Hospitals are always there when we need them—caring for all regardless of ability to pay. But the contributions to community health and wellness extend far beyond the hospital walls. Hospital “community benefit” services are needed now more than ever. With the challenging economic climate, individuals and families without health insurance are turning to hospital charity care and Medicaid to obtain necessary healthcare services. Connecticut hospitals offer a variety of community benefit programs and services to help residents maintain and enhance their health. These include: financial assistance to the uninsured, mobile vans and clinics delivering primary and preventive care, healthy lifestyle education programs, weight loss and physical activity promotion, programs for managing chronic conditions like asthma, and multi-faceted initiatives to address Connecticut’s key public health challenges like heart disease and cancer. The value of community benefits also includes investment in traditional “safety net” services. In 2011, Connecticut hospitals spent $213.1 million in uncompensated care — $96 million in charity care and another $117.1 million of care that hospitals had to “write off” for patients who couldn’t pay. They also incurred $831.5 million in losses due to unpaid government-sponsored healthcare — the shortfall resulting from Medicare and Medicaid paying hospitals less than the cost of caring for beneficiaries of public programs. While the dollars and cents of Connecticut hospitals’ community benefit are impressive, it is the human impact of these programs and services that tells the real story.

In 2011, Connecticut hospitals spent $1.1 billion on community benefit initiatives — that’s 11.3% of total hospital revenue — and provided more than 12.8 million community benefit services to individuals and families.

Every day, in communities throughout the state, Connecticut hospitals are touching lives—in ways we might not expect.
Bristol Hospital Community Breast Health Project

The Bristol Hospital Breast Health Project has provided more than 3,000 free mammograms to uninsured and underinsured women in Greater Bristol since the project’s inception in 1998 – saving countless lives.

Bristol Hospital recognizes that early detection saves lives for many women who would normally choose not to have a mammogram because they cannot afford one. For 25 days out of the year, Bristol Hospital makes appointments for these women at the hospital and Women’s Health Resource (Bristol Radiology Center).

They provide to more than 240 patients a year education, awareness, and financial assistance to cover the cost of a mammogram. The hospital has seen an increase in participation and interest in the program recently, with more women receiving mammograms.

The Bristol Hospital Breast Health Project is sponsored by the Charlotte Johnson Hollfelder Foundation, Inc., Women’s Health Resource, Beckley Corporation, Team Towanda, Radiologic Associates of Bristol and Farmington, and the Bristol Hospital Development Foundation.

Middlesex Hospital Cancer Center’s Men’s Health and Wellness Event

When designing a community program for prostate cancer, Dorothy Carvalho, RN, OCN, Middlesex’s prostate cancer nurse navigator, wanted to reach out to Middletown’s most vulnerable men to offer free screenings and extensive health and wellness education. She spearheaded Middlesex Hospital’s Men’s Health and Wellness Event, an annual comprehensive health program sponsored by Middlesex’s Cancer Center.

The inaugural event was held in April 2011 and served 40 Middletown men. The goal is to provide needed clinical services to uninsured or underinsured men, establish relationships between them and available healthcare and community services, and educate about preventive healthcare.

Men who are not able to have PSA/DRE screenings due to lack of insurance or high co-pays can take advantage of the free screenings. Follow-up support is provided for any abnormal findings.

Additional screenings include blood pressure and podiatry. Multiple tables are staffed with health experts providing information and education on asthma, diabetes, nutrition, smoking cessation, colonoscopy, cancer prevention, and mental health services. Community partners and physicians – including the Community Health Center, urologists, podiatrists, and ophthalmologists – offer health education and perform screenings.

Chair massages and translation services are also provided. Xavier High School students provide logistical coordination while Ministerial Alliance and church facility volunteers serve a hot lunch.

In addition, each man receives a bag including socks, underwear, toiletries, and a Stop & Shop gift card.

Attendance is expected to grow each year as the program becomes established in the community. Its success is due to extensive collaboration between Middlesex Hospital, community agencies, and providers.

Ms. Carvalho was recognized as a 2011 Connecticut Hospital Association Healthcare Hero for her conception and organization of this needed community service.

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center - Curtis D. Robinson Men’s Health Institute

The Curtis D. Robinson Men’s Health Institute at Saint Francis (CDRMHI) provides free services to the uninsured and underinsured while addressing racial disparities and health inequities affecting the targeted community. Established in 2010 at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, the program focuses on patient education, early diagnosis, and appropriate treatment for men at risk of, or who screen positive for, prostate cancer. The CDRMHI reaches African American and other at-risk populations by hosting community events that include outreach, education, and testing.

To date, more than 3,200 men have been served by the program.

Men with abnormal test results are referred to services for further examination – often with the same doctor who completed the exam at the community event. When surgery is needed, access to minimally invasive treatment options such as the da
Vinci® Robotic Surgical System are made available to all participants, regardless of insurance status. The men served by CDRMHI are sometimes on the margins of society and have limited resources for dealing with health problems that seem insurmountable. Their past experiences with healthcare are not all positive.

When one patient realized the commitment of the CDRMHI team, he commented, “I sent them an e-mail and then they called my house. No doctor has ever called my house. That right there told me something about how these people are.”

Participants often present with co-existing conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, or stress-related symptoms, and often are not connected to primary care services. Screening for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are frequently recommended to participants.

In addition, in 2010, Tuskegee University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Tuskegee, Alabama, and the CDRMHI entered into a historic partnership to identify biomarkers in African American prostate biopsy specimens in an effort to potentially prevent or cure prostate cancer. HBCU is home to the National Center for Bioethics and Research in Healthcare. The partnership will not only benefit the African American community, but all men, and particularly those who are afflicted with prostate cancer.

St. Vincent's Medical Center SWIM Across the Sound Celebrates its 25th Anniversary Helping People with Cancer

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, St. Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound provides 45 different cancer education, screening, and support services, ranging from prevention to survivorship programs. Because a diagnosis of cancer can often be financially devastating even if a patient has insurance, the SWIM offers a significant safety net to our region by also providing one-on-one financial assistance to cancer patients and their families in our community.

When St. Vincent’s volunteer Eileen Fernous’s husband Lou was diagnosed with lung cancer, they knew exactly where to go. “We saw the Elizabeth M. Pfriem SWIM Center for Cancer Care being built to be number one in the area. Why should we go anywhere else?” Following chemotherapy and radiation, they received good news. Lou has taken advantage of the survivorship services offered through the Integrative Survivorship program at St. Vincent’s to help him get back on track. He plans to go back to volunteering and conducting the hospital tours for which he has become so famous. As Lou states, “There is more in life than just getting. The concept of giving is just as important. We get a continued sense of purpose by having a positive impact on people’s lives.”

Unique among its many programs, St. Vincent’s was the first in the state 20 years ago to offer mobile mammography outreach to the medically underserved. The SWIM’s handicap-accessible Customized Digital Mobile Mammography Coach provides free mammography outreach for women who otherwise would not have access to mammography screenings because of the inability to pay, language barriers, and other barriers to access. The SWIM’s unique and highly successful Smoking Prevention and Cessation program reaches school students in 175 communities throughout Connecticut, and has reached more than 130,000 Connecticut students and adults. Since its founding in 1987, the SWIM’s main area of operation is Eastern Fairfield County, but outreach programs extend to other areas of Connecticut.

Fundraising for the SWIM includes an exciting swim marathon, the largest open water swim event in the United States, and second largest in the world. While the marathon is the marquee event, the SWIM holds more than 35 fundraising events each year such as the Breast Cancer Luncheon, Prostate Cancer Institute Celebrity Dinner, a Walk/Run, and more. Wherever possible, the SWIM covers costs and expenses of events through corporate and individual sponsorships and staff overhead is covered by St. Vincent’s Medical Center Foundation. The SWIM served over 20,000 individuals in 2012.
John Dempsey Hospital
Research Brings Benefit for Tomorrow and Today

Clinical trials are done with an eye toward long-term advances in science. But sometimes the gains can be immediate.

The UConn Health Center was the first site in Connecticut to enroll patients in a nationwide trial known as PROMISE—PROspective Multicenter Imaging Study for the Evaluation of Chest Pain—which aims to enroll 10,000 patients to compare methods of testing for signs of heart disease.

One patient, Deborah Galiette, 55, enrolled in PROMISE after reporting sporadic chest pain during a checkup. She was randomly assigned to the group that would undergo computed tomography of the coronary artery, or cardiac CT, instead of the standard-of-care stress test.

Deborah’s cardiac CT indicated a high-grade lesion in a major artery. An angiogram was scheduled immediately. It revealed an 85 percent blockage of the left anterior descending artery.

“That trial led to a test that she wouldn’t otherwise have had,” says Dr. Erick Avelar, who leads the PROMISE trial at UConn’s Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center. “Left undetected, the likelihood of her having a heart attack within a year was very high.”

Before that could happen, Deborah went for an angioplasty.

“The point of this study is to address this kind of patient. Functional testing not diagnosing significant coronary artery disease is a common problem in cardiology. The other problem is false-positive stress tests, which can lead to invasive procedures that turn out to be unnecessary.”

Cardiac CT is not the current standard of care, in part because of expense and radiation exposure, and therefore is generally not covered by insurance. Avelar believes the evidence yielded by PROMISE ultimately could convince the insurance industry to accept cardiac CT as an effective and necessary preventive tool that would reduce coronary events, therefore saving healthcare costs, and lives, in the long run.

Norwalk Hospital Diabetes Self-Management Education Program

The Norwalk Hospital Diabetes Self-Management Education Program provides education to people with diabetes so that they can learn to better manage their disease, control their blood sugar, and prevent acute and chronic complications.

“The program, which began in 1980, aims to reach people before they develop diabetes, and for those who have it, provide information on controlling the disease and lowering the risk of complications.

“Diabetes is a controllable disease,” said Barbara Nadolny RN, BSN, CDE Coordinator of Diabetes Education. “People can learn to control their diabetes and we can help. Our goal is to provide quality education to people with diabetes and to promote self-management and participation in personal health.”

The program includes individual and group sessions provided by certified diabetes educators who are registered nurses or registered dieticians. Approximately 500 outpatients attend the Diabetes Self-Management Education Program each year.

The Norwalk Hospital Diabetes Self-Management Education Program has recently been awarded continued Recognition status from the American Diabetes Association (ADA). The ADA believes that education is an essential component of effective diabetes treatment. Programs that achieve Recognition status have a staff of knowledgeable health professionals who can provide participants with comprehensive information about diabetes management.

Windham Hospital: Wildcat Marathoners Nutrition and Activity Project

The Windham Wildcat Marathoners Nutrition and Activity project was established in 2010 to work with fifth grade students from the Windham Middle School and their parents to promote healthy eating and exercise habits. This initiative was developed by a multidisciplinary team that was established to address the treatment of obesity among children and adolescents. The team consisted of hospital dietitians, school nurses, physical education teachers, and health teachers.
Through the program, the school is provided with high quality digital pedometers, Nordic walking sticks, and nutrition education materials for the students to use. Teachers associated with the program and the school-based clinic’s APRN participated in nutrition lessons provided by hospital dietitians.

During the first year of the program, the Windham Wildcat Marathoners walked 535,900,000 steps, which is the equivalent of 2,679 miles. During the last two years, the program has served 220 students.

One fifth grade participant requested to be weighed by the nurse, saying “ever since we had the assembly about walking, I have been walking for 30 minutes every day.” The student had lost 14 pounds of body weight as a result of the increased activity.

Author and speaker Robert Sweetgall, who has personally walked across America the equivalent of seven times, spoke to the students during the first year of the program and inspired school officials to make walking a part of the school curriculum. The following year, a professional acting troupe, Foodplay, presented “This is Your Life.” The performance emphasized the importance of physical activity and healthy eating in a live, interactive theater presentation.

The students who participated in the program were surveyed at the conclusion of the school year, and nearly 70 percent expressed interest in continued participation.

This program is a collaborative effort involving Windham Hospital, the Windham Hospital Foundation, Windham Hospital School-based Health Clinic, Family Resources Center, and the SBM Charitable Foundation, which has provided funding for the program.

Yale-New Haven Hospital’s Sickle Cell Program

Yale-New Haven Hospital (YNHH) offers a comprehensive program to meet the needs of patients with sickle cell anemia, also known as sickle cell disease. The hospital’s Sickle Cell Program provides comprehensive medical care, which includes pain management, psychosocial counseling, and education for the patient, family members, and the community at large.

Brandon Young has received inpatient and outpatient treatment through the hospital’s Sickle Cell Program. Diagnosed at age five, he can’t remember a day in the past 23 years during which he didn’t suffer some degree of the symptomatic pain associated with sickle cell disease.

The program, one of the few dedicated integrated models for sickle cell disease in the State of Connecticut, assists patients with access to community resources, such as medical transportation, medication programs that help people purchase needed medicines at reduced costs, and referrals to community resources.

The sickle cell interdisciplinary team works diligently with the pediatric team to ensure smooth transition of sickle cell patients from pediatric care to adult care by using the family-centered care model approach. Brandon is a staunch advocate for health education in the community. He remains committed to making sure everyone understands how sickle cell anemia impacts the lives of patients and their families. He plans to finish college and get a degree in counseling so he can more formally spread his message about breaking the “sickle cycle” of parents passing on the disease to future generations.

The Sickle Cell Program, established in 2005, includes a social worker, a full-time advanced practice nurse practitioner, and a medical director, providing a continuum of care that includes inpatient, outpatient and counseling services. In partnership with Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Southern Connecticut, YNHH does community outreach, health education, and screenings throughout Southern Connecticut. In FY2010, there were a total of 1,176 encounters for pediatric and adult patients.

In 1972, Yale-New Haven Hospital started the first hospital-based comprehensive newborn screening program for sickle cell anemia in the U.S. At that time, about 20–25 percent of children with sickle cell anemia died from infection in the first five years of life. This program was successful in that there were no deaths in the cohort of babies with sickle cell disease diagnosed at birth. The program served as a national model for similar programs in the 1980s, and today 40 states routinely test newborns for sickle cell anemia, using methodology based on the YNHH pilot program.
Keeping Connecticut Healthy

Raising Awareness/Education

Bridgeport Hospital's One-Day Cancer College

Every year, more than 300 cancer patients and their loved ones gather for Bridgeport Hospital’s free One-Day Cancer College. Since 2008, this annual community education event has provided more than a dozen information sessions about cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment from leading physicians and healthcare professionals.

An all-star roster of nationally known cancer survivors have provided keynote lectures over the years, including: Hoda Kotb, breast cancer survivor and co-host of the TODAY show; Alan Hobson, Mount Everest climber, best-selling author, and cancer survivor, who triumphed over an aggressive blood cancer nearly 10 years ago; Saranne Rothberg, founder and CEO of the ComedyCures Foundation, who shared her personal cancer journey and simple goal of helping people with cancer utilize the positive benefits of laughter for the mind, body, and spirit; and Holly Clegg, writer, recipe-developer and author of Eating Well Through Cancer.

Participants have consistently remarked on the vast amount of useful information provided in a compassionate manner, the interesting workshops and booths, and the quality of presenters.

The One-Day Cancer College is organized by the hospital’s Norma F. Pribem Cancer Institute and Norma F. Pribem Breast Care Center, the hospital’s Marketing Department, and community partners including CancerCare, the American Cancer Society, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and a volunteer staff of more than 30 hospital employees.

Connecticut Children's Medical Center’s Super Safe Comics™

The Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center is home to a number of safety and injury prevention programs, such as Safe Kids Connecticut and the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Hartford. Started in 2008, Super Safe Comics™, a safety comic book series, has become a valuable part of the Injury Prevention Center’s community outreach efforts by educating families and children on staying safe by preventing injuries.

Created by Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, the 16-page comic books are available for free to schools, libraries, and community organizations in Connecticut. The comic book is suggested for children in kindergarten through fourth grade. Issues are also available free to anyone in PDF format by going to www.connecticutchildrens.org/supersafecomics.

Each issue features Captain Super Safe and his friends as they go on adventures and learn about topics such as bicycle and helmet safety, pedestrian safety, dog bite prevention, water safety, fire safety, and concussion education. Super Safe Comics are made available within Connecticut Children’s Medical Center to patients and throughout Connecticut through the hospital’s injury prevention and safety education activities.

In August 2011, Super Safe Comics was featured in select movie theatres with an animated public service announcement on helmet safety and brain protection.

The comic series is written by Kevin Borrup, Associate Director at the Injury Prevention Center, and is illustrated by Scott DaRos and Alexis Deprey. Publication of this comic series is made possible through support from the Kohl’s Cares program.

To date, more than 35,000 copies of Super Safe Comics in Connecticut have been distributed. In fact, teachers have mentioned that the program encourages kids to read and makes them excited about safety. Connecticut Children’s Medical Center has partnered with the Connecticut Humane Society, the City of Hartford Fire Department, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (now Energy and Environmental Protection), the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut (BIAC), and the Poison Control Center to develop safety messages for each comic.

Day Kimball Hospital’s DUI Initiative, Saving Lives One at a Time

In 2010, Day Kimball Hospital began an ambitious project to educate teens, caregivers, educators, and community members about the risks associated with drug and alcohol use, and driving under the influence. To date, the program has reached more than 500 people.

The program starts with a nurse or physician-led presentation of one of two realistic, stark videos: “The Hard Truth or Dying High II.” Dying High II features a local, real-life story told by Day Kimball Hospital and over 75 other regional healthcare providers and volunteers.

The presentation delivers an emotionally tangible message followed by an educational session on the risks of alcohol and drug use.

The program is intended to be a catalyst for open and frank discussion between teenagers, caregivers, and educators, ultimately reducing the use of drugs and alcohol. One parent wrote, “My son opened up to me last night about your film. He said it really had an impact on him… Now my son wants to become involved as an EMT. I think only good will come from showing this film.”

Day Kimball Hospital believes if it is able to convince one audience member of the risks involved with alcohol and drug use, it has made a significant difference in the community. And to further support the program, a third video, “Emerging Drugs of Abuse and Underage Drinking 2012,” was recently created and debuted in January 2013. In the future, the hospital intends to design a rigorous study to scientifically validate the efficacy of this program.

The Griffin Hospital Mini Med School

Founded in 2006, Griffin Hospital’s 10-week Mini Med School Program brings the hospital’s physicians and community together to foster health education and empowerment.

The free program is designed for a general audience ranging from adolescents interested in pursuing healthcare careers to senior citizens seeking information on how to live longer, healthier lives. The program is offered over 10 consecutive Thursday evening sessions in the spring and fall.
To date, more than 600 community members have completed the course. One participant wrote, "The caliber of the presenters was excellent. Ten weeks were good but 12 would be even better. We knew little about Griffin Hospital and its doctors before the program and now we are very impressed... Thanks for all your effort... The program was a success!"

In addition to a basic understanding of human anatomy and the pathology of various diseases, participants also learn about strategies for disease prevention. Physician presenters stress a number of common themes, such as the harmful effects of smoking, the importance of regular health screenings, and the impact of lifestyle choices on overall health.

Founded by two leaders of the Griffin Hospital medical staff, the Mini Med School program has been offered nine times, and the hospital also offered an advanced "residency" session in Spring 2010 for previous Mini Med School graduates.

While community benefit is clear, the hospital and its physicians also benefit from the interaction with their patients and the feedback they provide. Course reviews by Mini Med School graduates have been overwhelmingly positive, with both the individual physician presentations and the overall program evaluations generating rave reviews.

One couple wrote, "Thank you for offering this Mini Med School Program. My husband and I both enjoyed attending and learned useful information. All the speakers were interesting to listen to. We appreciate the time and effort it took all those involved to make this program successful."

Hospital physicians volunteer their time as faculty for the program, and a number of pharmaceutical companies and medical device manufacturers have provided underwriting support over the seven years of the Mini Med School's existence to help defray program costs.

Hartford Hospital: Saving Lives Through Organ Donation

In the U.S., there are more than 117,000 people waiting for a donor organ at any given time, and 18 people die each day waiting for an organ that never becomes available. Hartford Hospital is saving lives in its community through outreach to increase awareness and by encouraging people to become organ donors.

Hartford Hospital partnered with Fox CT, The Hartford Courant, and Donate Life New England, and came up with an ambitious goal – to sign up at least 1,000 new organ donors in a two month period. They asked community members and employees to become ambassadors for the gift of life, and it worked – the hospital surpassed its goal of registering 1,000 new organ donors in 60 days. In February 2013, Hartford Hospital President and CEO Jeff Flaks announced that 1,240 donors had been registered in less than two months—surpassing the number that usually register in an entire year.

The Donate Life flag, which is raised in honor of patients who die and save lives through organ donation, was raised to celebrate the accomplishment.

Waterbury Hospital: A Life Transformed by Photography

Leonard has experienced firsthand what the Waterbury Hospital Infectious Disease Clinic offers its patients. In the parlance of photography, his life has developed into a picture of hope and resilience.

Leonard first came to the Infectious Disease Clinic in early 2008 after being diagnosed with HIV. At first, he was reluctant to take part in the clinic’s programs as he struggled to adjust to his diagnosis and the feelings of anger and confusion that came with it. But gradually he became more and more involved thanks to the guidance of the clinic’s staff. "I needed to adjust my lifestyle to live. The staff helped me understand things other people couldn’t help me understand."

By fall of 2008, Leonard had become involved in the Infectious Disease Clinic’s Project Photography, an innovative program in which HIV clients are encouraged to express themselves artistically through photography. Leonard found he enjoyed exploring the possibilities of using a camera, and some of his work was showcased at the hospital’s annual gala in November 2008. "At first, I joined the photography group to kill time, but then I started to like it... I began to think ‘Maybe I’m pretty good at this.’" Now, after years in the program, Leonard considers Project Photography a driving force in helping him and others cope with their diagnoses. "The photography group takes you to a certain place... it’s taken me places I’ve never been able to go," he said. In particular, Leonard said the program is able to reach people because it allows them to pursue their vision independently and therefore reclaim their lives. "We were the ones who had the ideas and the ones who pushed things forward. It gave use independence and something that was ours," he said.

During his time with Project Photography, Leonard and the rest of the group have been able to travel around the country to exhibit their photos. Group members have also traveled to Washington D.C. to be recognized for the unique and creative way in which they have brought hope and purpose to their lives. In 2010, Leonard’s work and that of his fellow group members received a national award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Leonard said he remains grateful for the support the Infectious Disease Clinic has given him. Since 2009, he has served as a Peer Advocate for the clinic, championing his fellow patients and helping them find the possibilities that he has embraced. "The photography program tied everything together," he said. "It gave me time to learn about me."

Investing in the future: Connecticut’s hospitals are committed to ensuring the healthcare workforce of tomorrow, spending $223.1 million in 2011 educating new doctors and allied health professionals.
Preparing for the Future

Lawrence + Memorial Hospital's Be Tru 2 U

Rita Whitehead doesn't care what your talent or hobby happens to be - if you're willing to share a skill or interest with some of New London's aspiring youth, she's interested. In a city that has high poverty, low academic achievement, and high rates of births to teens and STDs, punctuated by recent extreme violence among youth, her motivation is palpable.

As organizer of a youth program called “B Tru 2 U,” run with funding from Lawrence + Memorial Hospital (L+M), Whitehead's philosophy is simple: expose kids to as many opportunities as possible and good might come out of it.

“One boy had an interest in the library,” Whitehead said. “I told him, 'Don't be just a librarian – you should run the Library of Congress!' I tell these kids to aim high.”

Started in 2008 as a teen-pregnancy prevention program at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, “B Tru 2 U” has expanded over the years to promote all types of education for young people, including respect for others, self-confidence, and a mindset that anything is possible.

“B Tru 2 U” events have included trips to cheer on peer athletes, a tour of the Custom House in downtown, a visit to Connecticut College, a talk from a Coast Guard captain, leadership talks with a variety of local politicians, and a healthy eating discussion with L+M Hospital's Mary Ann Nash, a nutrition expert.

Dominic Cruz is a junior at New London High School and current president of “B Tru 2 U.” Cruz said he has learned leadership skills through the program and it also helped him join the R.O.T.C at the high school. “I would tell other kids to join us,” he said. “We learn about preventing teen pregnancy and preventing underage drinking. And it gives you something positive to do.”

Another participant, Jermaine Miller, also a junior, said he appreciated a “B Tru 2 U” program on personal finances. “We learned how to juggle priorities and to put the most important things first,” he said. “We learned that it's hard to get a job while you're in school, but it's easier to get a job if you do well in school.”

Saint Mary’s Hospital: Serving the Community Through A Commitment to Education

Samantha Szilvasy has always wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps and pursue a healthcare career. By the time she was in middle school, she was helping her father recover from a stroke, and helping him and her grandfather monitor their blood sugar levels.

As a junior at Crosby High School in Waterbury, Samantha jumped at the chance to enroll in an Allied Health program at Saint Mary's Hospital, where she learned more about healthcare careers and how to care for patients. “I was excited to get into the program so I could learn how to help people and get closer to my dream of being a nurse,” she said.

When her father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in February 2010, she was able to help care for and comfort him while at the same time tending to the physical and emotional needs of patients at Saint Mary's as an Allied Health student. "I try to make a difference with the patients I meet," she said. "My personal experiences with family illness have been difficult, but these have helped me to decide my career path.”

Samantha was recently accepted in the LPN program at Lincoln Technical Institute in New Britain, where she will continue to work toward her goal of becoming an oncology nurse. Her experiences at Saint Mary's have helped her to realize her dream, and fulfill her promise.

Saint Mary's commitment to education has helped many students like Samantha by providing opportunities to learn more about healthcare careers and gain valuable on-the-job training. In 2010, a total of 87 students from three local high schools – Crosby, Kennedy, and Sacred Heart – participated in Allied Health programs at Saint Mary’s. Each of them will be eligible to take a state exam upon graduation and earn their certification as a nurse's aide.

The program, valued at $284,236, is just one of many community benefits that Saint Mary's provides annually.

Last year, Saint Mary’s provided more than $27 million in discounted, in-kind, or free services to the Greater Waterbury community. That includes $5.4 million for educating and training nearly 600 individuals in health professions, as well as additional funds for medical and surgical services for the uninsured and under-insured, support groups, community outreach, and staff involvement in community organizations, boards, and events.
Western Connecticut Health Network’s Emergency Planning and Community Collaboration on Special Needs Sheltering

Surge capacity is an important part of Western Connecticut Health Network’s Emergency Management planning efforts. The program, in place since 2001, covers proactive response to emergency situations including weather-related, pandemic, bio-chemical, mass casualty, and other scenarios.

The program is collaborative, engaging Network hospitals (Danbury Hospital and New Milford Hospital) and community partners including the Western Connecticut State University, parish and school nurses, community agencies, municipal public health and emergency management staff, first responders, and even for-profit businesses.

Since the program’s inception in 2001, the hospitals have invested time, talent, and funding to train staff, hold drills, purchase equipment, allocate space, engage community providers, and develop an “on-your-toes” response that they have implemented successfully on many occasions.

The snowstorm in October 2011 hit many Connecticut hospitals hard and led to surge issues across the state. Inpatients could not be discharged due to widespread power outages, and home-based residents with special needs began arriving at the hospital emergency departments looking for a place for respite. The potential for capacity issues would be devastating and needed an immediate solution.

The Western Connecticut Emergency Management planning group convened to develop a Special Needs Shelter. The collaboration, led by hospital staff and including public health, community agency and emergency management staff, and local nurses pooled resources that led to a functional Special Needs Shelter that was operational less than 24 hours after the storm.

The shelter housed recently-discharged patients from the Network hospitals and area facilities as well as home-based residents with special needs who were without power, food, or heat. The shelter was completely staffed by volunteers, and supplies were donated by the hospitals, local agencies, and for-profit businesses.

As a result of the program, 25 residents from around the region were cared for in a non-hospital environment, free of charge. This allowed more emergency cases to be given priority. Capacity was maintained and the collaboration realized a new and major milestone in its work.

Others from around the country have sought out information about the implementation and structure of the shelter program, to use for best practices. Connecticut is now considering this collaborative model as a possible one for future scenarios across our state.

Building Healthier Communities

From Husky to Healthy: The William W. Backus Hospital Rx for Health Program

Imagine getting a doctor’s prescription for healthy fruits and vegetables. That’s what Backus Hospital is doing through its innovative Rx for Health Program. In three months, the program helped 32 families at risk for obesity by prescribing 814 $2 vouchers that were turned in at the farmer’s market in exchange for fresh food. Rx for Health will likely be expanded this year.

When several local studies, including a Health Needs Assessment by Backus Hospital, showed that obesity is a major problem in eastern Connecticut, Backus took action. The hospital collaborated with United Community & Family Services, Generations Family Health Center, a local farmer’s market, and Thames Valley Council for Community Action to improve at-risk families’ access to fresh fruits and vegetables and educate them on healthy eating habits.
Physicians identified families who would benefit from healthy food, and wrote the prescriptions. Vendors at the farmer’s market checked off which fruits and vegetables were obtained with the vouchers to ensure the choices are healthy. The vouchers were turned over to dietitians, nutritionists, and nurses on the Backus Mobile Health Resource Center, a medical center on wheels that is stationed at the farmer’s market, in exchange for nutritional education and healthy recipes. Backus underwrites the cost through donations to its annual fund, which is focusing on obesity.

The program received national attention – it was selected for recognition at the 2012 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Health Promotion Summit in Washington, D.C.

Charlotte Hungerford’s “Fit Together” Group Sponsors Foodplay Performances to Promote Healthy Eating

The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital’s “Fit Together”, a coalition of northwest Connecticut-based healthcare, education, and social service organizations, builds healthy kids, families, and communities through sustainable strategies that foster healthy eating and active living.

“Our group has been meeting monthly for the past year sharing expertise, seeking common ground, and assessing the needs of the community”, said Brian Mattiello, Director of Strategic Initiatives at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and founding member of the group. “We’ve put together a multi-faceted campaign to inform and motivate area residents on the importance of healthy eating and active living.”

Last year, Fit Together hosted 3,200 school children for two performances of “Foodplay,” a national award-winning theater show promoting healthy eating and exercise habits. The performance by a professional theater group at the Warner Theatre empowered children with the skills they need to take charge of growing up healthy and fit.

“We have to fight fire with fire,” says Foodplay creator and Executive Director, Barbara Storper, MS, RD. A leader in children’s nutrition, Barbara has reached over three million children at schools across the country with FOODPLAY, using the power of live theater to make nutrition come alive. “We need to use the same techniques advertisers use in order to get kids excited about healthy foods and healthy practices. Schools are the perfect setting to model healthy behaviors and educate students on how to make their choices healthy ones. Once kids get the facts, they become the most effective health advocates, bringing the message back home!”

In addition to Charlotte Hungerford, Fit Together combines the efforts of the YMCA and the United Way of Northwest Connecticut.

Greenwich Hospital’s Teddy Bear Clinic

Now in its 14th year, Greenwich Hospital’s annual Teddy Bear Clinic is a child-friendly mini-hospital designed to teach children about healthy habits while alleviating fear of the doctor. This family event is set up under tents adjacent to the hospital.

Children ages three through 11 bring their favorite plush toys and dolls to be treated by doctors, nurses, and other health professionals from 25 hospital departments, including Admitting, Emergency, Maternity, Pediatrics, Respiratory, Oncology, Surgery, Integrative Medicine, and Pharmacy. Depending on the diagnosis, X-rays, ultrasound, surgery, splints, or stitches are ordered to treat the bears.

Community partners are always eager to participate, as well. Greenwich Library provides health-related story time, and Greenwich Emergency Medical Service (GEMS) invites the children to tour an ambulance.

Children and their families leave the Teddy Bear Clinic each year better informed about healthy habits and lifestyles. Through role play and interactive activities, children learn about the importance of exercise, nutrition, and safety, as well as how illnesses are diagnosed and treated by doctors, nurses, and staff who put a friendly face on a hospital experience. Children receive handouts and samples to reinforce what they’ve learned at the event.

The Hospital of Central Connecticut’s Walk with a Doc

Every day, Richard Burrell of Southington clips a blue pedometer to his belt to track his steps. His goal: 10,000 steps. Through the Hospital of Central Connecticut’s Walk with a Doc program, both Richard and his wife, Rita, have logged thousands of steps.

Since October 2010, the hospital has hosted, weather permitting, a monthly (April through December) Walk with a Doc event at a park where a medical staff member talks about a health topic, answers questions, and leads a 30-minute walk.

Topics at some of the Walk With a Doc events the Burrells attended in 2011 included weight control, back pain causes and treatment, high fiber and health, and controlling high blood pressure. Nearly 600 walkers attended the eight walks in 2011.

Along the way, the Burrells have also lost something – lots of weight. Richard lost 50 pounds and Rita lost 30 pounds.

The Hospital of Central Connecticut (THOCC) was the first hospital in New England to join Just Walk, an Ohio-based Walk with a Doc program that a cardiologist started in 2005 in Columbus, Ohio. THOCC’s program is the largest of Just Walk’s programs, in terms of number of overall participants. By October 2011, THOCC’s Walk with a Doc program had walkers from more than 30 Connecticut towns.

At THOCC’s walks, sponsored by Anthem and Pepsi Beverages Co., walkers have received free T-shirts and pedometers from Anthem; water from Pepsi; and hats and fanny packs from the hospital.
Johnson Memorial Hospital Shows its Green Thumb

The staff at Johnson Memorial Hospital is not afraid to get a little dirty to help the hungry in their community. Last year, they purchased a share in a community-supported agriculture farm, which is a way to support local farms in return for fresh produce.

Employees worked on the farm from April through October. In return, the hospital received nearly 100 pounds of fresh, organic produce. Johnson Memorial Hospital donated the food to Safe Net Ministries, a local food kitchen. Safe Net Ministries distributed the donated food to its more than 300 families.

The program has been in operation for one year. It serves residents of Stafford Springs and Union, Connecticut in need of food assistance.

Manchester Memorial Hospital Addresses War Trauma and PTSD: Healing the Impact of War for Veterans and Their Families

In partnership with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Connecticut National Guard, Manchester Memorial Hospital hosted a half-day workshop for behavioral health professionals addressing the unique needs of military families.

The workshop focused on the experiences of military personnel and family during all phases of service with emphasis on pre-deployment, active duty, and reintegration. It provided valuable information to navigate the many services that are available for veterans, those that are currently in active duty, and their family members.

In addition to the training workshop, Manchester Memorial Hospital-based psychiatrist and author, Jamshid Marvasti, MD, has presented free health education lectures for the general public to discuss the signs and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how to manage its impact on veterans and their families.

To date, nearly 40 people have attended the lectures.

Pilates for Breast Cancer Survivors at MidState Medical Center

MidState Medical Center began a pilates class for breast cancer survivors in November 2006. The program began as an eight week pilot and was funded by grant money from Susan G. Komen. Eight volunteers participated in one-hour pilates sessions led by the program's founder, Linda Durham, MD. Dr. Durhan, a radiologist at MidState with over 20 years of experience, specializes in mammography and is an avid exercise fan.

Among those participants was Denise Rinaldi, of Meriden. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004. Denise, who played softball and volleyball and enjoyed exercise, was eager to regain her strength and energy. "Cancer knocked me out. I just wanted to get back to my old self," she said.

"At the first class, I couldn't even make it through the first exercise. I got better and better every week." After a few weeks, her muscles began to tone and she felt stronger.

The exercises in pilates are beneficial to breast cancer survivors because they focus on building endurance and overall muscle tone, helping patients to rebuild their strength after cancer treatment.

After the eight week pilot program, the participants were surveyed to determine how pilates had impacted their level of physical activity and quality of life. All of the women saw their quality of life improve and credited pilates with having a positive impact on their physical and mental well-being.

In addition to the physical benefits, Mrs. Rinaldi also realized the social benefits of joining the pilates program. "It's so nice to have people in a common situation. Everyone is there because they want to feel better and be more fit. We learn from each other. Everybody's a friend there. We cheer for each other. To this day, I try not to miss a class."

Now in its sixth year, pilates has been a staple among The Palladino Family Cancer Center's survivorship offerings. Since its inception, approximately 50 women have benefited from the program. More than a dozen women participate in class each week. Many women have attended pilates since the program's inception.

All women must have permission from their physician to participate in the program. This ensures that they are in good shape following their treatment.

Mothers and Daughters Find Common Ground with Milford Hospital's Tea Talk

Since 2000, more than 1800 mothers and daughters have participated in Milford Hospital’s “Tea Talk,” a two-hour, informative talk to open communication on various adolescent issues and concerns. Tea Talk topics have centered on self-esteem, making smart choices, creating healthy relationships, the pressure to be perfect, and more.

The program’s goal is to promote positive communication on challenging subject matter, fostering future discussions. The information, tools, and skills that participants receive from the program promote self-esteem, knowledge, and confidence.

This year, Diane Frankel-Gramelis, Director of Education, will present “We Are All a Different Beautiful.” This program will discuss self-esteem, pressures to be perfect, and confidence. Alicia Hanke, Health Educator and department intern, will present “Cyber Esteem.” This program explores how to stay connected and pressure-free while using technology, and provides tips on using technology in a healthy and enjoyable way.

The funding for Tea Talk is provided by the Milford Hospital Education Department’s budget, which includes funds from the yearly “Live Well” 5K Mother’s Day Run/Walk. Additional funding is provided by...
community businesses that donate items or monetary gifts for goody bags that are distributed to the girls who attend.

**Rockville General Hospital: Vernon Summer Food Service Program**

Over the past six years, Rockville General Hospital has partnered with Vernon Parks and Recreation and Youth Services Bureau to provide the children of Vernon a free, nutritious lunch Monday through Friday throughout the summer. Last year, the program served more than 5,000 children. Rockville General Hospital Food Service employee Bridgette dedicates five hours of her day to preparing, on average, 120 meals per day. In 2011, she prepared a total of 5,131 lunches.

Distributed at three locations in town, lunch consists of a sandwich, a piece of fruit, and a drink. Lunches are provided to any Vernon resident under the age of 18.

The program has grown over the years. Based on demand, distribution locations have been added and there was a 48 percent increase in the number of meals prepared in 2011 compared to 2010.

**Stamford Hospital Provides Outreach to Women Through Fairfield County Women's Expo**

Throughout the year, Stamford Hospital provides a broad range of health and educational outreach programs throughout Fairfield County to address the needs of the community across the healthcare continuum.

As part of this effort, and to promote its services for women, the hospital was the title sponsor for the 2011 Fairfield County Women's Expo. This two-day event included more than 250 booths covering everything from hair and cars to travel and health. The primary goal was to generate awareness for the hospital’s comprehensive array of women’s health services. Additionally, the event served to showcase key physicians and provide free screenings to identify women at risk. As the title sponsor, Stamford Hospital is the key health resource for women across the region.

More than 4,000 women attended the event, and approximately 3,200 visited the Stamford Hospital booth, resulting in just over 2,000 health screenings. Healthcare professionals conducted cholesterol, glucose, and blood pressure screenings; cardiac/stroke risk assessments; pulmonary function tests; hand hygiene and facial skin analyses; skin risk assessments; and screening mammograms. All of these women received appropriate on-site counseling and several were identified as candidates for additional testing. More than 100 mammogram appointments were scheduled, and nearly 950 women were provided with follow-up opportunities.