

Athol Memorial Hospital is a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) serving the nine towns of the North Quabbin Region. The area's relatively small population (###) is dispersed over a large geographic area (###). Inherent in the hospital's mission of providing healthcare services are efforts to help improve the health and lives of our community. This intent is the framework for our Community Benefits activities.

Senior Transportation Van

One of our major Community Benefits programs is the Athol Memorial Hospital Senior Transportation Van, offering free door to door to medical appointments for seniors (65+) to access care. Many of the communities in the hospital's service area (which includes the towns of Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick and Wendell) are not served by the existing transportation and non-driving residents are dependent on family and neighbors for rides to medical appointments.

The service has grown considerably since the van began operation in March of 2002. At that time, we provided service on a limited schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and by special arrangement. Within six months service hours expanded to Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. to meet increased demand, and since July 2004, our service hours increased by an additional five hours per week (until 4 p.m. each day).

The average number of trips per month has increased to one hundred and ninety-six (196), up from last year's one hundred and forty (140), and the previous year's ninety (90) trips per month. This demonstrates the increasing value of the Athol Memorial Hospital Senior Transportation Van as a significant and reliable means of transportation for our areas seniors in providing rides to the hospital and Medical Arts Building for appointments and treatment.

The hospital maintains an internal system for ride requests, dispatch, and tracking; a dedicated phone line for ride request phone calls; and a specially trained driver to guarantee safety and demonstrate sensitivity to persons with disability issues. Publicity for the Senior Transportation Van is completely designed and produced in-house to minimize costs. In previous years, promotion has been achieved through news articles, the judicious use of advertising in local media, and distribution of brochures and flyers throughout the community. Target market opportunities, such as flyer distribution through Council on Aging programs and "The Good Life"

senior newspaper, have also been used when appropriate. During this past year, however, there has been little need for advertising or promotion, as ridership has significantly increased based on existing community awareness and “word of mouth”.

Support Group Sponsorship

The hospital provides free space and publicity to the following support groups, which are open to the public. Hospital staff members facilitate some of the groups, as indicated:

ACOA AlAnon For adults raised by alcoholic caretakers/parents.

AlAnon for family and friends of people with alcohol related issues.

ALS Support Group for people, caretakers, and family seeking help in coping with this illness.

Bereavement Support Group for people seeking a compassionate environment to help cope with the death of a loved one. Facilitated by Kate Hart, LICSW, hospital social worker.

Cancer Support Group Facilitated by the AMH Oncology Clinic’s Bonnie Frank Hume, LICSW.

Diabetes Education & Support Group offers practical information and caring, emotional support. Led by Marjorie Sobil, RD, LDN, hospital dietician.

Healthy Hearts and Lungs Club for anyone with cardiac or lung disease or at risk for developing the diseases. Facilitated by hospital staff Joyce Sawyer, BSN, and Ron Raymond, RRT.

SMART Recovery is a cognitive/rational approach to overcoming addictive behavior and maintaining abstinence. Facilitated by hospital staff member Marcia Maglione Flynn.

Smoking Cessation facilitated by Tim Sweeney, Tobacco Treatment Specialist. Athol Memorial Hospital provides a stipend to the facilitator, who is not a hospital staff member.

Healthcare Scholarship Program

Athol Memorial Hospital offers scholarships to area local area students earning a degree in healthcare related fields. The purpose of the Athol Memorial Hospital Scholarship Program is to encourage area residents to enter and train in healthcare fields. Persons working toward an Associate’s, Bachelor’s, Master’s, or other healthcare degree certification will be considered. Qualifying areas of study include nursing (RN, LPN, or CAN) clinical laboratory, radiology technologies, pharmacy, respiratory,

occupational, physical and speech therapies, and Registered Dietician, amongst others. Participation in any healthcare related field will be considered for this program. Students planning to enter, or matriculating toward, a healthcare related degree program are invited to apply.

The program is available to all residents of the North Quabbin Region, excluding current hospital staff. Hospital staff members are eligible for other hospital-sponsored programs to help with educational costs. Scholarships are awarded on a combination of academic achievement, extracurricular and community activities, references, and student's essay and not on a financial need basis.

Outreach Activities

Athol Memorial Hospital actively pursues educational and service opportunities in the community. Many hours are contributed to activities in the community such as "Wellness Week" at a local high school, health and safety fairs, and seminars on health related topics. The hospital also provides blood pressure and/or glucose and cholesterol screenings at senior clinics and community events.

Staff members visit local area schools to teach about topics such as recognizing signs and symptoms of stroke, healthy eating, and careers in healthcare. The hospital supports community initiatives such as the "Healthy Smiles" Dental Fair, Senior Health and Fitness Day, Healthy Kids Day, and is a major participant in the area's annual Food-a-thon. The hospital also sponsors "Brown Bag" medication check ups where individuals may bring in their prescriptions pharmacists to review.

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