



2026

The
American Hospital
Association
Foster G. McGaw
Prize Honorees



Baxter
FOUNDATION

INSIDE



WINNER
Sky Lakes Medical Center | Klamath Falls, Ore.
Dreaming Big



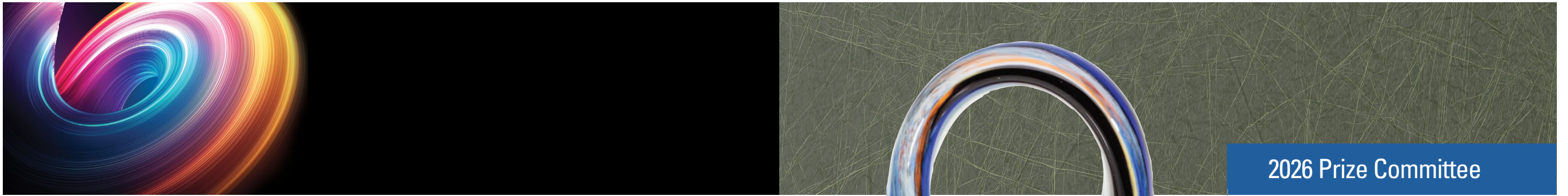
FINALIST
Children's National Hospital | Washington, D.C.
Driving Change



FINALIST
Grady Health System | Atlanta, Ga.
Hitting The Targets



FINALIST
Valley Children's Healthcare | Madera, Calif.
Focusing On The Future



2026 Prize Committee

Members of the 2026 Foster G. McGaw Prize Committee include the following:

Douglas Brown, chair

Partner
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
Boston, Mass.

Ji Im

System Senior Director, Community and Population Health
CommonSpirit Health
San Francisco, Calif.

Thea James, M.D., MPH, MBA

Vice President of Mission, Associate Chief Medical Officer
and Co-Executive Director of the Health Equity Accelerator
Boston Medical Center
Boston, Mass.

Marcos Pesquera

System Vice President, Community Benefit
Health Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (ret.)
CHRISTUS Health
Irving, Texas

John Vu

Vice President, Strategy – Community Health
Kaiser Permanente
Oakland, Calif.

Shannon Wilson

Vice President of Population Health & Health Equity
Priority Health
Grand Rapids, Mich.

AHA Staff

Jane Jeffries

Director, Award Programs and Member Leadership Development

Nancy Myers, Ph.D.

Vice President, Leadership and System Innovation

About the Foster G. McGaw Prize

The prestigious Foster G. McGaw Prize recognizes diverse health delivery organizations throughout the United States that demonstrate a passion for community health and an exceptional commitment to co-designing innovative partnerships and collaboratives that improve the health and well-being of their communities. The 2026 Foster G. McGaw Prize winner and finalists demonstrate that health delivery organizations working with community partners can be the cornerstone of a healthier America.

The Foster G. McGaw Prize is generously sponsored by the Baxter Foundation and administered by the American Hospital Association. This year, the winner received \$100,000 and each finalist received \$10,000. The award winner and finalists were recognized in July at the AHA Leadership Summit conference. For more information about the prize, visit <https://aha.org/fostermcgaw>.



Writer: Lola Butcher | **Senior Editor:** Suzanna Hoppszallern | **Designer:** Chuck Lazar
2026 American Hospital Association Foster G. McGaw Prize is published by Health Forum, an American Hospital Association company. The AHA and Baxter International Foundation sponsor the Foster G. McGaw Prize program. ©2026 by Health Forum, 155 N. Wacker Drive, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60606. All rights reserved. All materials in this publication are provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as professional advice.





Sky Lakes Medical Center Klamath Falls, Ore.

Dreaming Big

Sky Lakes Medical Center’s vision statement places a big responsibility on the organization: “Sky Lakes will be a catalyst for positive change, creating a vibrant and thriving community...”

“You won’t find the words ‘hospital’ or ‘health care’ in that vision statement,” said David Cauble, president and CEO. “It is fully focused on this community and on the ways we can make a difference in the lives of the people we are privileged to serve.”

That means building parks, advocating for policy changes, supporting public art projects and helping train high school students — along with many other community efforts — are high priorities on Sky Lakes’ to-do list.

Located in Klamath Falls, Ore., Sky Lakes is a community-owned, not-for-profit, 176-bed acute care facility serving roughly 80,000 to 120,000 residents across a 10,000-square-mile area of southern Oregon and northern California. It serves as the primary full-service hospital and Level III trauma center for this rural region, often acting as the sole provider within a 75-mile radius.

Its work in the community centers on the Healthy Klamath Network of local organizations, which came together in 2012 in response to consistently low performance in the annual Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

County Health rankings. In 2018, Sky Lakes created its own Healthy Klamath Department to support the network’s initiatives.

“About 60 community partners meet monthly to focus on the community health assessment and the priority areas,” said Merritt Driscoll, director of Healthy Klamath and Sky Lakes Foundation. “We dream big and then go for it.”

For example, when the city wanted to build a playground, it approached Healthy Klamath for help. The first step was to visit schools to ask what people wanted to see in a new playground. “We worked with the community from the beginning, through fundraising and into project implementation,” Driscoll said. “We got volunteers to build the playground. So that’s how change happens.”

The result is an 18,000-square-foot playground — the first in the county to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards — built with \$1.4 million raised by Driscoll and her colleagues. Meanwhile, a wayfinding signage initiative, funded by three grants, encourages people to use the city’s many trails; the downtown Klamath Commons park includes event space to host gatherings; and public art installations foster a sense of place.

“We think of the built environment work and placemaking work as a way to improve Klamath Falls as a whole,” Driscoll said, adding that a vibrant environment makes it

easier for Sky Lakes, the county’s largest employer, to recruit staff. “We want this community to be a place that people want to come stay.”

Sky Lakes is also leading a community career-development initiative that is creating job opportunities for young people while addressing the county’s health care workforce shortage. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) campus, which offers “earn-and-learn” programs for medical assistants, certified nursing assistants and surgical technologists, opened last year and is taking off quickly.

“We are expanding from three high schools to six,”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Sky Lakes is leading a community career-development initiative that is creating job opportunities for young people while addressing the county’s health care workforce shortage.
2. Students help clean up cigarette litter in city parks. The prevention program reduced downtown tobacco litter by 37%.
3. Try Day introduces students to healthy food options during lunch hour.
4. Healthy Klamath helped build an 18,000-square-foot playground — the first in the county to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

David Cauble

President and CEO, Sky Lakes Medical Center

“You won’t find the words ‘hospital’ or ‘health care’ in [our] vision statement. It is fully focused on this community and on the ways we can make a difference in the lives of the people we are privileged to serve.”

5

said Bryan Fix, Sky Lakes vice president and chief human resources officer. “Next fall, we’ll have a full multiyear curriculum, we will have two capstone programs and we will go from touching 60 students this year to more than 200 next year.”

The initiative is a partnership among the medical center, a community college and area school districts, which spent nearly a year in facilitator-led discussions to develop the vision and implementation plan.

“We brought them all together, about nine in total, and asked, ‘What do you want for your students? And how can we help uplift the whole community in this process?’” Fix said.

Sky Lakes provides students with hands-on experience, including the opportunity to apply to the 12-week paid Ambassador Program. At the end of the first year, students in the CTE program had a higher high school graduation rate than their peers, and 30 graduates took jobs in health care.

To tackle Klamath County’s high smoking and vaping rates, Sky Lakes works closely with the county health department on prevention strategies, particularly focused on middle and high school students. It is also working to make “tobacco-free” a community norm.

A cigarette litter prevention program reduced down-

town tobacco litter by 37%, and recycled cigarette butts generated funds for prevention efforts. Medical center staff, sometimes leading and sometimes supporting other leaders, have successfully advocated for policy changes to discourage tobacco use.

“We recognized that prevention programs and education only go so far. It is truly the policy changes that create lasting change,” Driscoll said. “So, we implemented tobacco retail licensing and passed tobacco-free city parks and tobacco-free events downtown. This took a lot of getting the community involved in that change and convincing our city that this was the right thing to do for a healthier community.”

To increase year-round access to fresh produce, Sky Lakes staff started an online farmers’ market several years ago, before handing the reins to farmers. Shoppers place orders for food grown by local farmers online and pick them up at a designated time and place. “Now it’s a non-profit run by the farmers, and they have a full staff, which is fantastic,” Driscoll said. “It has really done a great job increasing access to fresh local food.”

More recently, the medical center partnered with a workforce-development organization and the Rotary Club to start a community garden.



6



7



8

To promote healthy lifestyles, Sky Lakes Wellness Center offers a four-month program to help individuals make long-term changes through better nutrition, activity, sleep and stress management. The Wellness Center also increases access to care by hosting group medical visits staffed by a physician and, when appropriate, supported by a dietitian and a qualified mental health associate.

Self-selected patients with a diagnosis such as hypertension or congestive heart failure meet the clinical team as a group for a series of educational sessions. Because each patient receives a physical exam, a treatment plan and the opportunity to ask questions, the visits can be billed to insurance.

“One of our goals is to build a community for people so they don’t feel so isolated and alone when dealing with a condition that may be confusing to them,” said Stewart Decker, M.D., medical director for the Wellness Center. “People end up with friendships, join our walking and fitness classes, and are exposed to other group activities they can do.” ●

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

5. President and CEO David Cauble of Sky Lakes Medical Center.
6. Students from a local high school participate in a hands-on cooking activity at the Wellness Center.
7. Sky Lakes Medical Center partnered with a workforce-development organization and the Rotary Club to start a community garden.
8. To increase year-round community access to fresh produce, Sky Lakes staff started an online farmers’ market several years ago with local farms.



Children's National Hospital Washington, D.C.

Driving Change

Children's National Hospital, based in Washington, D.C., is prioritizing two issues identified as having the greatest impact: health insurance coverage and access to employment.

"When you think about a family's ability to provide what their children need, having access to stable employment and having access to health insurance are really key drivers of a family's overall health and well-being," said Cara Biddle, M.D., chief of general pediatrics and community health.

Children's National, the largest provider of pediatric care in the District of Columbia, also serves children in Virginia and Maryland.

"What we're trying to do, especially in these two areas, is focus on ways to build sustainable change," said Jordan Grossman, vice president and chief of staff. The hospital's pipeline employment initiatives align with the district's efforts to boost employment rates and with residents' desire for good-paying jobs.

The Conway Nursing Pathway Program, largely funded by philanthropy, targets high school and college students interested in nursing. The program offers full tuition, a nurse mentor and real-world exposure to pediatric nursing. Of the nearly 60 students who have participated in the competitive program since its inception in 2019, more than 30 now

work as full-time nurses at Children's National.

Children's National staff work with the district's public school system and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to support students who will graduate from high school with credentials to work as medical assistants, certified nursing assistants or emergency medical technicians.

The hospital is preparing to open an urgent care center at one of those high schools/training centers to serve the entire community. "That will become a training spot for those students in addition to the other resources we have at Children's National to provide them with some experience," Biddle said.

Children's National's focus on insurance coverage includes developing an artificial intelligence-enabled algorithm to help families avoid a lapse in Medicaid coverage that can disrupt their access to care. "Through this work, we are developing a way to identify those families so that we can proactively reach out and provide support," Biddle said.

To address food insecurity, the hospital's Family Lifestyle Program (FLiP) helps families access fresh food and adopt healthy habits that reduce their risk of diet-related diseases. Through FLiPRx, an element of the program, families who screen positive for food insecurity during a primary care visit can receive a prescription for weekly home deliveries of produce for several months. They also

receive nutrition education through online sessions.

"There are lots of culturally relevant classes about using the vegetables that they will be receiving, trying new foods and how to get kids interested in vegetables and fruit and a healthy lifestyle," Biddle said.

Accountability for the initiatives is built into the organization at the top. Children's National ties executive compensation to performance on strategic objectives, including community health outcomes. "This ensures initiatives like Food Is Medicine and workforce pathways are measured alongside clinical, research and operational priorities, with shared accountability across the organization," said Michelle Riley-Brown, president and CEO. ●

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Children's National's focus on insurance coverage includes developing an artificial intelligence-enabled algorithm to help families avoid a lapse in Medicaid coverage.
2. Michelle Riley-Brown, president and CEO of Children's National Hospital.
3. Pediatric staff cheer on a new mother and her healthy newborn as they leave the nursery.
4. The Conway Nursing Pathway Program, largely funded by philanthropy, targets high school and college students interested in nursing.



Grady Health System Atlanta, Ga.

Hitting The Targets

By focusing on ZIP codes with low life-expectancy rates, Grady Health System is saving lives through its robust cancer-screening program. In the past three years, the large academic safety-net health system in Atlanta has seen its breast cancer screening rate increase from 56% to 69%; its cervical cancer screening rate rise from 62% to 70%; and its prostate cancer screening rate go from 30% to 85%.

The secret sauce, said Yolanda Wimberly, M.D., Grady’s chief of health outcomes, is earning patients’ trust.

“Getting a 1-800 number out there and making sure somebody would answer on the first ring wasn’t going to solve our problem,” she said. “What we needed to do was embed ourselves within the community on a consistent basis.”

Wimberly was recruited in 2021 to launch Grady’s Office of Health Outcomes as the health system doubled down on its longstanding goal of improving community health. The system received federal funding to expand its community health capacity in exchange for being monitored on 10 health outcomes.

Grady met or exceeded the metric targets while building out the infrastructure for sustainable improvements. “We opened four new neighborhood health centers and

one of the most robust HIV/AIDS centers in the country, along with our mobile health program,” said John Haupt, president and CEO. “We have been able to reach many more people where they live, where they need us, and get ahead of many chronic disease issues.”

In the Atlanta area, life expectancy ranges from 72 years in some ZIP codes to more than 85 years in others. Grady, one of the first health systems to establish a board-level health equity committee, prioritizes efforts in ZIP codes — and specific neighborhoods within ZIP codes — that need the most help.

“When we see that lower life expectancy, we know the community needs additional resources,” said Shannon Sale, chief administrative officer.

One strategy is a mobile unit that provides primary care, including wellness visits, chronic disease management, screenings, vaccinations and other preventive services, in targeted neighborhoods.

“Our goal is to return to the same location repeatedly to establish continuity of care,” said Leslie Marshburn, vice president of strategy and population health.

More broadly, Wimberly said, access to health care requires an individual’s awareness of the need for care and trust that a diagnosis can be treated. That means dispatching Grady staff and volunteers to churches, health fairs

and community events. “We needed to embed ourselves within the community on a consistent basis to be able to educate people,” she said.

Education also comes from health equity access coordinators (HEACs), who call individuals to emphasize the importance of cancer screenings. When Wimberly conducted a two-week trial of the concept with two college students, they called more than 400 women and scheduled more than 200 mammograms.

Grady now employs nine HEACs who work on a range of cancer screenings, and Wimberly credits them with the high screening rates, particularly for prostate cancer. “We have long conversations with them on the phone to explain prostate cancer and who we are — no, we’re not a spam call,” she said. “There is a lot of energy put into it.” ●

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Health equity access coordinators call individuals to emphasize the importance of cancer screenings and help set up appointments with a nurse.
2. A newborn in his “Grady Baby” onesie.
3. John Haupt, president and CEO of Grady Health System.
4. A mobile unit provides primary care, wellness visits, screenings, vaccinations and other preventive services in targeted neighborhoods.



Valley Children’s Healthcare
Madera, Calif.

Focusing On The Future

In his three-decade career at Valley Children’s Health-care, President and CEO Todd Suntrapak has seen the board of trustees endorse a political issue exactly once: a tax initiative to create new parks.

Green space supports the health system’s mission to continuously improve children’s health and well-being. “If we can help, through our community health work, to lower the incidence of Type 2 diabetes, that’s a phenom-enal outcome,” Suntrapak said. “Whether it’s helping fami-lies afford to have their children participate in sports teams or investing in a community recreation program, we see it as a continuum of our care.”

Valley Children’s, based in Madera, Calif., serves a 12-county region that includes 1.4 million children in cen-tral California. Its Guilds Center for Community Health, supported by philanthropy and hospital operating funds, serves as a hub for supporting children’s health outside the hospital walls.

The Guilds Center’s work is carried out through dozens of partnerships with other organizations that share its goal of improving children’s well-being in a highly challenging environment. About 25% of children in Valley Children’s vast service territory are food-insecure, and more than 70% of its patients are insured through the state’s Medi-aid program, Medi-Cal.

For example, through a multiyear partnership with the Central California Food Bank, the health system is using innovative strategies to address food insecurity. “We are trying to shift from a transactional relationship — ‘Here’s \$10,000’ — to identifying specific priorities that could make the most difference for kids and families in need,” said Lynne Ashbeck, senior vice president and chief com-munity impact officer.

To that end, the food bank/health system partnership supports two school-based food pantries and a market at a rescue mission in Fresno, where families can ‘shop’ for free from a wide variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat and other staples. They also partner with the health system’s home care team to deliver meals to rural fami-lies with children facing complex health challenges, many of whom live two hours from Valley Children’s and strug-gle with transportation.

Valley Children’s also partners with school districts across the service area, the Congressional Epilepsy Cau-cus, Epilepsy Alliance America and others to provide free supportive services to children with epilepsy and their families. The program works to reduce stigma, increase awareness, provide mental health support and promote safety on school campuses through support groups and community events.

The program published a first-of-its-kind book written with the help of children for children to explain epilepsy to their friends. “The book has been an invaluable way for kids to share with others a little bit more about epilepsy, what it means, and what it might look like if they experi-ence a seizure,” Ashbeck said.

“There has been a tremendous amount of education that has gone out to schools — not just to school nurses, but also to hundreds of bus drivers, who have been educat-ed about how to support kids with epilepsy,” said Carmela Sosa, M.D., medical director of the Guilds Center. “And we have given epilepsy support backpacks to schools, so they have comfort items for kids after a seizure.” ●

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Basketball tournament for children with physical disabilities co-sponsored by Valley Children’s Healthcare.
2. At Golden Charter Academy in west Fresno, students are growing their own fruits and vegetables and learning how to turn them into nutritious meals.
3. Valley Children’s Healthcare President and CEO Todd Suntrapak.
4. “Room for Friends,” a book to help others learn about what it is like to experience epilepsy, was published this year.



Baxter

FOUNDATION

Making a lasting impact on health care and the health of communities

The Baxter Foundation and the American Hospital Association founded the Foster G. McGaw Prize on the belief that the relationship between a hospital and its community is unique. We celebrate the winners and finalists of this award because they show us how people working together in hospitals and communities can enrich the environment in which they live.

In the decades that come, the bond between the community and its health care providers will become stronger and more interdependent. And we shall continue to honor those individuals and organizations that distinguish themselves through excellence in community service.

We congratulate Sky Lakes Medical Center on the impact it has had on advancing care and well-being in its communities, along with all this year's Foster G. McGaw Prize finalists who are inspiring new ways to deliver health care and adapting to meet evolving local needs.

— *The Baxter Foundation*



Children's National.

Kids Are Our Everything | 155 Years

