

AHA 2012 Hospital Awards for Volunteer Excellence (HAVE)

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

Food Pantry (Castle Point & Montrose)
VA Hudson Valley Health Care System
Montrose, NY
Gerald Culliton, Medical Center Director

In 1996, the Veterans Administration Hudson Valley Health Care System initiated a food pantry on its Montrose Campus in Westchester County, New York to serve its low income outpatients and their families. An additional food pantry was opened on its Castle Point Campus. They represent the largest non-mandated Food Pantry at a VA facility. The food pantries were made possible through grants obtained from the New York State Department of Health Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program, contributions from community based service organizations and from numerous community food drives.

During 2011, the food pantry on both campuses served 4,325 households consisting of 1,678 children, 6,424 adults and 1,289 seniors and 253 new veterans. In addition, they received \$8,497 in monetary donations and \$112,514 in non-perishable food items.

The success of the program can be clearly attributed to the leadership role the volunteers have taken in maintaining ongoing working relationships with the staff of the community Food Bank in Millwood, New York. Since their inception, both the Montrose and Castle Point Campus Food Pantries have been solely staffed and led by health care system volunteers who order and secure food from the Food Bank, track inventory, and sort and shelve the items which they bag for distribution. The volunteers participated in completing grant applications and collected data and support documents to prepare required reports for the grant award. The volunteers are involved in the overall operations of the Food Bank including staffing, ordering food, space requirements, etc.

The volunteers maintain regularly scheduled operating hours on both campuses and maintain records of veterans and families served by the program. Through their efforts, the facility has increased public awareness and understanding of the mission, vision and values of the health care system which is to provide comprehensive bio-psycho-social health care services to their deserving veteran population.

FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

Pay It Forward Fund
North Memorial Hospital
Minneapolis, MN
Larry Taylor, Chief Executive Officer

The Pay It Forward Fund helps women cancer patients pay essential living expenses while undergoing treatment to alleviate financial burdens and focus on getting healthy during a difficult time in a patient's life. Cancer patients from five hospitals in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area are eligible to receive up to \$1500 per year to pay medical and living expenses such as insurance co-payments, rent, electricity and heat.

In partnership with the North Memorial Foundation, the Pay It Forward Fund is entirely staffed by volunteers who answer phones, field questions, screen potential fund recipients to assure that they meet the fund criteria and process paperwork. Volunteers also plan and organize fundraisers to benefit the Pay It Forward Fund. The partnership with North Memorial Foundation along with the volunteer commitment allows 100% of the funds to go to those in need.

The Pay It Forward Fund was started by Michelle Morey who is a breast cancer survivor. The first donation of \$500 to the hospital foundation was spent on the same day on one bill; restoring running water to a home for a mother of two young children. The mother was in jeopardy of her children being removed from her home by Child Protection Services because there was no running water. Following that experience, Michelle organized the first annual Casino Night fundraiser which raised \$33,000. In 2011, the Casino Night event raised \$228,000. In addition, the volunteers launched an annual Summer Concert series featuring local musicians who donate their talent and raised a record \$53,599.

The Pay It Forward Fund utilizes social media, evites and modern technology to produce high-level marketing materials and minimize overall costs. After successfully launching an on-line silent auction, the North Memorial Foundation began using the technology for other fundraisers. The volunteers created strategies to encourage in-kind donations which included website design, branding, marketing, graphic design, entertainment, paper products, printing, food and trash collection services.

The name, "Pay It Forward" Fund was chosen to enable patients to accept the help that they need. The hope is that recipients will someday find a way to pay it forward. Many patient recipients have chosen to volunteer, donate, share their story and their struggle and in some cases, designate the Pay It Forward Fund for their memorials.

IN-SERVICE HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Cherished Portraits

University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics, University of Iowa Children's Hospital

Iowa City, IA

Ken Kates, Chief Executive Officer

The Cherished Portraits program provides private, caring, professional portrait sessions for families who have lost a child or infant or have children with life-threatening illnesses who are facing the end of life. There are no fees for this service. Each portrait session, offered on-site by professional photographers who volunteer on an on-call basis, is individualized to reflect each patient and their family. The program addresses the emotional needs of families dealing with life-threatening issues in a positive and life-affirming manner. Each family receives an archival CD of the images at no charge which they can use to print portraits or create other mementos with the image of their cherished child.

As the program grew and requests for photographers became more frequent, a group of community volunteers were recruited to help to triage the calls and ensure the requests were divided equally between photographers. A separate contingent of community volunteers were recruited from those serving in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. These volunteers were familiar with the impact a gift like this could have on families dealing with loss. The volunteers carry pagers from 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. daily, roughly 5,000 hours a year, and take their role as seriously as any physician on call.

Staff volunteer supervisors and nurses coordinated the program and recruited professional photographers as volunteers and oriented hospital volunteers. Specific training was offered by the nurses to prepare them for the physical, emotional and spiritual issues they might encounter during these special photography sessions. Throughout the existence of this service, relationships with nurses, physicians and other staff and faculty have been instrumental in developing and implementing the program. The volunteers depend on staff to inform families and identify appropriate patients. Families are more likely to utilize the service if they receive the informational brochures from staff they know and trust. It is beyond what is expected from their health care provider.

There have been over 175 portrait sessions offered since the inception of the program in June 2007. The hospital benefits from the positive impact the program has on the family receiving this very personal gift. The program has provided personal keepsakes that allow families to keep their loved ones close to their heart.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND/OR COLLABORATION PROGRAM

Charla de Lupus (Lupus Chat)
Hospital for Special Surgery
New York, NY
Louis Sharpiro, President & CEO

Charla de Lupus/Lupus Chat is a national peer support and education program serving clients with lupus and their families. Trained volunteers living with the illness provide peer support and education in English and Spanish for clients in traditionally underserved communities. Lupus is a life-threatening autoimmune illness which disproportionately affects African American, Asian, and Latina women. These communities also experience significant health disparities in the severity and mortality of this illness.

The program includes a toll free support and education helpline which screens and matches callers with a peer volunteer for ongoing telephone support. Monthly support groups are provided in English and Spanish for young people and their families. An award-winning teen booklet was written by a Charla volunteer who was diagnosed with lupus as a teen, and is distributed worldwide free of charge. In addition, Charla partners with the Office of Women's Health, the Office of Minority Health and the National Institute for Arthritis to address health disparities in lupus care and outcomes by developing culturally relevant health messages and education.

Charla volunteers receive a six-week, 20 hour, culturally relevant training program which includes; participatory learning in listening skills, lupus diagnosis, treatment, doctor-patient communication, opportunities to share personal experiences and information about essential resources. Pre and post evaluation and coaching are facilitated by a peer learning process under the leadership of a professional social work manager.

Charla deploys volunteers who understand lupus first-hand to empower children, teens and adults to cope with the impact of the illness and to help them feel less alone. Volunteers also partner with health care providers to help patients better understand their illness and enhance their adherence to complex treatment regimens. Since its inception in 1994, the program utilizes culturally specific strategies to raise awareness, improve quality of life and help reduce health disparities. Fifty volunteers have contributed approximately 20,000 hours of service with over 30,000 client contacts to date.