

2024

AHA Dick Davidson

NOVA Award

Collaboration for Healthier Communities



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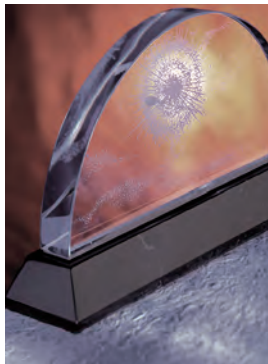
NOVA Award

Collaboration for Healthier Communities

Each year, the American Hospital Association honors as many as five programs led by AHA-member hospitals as “bright stars of the health care field.” Winners are recognized for their work to improve community health status in collaboration with other community stakeholders.

In 2018, the AHA NOVA Award was renamed in memory of Dick Davidson, who led the Association as president and CEO from 1991 to 2007. Davidson championed the role of hospitals in improving the health of their communities and drove the creation of this award in 1994.

The AHA Dick Davidson NOVA Award is directed and staffed by AHA’s Field Engagement division. Visit www.aha.org/nova for more information.



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Online directory connects patients to community resources

If a clinician writes a prescription, what happens if the patient has no way to get to the pharmacy or can't afford the medication?

Thanks to Essentia Health and many community partners, that's no longer a shrug-your-shoulders moment in a heavily rural service area encompassing about 1.1 million people in parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota.

With funding from its operations, along with financial assistance from outside sources, Essentia Health has established Resourceful, an online directory of approximately 4,500 community-based organizations (CBOs) that can assist patients with life challenges that impact their health.

Resourceful is built on a platform designed by findhelp, a technology company based in Austin, Texas.

"It's important that we understand that there's a 'before' and 'after' piece to that patient journey and not just when they're right in front of us," said Cathy Cantor, M.D., Essentia Health's chief medical officer, population health. Being unable to help with external challenges facing patients, Cantor said, "can make (a physician) feel empty pretty quickly."

Within the past year alone, approximately 25,000 patients have told Essentia Health that they are concerned about running out of food, not having access to transportation or struggling to pay bills.

More than 32,000 unique users have accessed Resourceful since its launch in March 2021. A community health worker even used Resourceful to help a small-town patient find assistance in repairing a collapsed well, said Emily

Kuenstler, Essentia Health's community health director. She added that Resourceful embodies Essentia Health's commitment to achieving health and vitality with our community.

Jill Doberstein, community outreach program manager, explained: "It's very easy to hand somebody a brochure for a program or a resource that you're familiar with and say, 'Here you go, I helped.' But that's not really helpful helping."

Essentia Health workers can make referrals to CBOs through its electronic health record system, which empowers the organization to reach out to the patient in need. This is also a closed loop referral system — so all parties involved can see the status and outcome of that referral.

The bulk of the more than 126,000 searches on Resourceful has come from people outside Essentia Health, generating more than 14,000 referrals to CBOs. About one-third of the referrals have resulted in definitive resolutions.

Rival health care systems also have access to Resourceful.

"We're happy to compete in the areas where we should compete in — patient satisfaction, quality, safety, market share — but there are areas like substance-use disorder or addressing social determinants of health where we partner with everybody because it's the right thing to do," said David Herman, M.D., CEO of Essentia Health.

Essentia Health augments its quantitative data with qualitative findings gathered from a community-based participatory evalua-



Photo courtesy of Essentia Health

RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGER TIPS: Resourceful is an online directory of approximately 4,500 community-based organizations that can assist patients with life challenges that impact their health. The free resource has garnered over 126,000 searches to date.

tion designed and conducted by Resourceful's 22-member community advisory team.

Among the findings were that two-thirds of the respondents said Resourceful strengthened their trust in Essentia Health, and 56% said the tool led to "helpful help" that reduced the time and energy they otherwise would have spent finding or connecting to services.

Essentia Health this year instituted a payment incentive plan that rewards some CBOs for prompt responses to Resourceful referrals.

The pilot includes bonus payments based on feedback from the seekers of services.

"Essentia Health is proud to offer Resourceful," Herman said.

"These people are not just our patients, they are also our friends and neighbors, and when we have an opportunity to make a difference in their lives, that makes changes in our communities that we get to see ourselves." ●

Quick intervention steers violence survivors toward path of healing

As they recover in the hospital, survivors of assaults, stabbings or shootings are in stages of deep reflection recounting their violent experience.

It's at this critical juncture that intervention specialists from the John Muir Health (JMH) Beyond Violence (BV) program provide essential support toward a path of healing and safety.

Since its inception in 2010, nearly all of BV's approximately 700 clients have remained alive and avoided further injury. Nearly all have avoided incarceration as well.

The assistance begins right at the bedside.

"This is when somebody is in severe pain, they may have had a near-death experience, (and) now it's their time to think, reflect, and we provide support by reflecting with them," said Jamie Elmasu, JMH's director of community health improvement.

Drawn specifically from the communities they serve, all intervention specialists are people of color and half are bilingual in Spanish. In addition, more than 90% of the BV clients are people of color.

BV services do not end at hospital discharge. Intervention specialists do everything from driving clients to health appointments to advocating for them in court. BV also helps clients pay for groceries and gas.

BV started as a partnership between the JMH trauma center and the nonprofit One Day at a Time to assist victims between the ages of 15 and 25. Kacey Hansen, JMH's executive director of trauma and Regional Transfer Center services, wanted to address the lack of postdischarge services available to the growing num-

ber of young people presenting at the center.

To help bridge the gap in violence prevention and intervention services, over the years, JMH brought on additional non-profit partners — the RYSE Center, the Center for Human Development, Fred Finch Youth and Family Services, and the Family Justice Center — to expand services to more communities. With the assistance of a three-year grant of nearly \$1.8 million from the state of California, BV removed the upper age limit in 2022. JMH estimated that the grant funding could lead to serving as many as 150 additional clients annually in the cities of Antioch and Richmond.

JMH also has expanded the scope of the initial program to provide mental health services. The program now has seven intervention specialists and four mental health therapists.

Data collection has iterated from paper records to Excel and now to QuesGen, a secure online referral and data-management system used by all the partners.

BV has received nearly \$3 million in external grant support throughout its history. The program costs about \$1.1 million annually, which includes JMH and nonprofit costs. In addition to helping its nonprofit partners pay for overhead and staffing, JMH also pays for QuesGen.

"John Muir Health's mission is to improve the health of the communities we serve with quality and compassion," said Michael S. Thomas, JMH president and CEO. BV demonstrates JMH's "commitment to uphold the safety of the community," he said, and the program's expansion is "representative of the power of community partnerships with local expertise."



Photo courtesy of John Muir Health

RENEWING HOPE: Since Beyond Violence's inception in 2010, all of BV's approximately 700 clients have remained alive and avoided further injury. The assistance begins right at the bedside.

JMH convenes quarterly meetings of the partners collaborative to tweak the program based on feedback from the field.

Laura Pooler, a licensed clinical social worker, works closely with the program as a trauma social worker and JMH's trauma injury prevention and community outreach coordinator.

Her work in a follow-up clinic for trauma services brings her into direct contact with BV clients, and their gratitude is something that

would never come through as powerfully through a note or an assessment of the visit.

"We have teams that are extremely dedicated to this whole program and dedicated to listening to the folks in the community to identify what the needs are," Pooler said. "I think starting small has helped us prove our efficacy. It's a well-respected program within our health system and our community because of how effective it's been." ●

Street medicine program deploys medical residents, mobile unit

The embers of a strengthened collaboration to assist Traverse City, Michigan's, unhoused population smoldered for several years within the medical and social service communities.

But it was the COVID-19 pandemic that "really stoked the fire and got things roaring," said David Klee, M.D., associate program director of the Munson Family Medicine Residency Program.

Emerging from the flames was the Street Medicine Program, a collaboration between Munson Healthcare, Traverse Health Clinic and Goodwill Northern Michigan. The program does exactly what the name implies: It provides care in wooded encampments and wherever else unhoused individuals congregate.

Program services include immunizations, treatment of opioid addiction, assistance for pregnant women, distribution of hygiene products and connections to housing resources.

Street Medicine health care professionals see nearly 300 individuals a year, which contributes to the overall health and well-being of the community by minimizing severe health issues, reducing the strain on emergency departments, improving public safety, and reducing health disparities and promoting equity.

Munson Healthcare's participation in the Street Medicine program exemplifies its commitment to caring compassionately for the communities it serves, said Ed Ness, president and CEO.

"As our unhoused population has continued to grow in northern Michigan, we want to ensure that folks have access to the health care

services they need when they are the most vulnerable to significant or chronic health issues," Ness said.

The three main partners have the support of several community organizations, such as the Thomas Judd Care Center, an HIV/AIDS clinic, which cares for unhoused individuals each Tuesday at Central Methodist Church. Staff from the county health department and Northern Lakes Community Mental Health also assist as needed.

One hallmark of the Traverse City Street Medicine program is the participation of medical residents from the fields of primary care, psychiatry and pharmacy.

While providing critical manpower support, Klee said the residents also receive invaluable experience working in less-than-ideal conditions. He hopes the training helps prepare the residents to practice in the rural, underserved areas of Michigan.

Klee has seen signs that residents are warming to the idea of treating unhoused patients. One example: As they were doing rounds in the woods, one of the residents broke off to check on a patient who was crying.

Working with patients who face tremendous obstacles in adhering to medical advice is also instructive, Klee said. It changes the conversation from having the doctor give instructions to asking what the patient needs to be successful.

With an unhoused population, a no-show is not something to take personally, said Ryan Hannon, Goodwill Northern Michigan's community engagement officer. "It's not because they don't



Photo courtesy of Munson Healthcare

MORNING MARCH: Medical residents head out to an area where a tent city has been growing. The workers bring much-needed basic health care to this underserved homeless population.

want care or they don't like you so much," he said. "It's that other circumstances got in the way."

Klee had a learning moment himself when no one showed up at a morning clinic he had staffed with residents at a homeless shelter. As it turned out, the timing overlapped with a free breakfast being served a mile down the road.

Having medical personnel available at the ready came in handy one time, Hannon said, when they warded off a potential infection by treating a barefoot man who had nicked his toe on an axe.

A big addition to the program came when the Traverse Health Clinic obtained federal grant

funding to purchase a mobile medical unit. The mobile unit logged 445 patient visits within several months after coming online in the fall of 2022.

The unhoused population came to trust the Street Medicine team members during COVID, said Lynn Swan, M.D., staff physician at Traverse Health Clinic and one of the founders of Street Medicine. Patients still thank the providers for sticking with them during the pandemic. That care is central to the mission. "It's a human endeavor to alleviate human suffering and to welcome them back into the community," Swan said. ●

Individual successes highlight four decades of trauma services

Nothing is more rewarding in health care than seeing a former patient flourish.

More gratifying still would be to have the person pay it forward by coming to work for the institution, which is exactly what providers at Palomar Health have experienced with an abuse victim treated at its Nationally Accredited Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

This former patient is working with trauma survivors through Palomar Health programs, explained Michelle Shores, R.N., director of Forensic Health (FHS) and Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) Services.

“Being able to see someone have a meaningful life of work and give back,” she said. “I think that’s a testament to those interventions.”

Palomar has a long history of helping survivors of all ages who have endured physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence and human trafficking.

The commitment dates to the 1984 establishment of FHS and the opening of the CAC. More recent milestones include expanding regional care as a newly designated TRC in 2021 and becoming the designated state-wide hospital-based training center in California for forensic medical exams in 2022.

As president and CEO of Palomar Health, Diane Hansen relishes hearing about the resiliency of the FHS and TRC survivors from Shores and Sheila Brown, former chief operations officer for Palomar who is now serving as executive sponsor of the two programs.

“We have a lot of programs here at Palomar,” Hansen said. “But, this is the one I am most proud of because it shows that partner-

ship and the connectivity to our community.”

Palomar has forged close ties with law enforcement, with a police official in one nearby community crediting FHS staff for helping it build a child abuse case for a 14-year-old survivor and providing expert testimony that bolstered the prosecution in another domestic violence proceeding.

Gone are the days, Brown noted, when patients had to travel to multiple locations or repeat their stories to multiple service providers.

“There’s now one centralized specialty program here with Palomar Health that is able to provide a full continuum of services for those impacted by violence,” she said. “You’re going to have a highly trained professional to respond and assess the health and safety needs of our patients. Additionally, through our medical evidentiary exams, the investigating partners are provided documentation and evidence for their criminal justice system review.”

Palomar officials are particularly proud of the expertise they have developed in identifying instances of strangulation even when the victim showed no outward injuries.

More than two decades’ worth of data from the San Diego County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team indicated that a significant number of intimate partner homicides were due to strangulation.

To intervene upstream and prevent what ultimately could become a homicide, Palomar expanded their forensic medical examinations in 2017 to include strangulation and domestic assault forensic exams.

Following that step, felony filings that includ-



Photo courtesy of Palomar Health

DOCUMENTING ABUSE: Photographic images collected during a medical evidentiary exam by a Palomar FHS nurse may be used as court evidence.

ed strangulation nearly tripled, and the number of domestic violence strangulation murders (measured in five-year increments before and after instituting the protocols) fell from seven to two.

One of the survivor stories that Shores also likes to tell involves the case of a domestic violence victim who was seen by a health care provider after fleeing the county. The victim was examined later by a nurse at Palomar who recognized concerning symptoms. The patient was discovered to have a fractured larynx using the higher-level strangulation exam.

The TRC program provides short-term trauma-

ma-based care and case management for all ages. Another hallmark of the Palomar program is the range of services available. Both FHS and TRC are co-located with approximately 100 partners all under one roof.

Health care can be a fleeting service, Hansen observed. The patient comes, gets treatment and leaves. “And we may or may not know how they do down the road,” she said. “This is our pathway to making sure that we’re part of that equation that puts them on a better path for their future.” ●

UH Food for Life Markets® prescribe healthy offerings in local food deserts

The Ladies' Aid Society of First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland established the Home for Friendless Strangers to help impoverished men and women displaced by the Civil War. At the end of the hostilities, board members of the home and other leading citizens combined forces to establish the Cleveland City Hospital Association with the principle of "the neediest being considered the most worthy."

"Those words are as true today as they were back then," said Cliff A. Megerian, M.D., CEO of the vast health system now known as University Hospitals (UH). UH, he said, offers a "brand of care beset by kindness and compassion" and pays "close attention to our community" by focusing on addressing inequalities that contribute to poor health among under-resourced communities.

To that end, UH's Food for Life Markets address such diet-related conditions as obesity, heart disease and diabetes by making healthful foods available to patients who often default to fatty, processed meals because they are the only convenient option in their neighborhoods.

The Food for Life Markets serve "food deserts," areas that are more than a half-mile away from the nearest supermarket and where nearly a third of the residents have incomes below 200% of the poverty level.

In Cleveland, nearly 50% of white residents live in a food desert and that figure increases to almost 68% for Black residents. Similar disparities exist in surrounding Cuyahoga County.

UH opened its first Food for Life Market in 2018 and now has five in both urban and rural areas, with plans to open a sixth market this year.

"One secret of the markets," said Celina Cunanan, MSN, APRN-CNM, UH chief diversity, equity and belonging officer, "is the active participation of dietitians."

That, she said, is a "nice, wonderful way for our patients to get an individualized, tailored approach to their visit and form that relationship with the dietitian, because every month they come back and they see that [same] dietitian who can then check in on them."

Clinicians in these high-need locations refer patients to the Food for Life Markets if they screen positive for one or both of the following two "hunger vital sign" statements: "Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more" and "Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more."

UH has opened four markets in UH-owned facilities, either hospitals or outpatient office settings. Their fifth market opened last year in The Davis Apartment Homes, an affordable housing complex built by the NRP Group in the Glenville neighborhood.

UH partners with its food vendor, Sodexo Nutrition Services, to plan and manage each market as well as oversee the dietitian teams. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank serves as UH's primary partner in stocking their markets every week. Patients can receive food for up to a family of four for one week, once a month for up to six months and can get an extension by



HEALTHY HABITS: University Hospitals opened its first Food for Life Market in 2018 and now has five in both urban and rural areas, with plans to open a sixth market this year.

meeting again with their clinician.

From October 2018 to July 2023, the Food for Life Markets averaged 76 visits per month and provided more than 422,000 pounds of food. Women with an average age of 50 years make up the majority of market attendees and roughly two-thirds of the users are Black.

Patients referred to the markets saw a decrease in blood pressure; pregnant women with higher BMIs experienced less weight gain; patients with chronic kidney conditions saw reduced blood pressure readings; and diabetic patients improved their A1C scores.

Elements of the markets that have contributed to their success include providing in-

centives (such as free diapers) to encourage patient participation, ensuring fresh produce even during the winter months and offering culturally diverse food options.

Healthful recipes, meal preparation tips and cooking demonstrations are also key components of the markets.

"You can give people that eggplant or that spaghetti squash," Cunanan said, "but if they don't know what to do with it or how to prepare it, they're not going to eat it. What we are trying to do is to not only feed people who are hungry, but to also get them on a journey to actually improve their overall health through food." ●



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