ensure that its members continue to lead the nation in delivering high quality, affordable and accessible health care services.

The partnership between WHA and its members has grown and strengthened through the years, which is one reason why the Association continues to be successful in its advocacy efforts. Member participation on WHA councils, task forces, and committees this year was at an all time high. The work products, recommendations and motions that were acted upon by the WHA Board in 2012 generally began as discussions that required expertise, experience, and vision—hallmarks of Wisconsin’s health care leaders.

“It is an honor to work with some of the country’s leading health care innovators who are not waiting to see what the future brings, but rather, are helping to shape it,” said WHA President Steve Brenton. “We are fortunate in Wisconsin to have leaders who are willing to roll up their sleeves and lend their expertise to find solutions to the complex problems that are facing our industry. We look forward to working with our members in the year ahead.”

The 2012 WHA Results (www.wha.org/pubArchive/special_reports/2012Results.pdf) summarizes the Association’s major advocacy efforts, quality initiatives and program activities over the past year. If you would like copies of this publication, contact Mary Kay Grasmick at WHA, mgrasmick@wha.org or 608-274-1820.

President’s Column

There is a common thread that binds Wisconsin’s health care community and that is their desire to deliver the best patient care in the country. And that dedication to excellence by health care professionals working in our hospitals and clinics has earned Wisconsin a reputation as a “leader state” for quality, value, innovation and population health improvement.

Wisconsin’s health care leaders are advocates for payment reform that rewards quality over quantity of services. As a state that is nationally-recognized for delivering high-value care, we should acknowledge and support the expectation that future payment will recognize and incentivize high value care that keeps people well.

Wisconsin is a leader when it comes to health care integration. And WHA is a trade association that focuses on issues beyond the traditional hospital “silos.” But community hospitals are, and will continue to be, at the center of our advocacy universe.

Please take a moment to review WHA’s 2012 Results. www.wha.org/pubArchive/special_reports/2012Results.pdf It is a testament to the success of YOUR Association as we start a new year of working together.

Thank you for your support and have a Happy New Year.

Steve Brenton
Chemical Spill Activates Cumberland Hospital Disaster Plan

A chemical spill at a Turtle Lake business sent a dozen people to Cumberland Memorial Hospital for treatment for respiratory issues when three chemicals were inadvertently mixed together, creating a cloud of hydrochloric acid according to the Barron County Sheriff.

Todd Anderson, emergency services supervisor and emergency preparedness coordinator at Cumberland Memorial said the hospital set up their decontamination tent a safe distance from the emergency department and patients were decontaminated before entering the ER.

“It was very cold so we were ready with warm towels for patients as they exited the tent and entered the ER,” according to Anderson. The hospital had just participated in regional training on decontamination led by Hilde Surbaugh Perala and Jim Monarski, who are regional project coordinators with the Wisconsin Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program (WHEPP).

Anderson said the incident helped the hospital and the region identify areas for improvement. None of the patients required hospitalization.

Mark your 2013 calendar for these important WHA event dates:

- March 8-9: Physician Leadership Development Conference, The American Club, Kohler
- April 23: Advocacy Day, Monona Terrace, Madison
- June 26-28: Rural Health Conference, Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells
- September 19: WHA Leadership Summit, Country Springs, Pewaukee
Just ask Alice

“I’ve just fallen on hard times,” Alice remarked when describing some of the indignities she experienced after losing her job in 2011, and then losing her house.

“When you’re older and you lose everything, you don’t want to be a burden to others. But when you reach out for help, and people talk at you instead of to you, it makes you feel even worse,” Alice explained. “People I spoke with talked to me as if I were uneducated,” she continued, describing how she felt when applying for Food Stamps and other services.

Alice moved to a one-bedroom apartment determined to begin the process of rebuilding her life. But her will to be independent was compromised because of a recurrent and excruciating pain in her leg.

So she made the effort to see her family physician, Dr. Laroyce Chambers, who said, “Let’s do a complete work-up.” Pleased, Alice did her best to get up on the examining table, but it triggered the pain in a way that was so severe, she nearly fell down. Dr. Chambers wasted no time in referring her to Aurora Sinai Medical Center (ASMC) for an ultrasound.

That’s where Alice met Katie Jackson, Aurora financial counselor, during the admitting process.

“Katie treated me like a person. She was so compassionate and so nice to me,” Alice said. “It was very comforting.”

The ultrasound revealed the source of Alice’s pain was coming from her knee. She had torn cartilage and other complicating factors. It was clear that surgery was required.

Katie introduced Alice to Aurora’s Helping Hand Patient Financial Assistance Program and assisted her in filling out the application.

Shortly thereafter, Alice was approved and covered so that the surgery could be scheduled.

Two weeks post-op, Alice was back at ASMC getting physical therapy.

“I just know the outcome will be good,” Alice remarked with absolute conviction.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Noreen’s story

When the calendar turns from November into December, it is usually a happy time of anticipation for the holidays. But for Noreen Moore of Lancaster, the beginning of December was instead of very difficult time. In fact, December 3rd brought with it – the first true snow storm of the season which caused a serious car accident for Noreen and her family. She was returning to Lancaster with her daughter and two grandsons, when the truck in front of her braked suddenly and her car slid to the left and slammed head-on into another truck in the oncoming lane.

Each person in Noreen’s car was injured, but Noreen’s injuries were the most serious. With a broken knee cap, four broken ribs, a collapsed lung and broken tailbone – she was rushed to Grant Regional Health Center’s Emergency Department and later her and a grandson were transferred to a Madison hospital. Noreen recalls the excruciating pain she was in and yet all she could think about were her other family members and how they were doing. And given the fact that she did not have health insurance at the time, she was also concerned about how she could afford the necessary emergency care she received. With the help of Grant Regional’s Community Care Program, Noreen qualified for assistance and thankfully her entire Emergency Room charges were forgiven.

Unfortunately for Noreen, three months following the car accident, she suffered another setback when she injured her rotator cuff and required surgery. “After my surgery, I needed physical therapy and ended up being off work for seven months and five days,” recalls Noreen. Without health insurance and being off work, Noreen was again eligible to receive

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

assistance from Grant Regional Health Center who covered her rehab charges. Including the earlier ER charges, her total loan forgiveness came to approximately $30,000.

“I am so grateful to Grant Regional Health Center for the excellent care they provided,” smiles Noreen. “It’s comforting to know we have such a great hospital in our community…they are really here for us when we need them most!”

Grant Regional Health Center, Lancaster

Charity Care Story
The last several years have proven to be quite a battle for Suzanne and Steven, a Chilton couple. Between post-transplant care, post-polio care, hip replacements, skin grafts, monthly labs and numerous other services, the bills began to add up.

Throughout all of this, Suzanne went uninsured for six years.

Affinity Care has been highly beneficial for Suzanne and Steven, who both have fibromyalgia and various other medical ailments that require treatment.

“It’s made it a lot easier on us to have the majority of the expenses covered,” Suzanne said. “We depend on it because we are on a very limited fixed income.”

Suzanne and Steven now have their medical care and bills covered 100 percent, thanks to Charity Care. Calumet Medical Center has made things easier for them by providing them with affordable, quality care.

“The pressure of our financial burden has been lifted,” Suzanne said. “It makes a huge difference.”

Affinity Care provides financial assistance to patients who are unable to pay for their medical care. Through Charity Care, portions of medical bills are paid, and payment plans are set up to cover the rest. This type of financial assistance, provided by Affinity Health System, has helped many patients across northeast Wisconsin – patients just like Suzanne and Steven.

Calumet Medical Center, Chilton

Community Care
Attending college can have a big impact on a person’s future. It can also have a big impact on his or her wallet. It’s no surprise then that from time to time someone facing the cost of college, dorms, and books, or someone in the midst of paying back thousands of dollars in school loans may find him or herself unable to afford the cost of health care. That’s where Memorial Health Center’s Community Care program comes in. This program is devoted to providing compassionate health care services of the highest quality to people who cannot afford them otherwise.

Over the past year, Memorial Health Center has been pleased to assist a number of future, current, and former college students in paying their medical bills.

The following thank you messages come from a few such people.

One patient’s grateful mom writes:

“Thank you so much for helping [our son] pay his bill [at Memorial Health Center]. We did not have any more in our HSA account after paying [for his earlier bills at another hospital]. We are grateful to you to have this paid in full, especially as he enters college soon and [will] probably have more bills.” Her son adds: “You have blessed my future with your kindness. Thank you so much!”

Another thankful Community Care recipient writes:

“Mary & Erin, I was worried this bill would drain me! Working with you ladies was a pleasure. Thank you so much for your time and understanding. I can now focus on paying off my student loans! You have no idea how this has helped! Your kindness was an answer to my prayers.”

Memorial Health Center, Medford

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.