Geisinger–Bloomsburg Hospital

Community Health Needs Assessment

GEISINGER

Over nearly a century, Geisinger has been deeply committed to doing what is right for the communities we serve. In fact, Geisinger Medical Center (GMC) opened earlier than planned in 1915 to handle the health care needs associated with a typhoid outbreak.

Although Geisinger Health System is a much different place than GMC was long ago, we remain true to our patient care, education, research and community service mission. As part of this endeavor, we are proud to support and participate in regular community health needs assessments in conjunction with other area organizations.

Community health needs assessments are an important component in our effort to enhance the health and well-being of the people throughout central and northeastern Pennsylvania. Please read the information in this brochure and visit geisiniger.org/chna to learn more about Geisinger's ongoing efforts in this regard.

Long ago, our founder Abigail Geisinger set a high standard by stating, "Make my hospital right. Make it the best." We believe community health needs assessments and the actions we take as a result help us achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

Glenn Steele, MD
President & Chief Executive Officer

Getting to Know You Better

Meeting the needs of the communities we serve means understanding those communities thoroughly. And what better way to do that than by talking to the people who live and work there through a Community Health Needs Assessment?

We partnered with ACTION Health and other local non-profit hospitals to bring Tripp Umbach, a private healthcare consulting firm and nationally recognized leader in health needs assessments, to our area. Together, we collected data and interviewed local community members, social service workers, health care professionals, legislators and representatives from schools, businesses, local government, emergency management and faith-based organizations. The study was completed in June 2012 and what we discovered was eye opening.

Topping the list of needs for the Geisinger–Bloomsburg Hospital (G–BH) community was a need for improved access to healthcare for underinsured and uninsured residents. According to the study, there are a shrinking number of healthcare providers in the area. The shortfall in the number of physicians will affect everyone, but the impact will be most severe on vulnerable and underserved populations. Columbia County has a substantially lower ratio of physicians in direct patient care (127.7 per 100,000 population) than the state ratio (247.8 per 100,000 population). This fact, combined with a high rate of unemployment and the high cost of health insurance means too many residents were not getting the care they need.

A second crucial need for the community was education aimed at improving healthy behaviors. Columbia County ranked highest in our 5-county region, representing the *unhealthiest* measures, related to education, diet and exercise, and community safety. In addition, Columbia County ranked 54th worst, out of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania, in regards to Health Behaviors, which includes alcohol use, tobacco use, and other lifestyle choices. By improving nutrition, making better lifestyle choices about smoking and substance abuse, and increasing physical activity, individuals can help to prevent some of today's most prevalent chronic illnesses, such as obesity, diabetes and pulmonary issues. But the study showed that there was a general lack of education regarding nutrition and community members have limited access to healthy food options, due to the cost, limited access to healthy produce, and the prevalence of convenient but unhealthy food options. Throughout our region, individuals and families have limited access to clean and safe recreational facilities, which contributes to

a lack of exercise. Barriers such as these make improving healthy behaviors a challenge for many in our region.

The third largest need for the area was to improve transportation services. Community leaders, key stakeholders, and focus group participants all reported that a lack of transportation, coupled with the predominantly rural nature of our region, made it challenging for many residents to access healthcare. Although multiple community transportation systems are in place, the study showed they are limited and unable to meet the transportation needs of our community, due to program restrictions, lack of funding and increased number of riders. In addition, the growing senior population in our region means demand on existing transportation systems will only increase in the future and can pose a challenge for area seniors to access healthcare.

So now that we better understand the needs of the communities we serve, what are we doing to meet them?

Plenty.

At G–BH, patients and families can access high quality, coordinated, patient-centered care – right in their community.

With $336.6 million put toward community support in 2012 alone, the programs showcased in this brochure are just a small sampling of the ways in which we're working to improve the lives of the people we serve.

Your Community is our Community.

Exceptional healthcare. It's what our neighbors in northeastern and central Pennsylvania have been expecting from us for generations. And after nearly a century, we're meeting, and exceeding, those expectations like never before.

In fact, Geisinger's integrated healthcare system has become a nationally recognized model for delivering innovative, high-quality care that's efficient, effective, and most importantly, compassionate.

The way we see it, we don't treat illness. We treat people.

People like Joyce, whose life was saved by the quick actions and compassionate care provided by staff of the Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine Clinic.

People who visit us at community health fairs and find the information they need regarding issues that impact their lives, like depression, anxiety, stress and community services such as 211.

And all the young people in our community having the opportunity to learn and train next to experienced Geisinger healthcare providers through the Bloomsburg University Nursing Program. This partnership not only helps to train our future healthcare professionals, but increases care available to our community.

The truth is Geisinger Health System touches the lives of tens of thousands of people each year. And with that many people depending on us, we take our commitment to the communities we serve very seriously. In 2012 alone, we provided community support including: free care for patients who could not afford to pay, care for the elderly and poor not covered by Medicare or Medicaid, and numerous community health, education and outreach programs.

We're also proud of the fact that in 2012 the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania reported that Geisinger Health System has an annual $6.1 billion positive impact on the local, regional, and Pennsylvania economy.

Our non-profit mission allows us to not only make significant investments in community needs, but also partner with other local non-profit organizations to help improve the health of the people we serve in central and northeast Pennsylvania.

Dial 211 and Get Connected to the Services You Need

Did you know it used to take an average of seven phone calls to reach the human services office you were looking for?

Not anymore thanks to 211.

211 is a *free* three-digit telephone number that gives Pennsylvanians access to customized health, housing, and human services information all in one place. Anyone who needs help with job training, transportation, health insurance, rent assistance, child and elder care, or crisis intervention just needs to dial 211. Just that one call will connect them to an Information Referral Specialist who can help them get the services they need fast. And many of these services are provided by agencies within the Columbia County Human Services Coalition.

"The partnership between the Columbia County Human Services Coalition and G–BH is a long standing one," says Lisa Makara, CTRS, MHS, Vice President of the Columbia County Human Services Coalition. "The Coalition brings many agencies together to share what's going on and to form partnerships to better serve the community. G–BH supports the coalition by providing medical services where they are needed. The Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine Clinic is a great example of that."

According to Makara, there were more than forty calls to the Columbia County 211 call center in July 2013 alone. More than half had to do with people needing assistance to cover rent or utilities but, as she is quick to point out, there are a host of other services available as well. To make things even easier, a searchable database of what's available can be found at pa211central.org.

Supporting students' health and professional goals

Our partnership with Bloomsburg University gives us the opportunity to educate students about their health, as well as support students who are interested in a health care career.

Practical training in the rural healthcare experience

We give student nurses hands-on, practical learning through advanced clinical experience from G–BH skilled nurses, physicians and healthcare professionals.

Sharing our medical expertise helps further our mission to provide a quick, effective response to community healthcare needs.

Bloomsburg Student Health Advisory Board

We make regular visits to Bloomsburg's student orientation days to give health tips to students and parents, including emergency cards with helpful information about G–BH services.

As a member of the Student Health Advisory Board, we advise the school on Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) policies and procedures, to ensure students and their families are up-to-date on their healthcare privacy rights.

Educating our region on the value of mental health

Through community health fairs, G–BH educates students and community members about mental health issues such as suicide prevention, depression, bipolar disorder and stress management. Helpful brochures and other materials are available for counseling referrals and other resources.

Students Benefit from Hospital-University Partnership

The Bloomsburg Hospital had been a trusted part of the community since 1905. But its recent merger into Geisinger Health System provided additional services, technologies, and resources to augment the compassionate care for which it has always been known.

But that's only part of the G–BH story. The merger has also enhanced the hospital's profile in the community and helped in its ability to attract, educate and keep nursing students. That's where the partnership with Bloomsburg University comes in.

"We're pulling together the resources of two hospitals (G–BH and Geisinger Medical Center in Danville) and a university," explains Lissa Bryan-Smith, Chief Administrative Officer of G–BH. "The effects have been overwhelmingly positive—for the students and for the community at large."

The merger has allowed the nurses' training program at Bloomsburg University to expand. "It's often difficult to recruit into small community hospitals," explains Bonnie Hess, RN, Chief Nursing Officer at G–BH. "But now, our students are part of a larger network. They spend sophomore year at G–BH and junior and senior years at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville and Geisinger–Shamokin Area Community Hospital in Coal Township."

Hess explains that this has made for a highly competitive program with 165 placements available for 1,600 applicants. There's an anesthesiology program, an exercise therapy program for post cardio patients, a program for audiology and speech, and plenty of work to be done with newborns and stroke victims. Students are even given the opportunity to observe surgeons at work.

"Because of the many awards and distinctions Geisinger Medical Center has achieved, we are able to attract students from all over the region," says Lissa Bryan-

Smith. "After graduation, many choose to stay. That says a lot about the communities and the program."

Stephen Paolucci, MD, Chief Medical Officer, G–BH and Chairman of the Division of Psychiatry, explains how the merger has allowed his staff to better identify and treat at risk students from a mental health perspective. "Kids are coming to school these days with more needs," he says. "Depression, ADHD, substance abuse issues. A fully integrated program allows us to identify at risk students and give them the support they need early on. Hopefully, we never have to see them in the Emergency Room."

Paolucci points out that many students are only able to attend school thanks to advances in the medications that keep their medical conditions under control. The problem, he says, is that once they get away from home, some students stop taking their prescriptions. "They want to be like their peers," he explains. "This is just one of the many reasons why Geisinger has made the commitment to focus on student health issues, not just at Bloomsburg University, but at Susquehanna and Bucknell Universities as well."

G–BH's partnership with Bloomsburg University is just one shining example of how partnering with local organizations can benefit everyone in the community.

Free healthcare services for the under and uninsured in Mifflinville, PA

Good health shouldn't depend on a person's ability to pay. That's why G–BH donates vital medical services such as lab work, x-rays, cat scans, ultrasounds and MRIs to Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine (CCVM) each year.

The clinic provides non-emergency health care free of charge to the working uninsured who meet the income eligibility guidelines. A group of medical and support volunteers give their time and skills to assist working uninsured Columbia County and Southern Luzerne County (i.e. Shickshinny, Nescopeck and Salem Township) residents who are in need of medical services.

Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine
310 East 3rd Street,
Mifflinville, PA 18631
Phone: 570.752.1780
http://ccvim.org

Hope for the Community's Uninsured

Imagine having to choose between medical care for yourself and putting food on the table for your family. It's a decision too many are forced to make every day.

Bette Grey understands that dilemma all too well.

It was finding herself without insurance that inspired her to start a free medical clinic. A respiratory therapist by trade, Grey opened the doors to the Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in 2007 and has been running the place ever since.

"We've seen about 1,800 patients here," she says. "Some have jobs. Many don't. But what they all have in common is a lack of insurance." Grey adds that she has seen too many people wait too long to ask for medical help. "People have a sense of pride," she says. "But they need to realize we're here to help. We want to help."

And patients are deeply appreciative.

Joyce Kyttle's husband called the clinic on behalf of his wife. She had been feeling terrible and he knew that even though the couple had lost their insurance coverage, something had to be done.

Grey listened as he described his wife's symptoms, which included extreme fatigue, weakness, and an inability to focus. She asked if Kyttle had any known health issues and when she learned that Kyttle was diabetic, Grey knew the situation was potentially very serious.

Grey insisted that Kyttle be brought in right away.

At the clinic, Grey attempted to give Kyttle a blood test to determine her blood sugar levels, but the sample was rejected repeatedly due to low hemoglobin. Grey knew levels as low as hers required emergency attention and told Kyttle's family to get her to the Emergency Room immediately. At Geisinger Medical Center, Kyttle learned that she had an extremely large kidney stone, and that she had been born with only one kidney.

Her body was filling with toxins fast.

Expert medical care brought Joyce Kyttle back to health and Medicaid was there to cover her financially. "Bette and her clinic were an absolute blessing to me," Kyttle says. "Without them and Geisinger I know I wouldn't have made it."

geisinger.org

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