

## **History and Background**

Athol Memorial Hospital is an independent, not-for-profit, Critical Access Hospital primarily serving the nine towns of the North Quabbin Region (Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick and Wendell).

The area's population (approximately 28,000) is dispersed over a large geographic area (357 square miles). Seven of the service area towns are sparsely populated, rural communities. The majority of the area residents live in the towns of Athol and Orange, former industrial centers where now only a few factories and major businesses remain. The service area sits across two counties, at the northwest corner of Worcester County and the northeast corner of Franklin County.

Athol Memorial Hospital is firmly rooted in the community. The Hospital opened its doors in 1950 as the result of a grassroots effort to bring healthcare services into the area. The Hospital is the region's primary acute care facility and the second largest private employer. Strong ties to the area and institution exist within the staff and patients alike, as neighbors are often caring for neighbors. This spirit of community is inherent in the Hospital's mission and has provided the framework for our Community Benefits activities to date.

In FY 2009 the Hospital contributed 9,280 hours of Community Benefits time, beyond our direct scope of services, to efforts in and for the community. This included health and wellness education; Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training (AMH is a regional training center for the American Heart Association); flu and blood pressure clinics; support for a community food drive, dental fair, senior and veteran's health fairs and other events; work force development through scholarships, externships and internships; assistance in accessing healthcare through direct referral; marketing and enrollment in health insurance programs, and the Hospital's Senior Transportation Van; providing meeting space for support groups and other community entities, and substantial emergency preparedness efforts. It was also in FY 2009 that we aggressively began working toward a formal Community Benefits Plan.

## **Community Benefits Mission Statement**

The mission of the Community Benefits Program is to encourage healthy lifestyles through outreach, education, and support to the communities we serve (Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick, and Wendell).

This underlying principle of encouraging healthy lives guides our existing Community Benefits activities and will be carried forward as we formalize our Community Benefits Plan.

### **Program Organization and Management**

The Community Benefits activities have historically been managed and monitored by the Community Relations Department. Going forward the Community Benefits Plan will be developed and overseen by a Community Benefits Advisory Committee comprised of members of the AMH Board of Trustees, hospital staff including senior administration, and community members representing target populations. The Community Benefits Advisory Committee will recommend a formal plan through the AMH Strategic Planning Committee to the Hospital's governing body, the Board of Trustees, for approval and adoption.

### **Method for Sharing Information**

Information about the Community Benefits Plan and Programs will be communicated within the institution at quarterly Outreach Committee and All Staff meetings and to the community through the sharing of the plan with community agencies, posted on the Hospital's website and through other media.

### **Key Collaborators and Partnerships**

American Heart Association  
American Red Cross  
Athol Area YMCA  
Athol Senior Center  
Athol-Royalston Regional School District  
Athol/Orange Area Rotary Club (Lifeline Program)  
Community Health Center of Franklin County  
Community Transit Services  
Franklin County Home Care Corporation  
Gardner VNA  
Health Access Physicians Network Program  
Henry Heywood Hospital (SBIRT)  
HRSA, Emergency Preparedness Consultants Massachusetts College of  
Pharmacy and Health Sciences  
Massachusetts State Office of Rural Health  
Mount Wachusett Community College (Nursing Program, Lab Program)  
North Quabbin Community Coalition  
Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District

Seeds of Solidarity

Towns of Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick, and Wendell (Councils on Aging, Emergency Preparedness)

### **Community Health Needs Assessment**

The Hospital spearheaded a Community Health Needs Assessment in 2008 for the specific purpose of identifying unmet needs in the community and to inform future Community Benefits activities. This exercise was critical to the Hospital's Community Benefits process, as an assessment had not been conducted in seven years

The Community Health Needs Assessment report was presented to the Steering Committee in September 2008. A similar Steering Committee will reconvene in another three years to direct the next Community Health Needs Assessment. The report was also presented to the Hospital's Board of Trustees at their January 2009 meeting and accepted unanimously. The Board determined that the report should be forwarded to the Hospital's Strategic Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the Hospital's Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees further determined to form a Community Benefits Advisory Committee that would review the report and recommend a Community Benefits Plan to the Strategic Planning Committee. The Community Benefits Advisory Committee will be comprised of members of the Community Health Needs Assessment Steering Committee, the Hospital Board of Trustees, Hospital staff, and community groups.

The Strategic Planning Committee met in May 2009 and reviewed the findings of the report with recommendation for the Community Benefits Advisory Committee to meet and make a recommendation for Community Benefits Plan to the Strategic Planning Committee before years end.

### **Community Benefits Plan**

As previously stated, the Hospital has not historically had a formal Community Benefits Plan in place. Current Community Benefits activities were implemented in direct response to needs stated by the prior Community Health Needs Assessment completed in 2001 and input from community members and agencies. Future reports will include the process of developing a plan, confirmation of target populations, strategies and goals. Methods for measuring outcomes and evaluating effectiveness will also be considered, as well as determining a budget, and a process for reviewing, evaluating, and updating the plan.

### **Progress Report: Activity During Reporting Year**

Expenditures for the reporting year include \$22,582 in direct expenses and 9,280 Community Benefits hours (estimated value of \$232,000), for a total contribution of \$254,582 in benefits to the community. This includes our major Community Benefits activities such as the Lifeline program and the Healthcare Scholarship Program as well as numerous health and wellness education activities, community nursing outreach includes free blood pressure screenings, flu/immunization clinics, office support for the transportation services offered with Community Transit Services, providing space for Support Groups and community agencies/groups, initiation of community wellness gardens on campus with educational seminars illustrating the benefits of homegrown fruits/vegetables contributing to better nutrition, and contributions to community agencies and events in terms of cash or materials. The hospital also takes a leadership role in community Emergency Preparedness efforts.

The Hospital's major Community Benefits activities in FY09 are as follows:

#### **Lifeline Program**

Lifeline is a personal emergency response system through which individuals in distress at their homes can contact the hospital for assistance at a discounted cost. The hospital maintains a dedicated unit in the Emergency Department to answer calls and an additional workstation and part-time staff person to administer the program. In FY09 there were 171 units in place throughout the community and the Hospital handled and processed 2,297 alerts and/or calls. The program is co-sponsored by the Athol/Orange Area Rotary Club, with patient rates heavily discounted. Set-up fees, which normally range from \$200-400 per install, and the monthly charge(\$35-50) is waived. The hospital does the set-up for free, and the monthly fee is only \$20. The hospital also provides free monitoring.

#### **Senior Transportation Van**

Due to budget cuts, the Van was eliminated in July 2009. The program was redesigned and an association with Community Transit Services, a nonprofit regional transportation authority, was developed wherein the transportation needs would be met by Community Transit Services at minimal cost with Athol Memorial Hospital maintaining the necessary internal office staff to support the rider's requests and scheduling as well as a dedicated phone line for ride request phone calls. Due to the association with Community Transit Services, services were expanded to all patients not just seniors, seeking transportation door to door for medical appointments.

Cost of Program: FY09

Driver salary and benefits	\$24,254
Gas and Maintenance	6,932
Community Transit Services Tickets	1,000
Dedicated phone line	<u>240</u>
	32,426
Less program grant received from Parmenter Trust	-12,000
Net program expenditures	\$20,426

**Health and Wellness Education**

The Hospital provides at no cost to the community many health and wellness education efforts. These include a Brown Bag Medication Check-up provided twice a year through our Pharmacy Department; Stroke Education in middle schools; collaborating with the Athol Area YMCA on girls fitness through a summer program; and participation in numerous health, safety, and wellness events; and distribution of health information materials. Presentations on the following topics were offered at various sites throughout the community: alcohol and medication issues in older adults, asthma, fall prevention, fitness and flexibility, heart attack and stroke, head lice, Lyme Disease, melanoma, MRSA, respiratory illness, and substance abuse.

Events included, but are not limited to:

- Women's Health Forum
- North Quabbin Community Health Fair
- Senior Health and Fitness Fair and workshops
- Healthy Kids Day
- As We Age Fair
- Healthy Smiles Dental Fair
- Accessing Healthcare
- AARP presentation on prevention of falls

In FY09 the Hospital also presented the second annual Hospital sponsored "Women's Health and Wellness Forum", presented in October 2009 with more than 100 participants held at a local high school.

**Community Outreach Nursing**

The Hospital employs one 26-hour per week nurse dedicated to health efforts in the community. A number of active and retired nurses affiliated with Athol Memorial Hospital also volunteer at larger events. Areas of focus are organizing, overseeing and staffing flu clinics (2,491 residents served in FY09); providing education on health related topics; and responding to health issues in the community. The Community Outreach Nurse is also a

resource for local area elementary, middle, and high schools, councils on aging, and Boards of Health.

### **Healthcare Scholarship Program**

The hospital began the scholarship program in 2006 as a workforce development initiative. The purpose of the program is to encourage local area students to enter healthcare related careers. All service area residents (excluding hospital staff), who are pursuing a clinical field, are eligible. Graduating high school students, as well as those already matriculating, are eligible. Invitations to apply are circulated at the local high school in the service area, on the hospital website, and through advertising in local media. A committee comprised of hospital staff and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees oversees the program. The program is administered by the Community Relations Department. The scholarships are based on academic performance, community service, letters of recommendation, and a student essay. The hospital awarded \$15,250 in scholarships in April 2009.

### **Support Groups**

The hospital provides meeting space and publicity at no charge to the following groups. Hospital staff members facilitate some groups, as specified\*. The hospital's Community Relations Department acts as a resource to the groups, for scheduling and coordinating, and to community members seeking group meeting spaces.

**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 members;  
**Bereavement Support Group\*** for help in coping with loss of a loved one;  
**Cancer Support Group\*** for people dealing with cancer and treatment;  
**Diabetes Education & Support Group\*** offering information and caring;  
**SMART Recovery\*** overcoming addictive behavior;  
**Smoking Cessation** facilitated by a Tobacco Treatment Specialist/stipend paid by Athol Memorial Hospital;  
**Wellness Wednesday** offering support and motivation for positive lifestyle changes such as weight control, stress reduction offered to hospital staff and community members.

The Hospital donated 400 hours worth of meeting space to these groups in FY09.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

During the past decade the hospital has designated significant resources for Emergency Preparedness, both on an institutional and community level.

We have taken a leadership role in facilitating collaboration between emergency responders in our service area towns. Representatives from Athol Memorial Hospital and the towns of the North Quabbin Region meet quarterly regarding Emergency Preparedness planning. The group, which includes town administrators, health agents, police and fire department officials, paramedics, and hospital staff, began meeting in 2004 to develop a cohesive strategy for responding to disasters in the community. Emergency Management Systems training exercises are held regularly. Numerous tabletop and full scale drills focusing on alternate care sites, mass decontamination, pandemic flu, personal protective equipment, and site evacuation have been conducted over the past few years.

Specifically in FY09 the Hospital conducted:

- Two Code Adam drills
- Code Ice drill
- Large scale decontamination drill
- Evacuation drill
- Medication dispensing site drills (2)
- Numerous on-site utility failure drills
- Four table top drills:
  - Improvised Explosive Device
  - Radiation dispersal
  - Major utility failure
  - Weather emergency

The Hospital received \$34,815 in Assistant Secretary for Preparedness funding (ASPR) to help underwrite the Hospital costs in these efforts.

### **Other activities**

Community events:

Relay for Life Cancer Walkathon  
North Quabbin Food-a-thon  
Mahar High School Cancer Walk  
Athol Council on Aging Volunteer Recognition  
Athol High School Week of Wellness seminars  
Athol High School After Prom Party  
Family Fun Day  
North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival  
Community Reading Day

Workforce development:

Athol High School Career Fair  
Internship opportunities

Externship opportunities  
Job shadows  
Mock interviews job preparation  
Hospital student tours

Other donations of funds, goods, or sponsorships for community functions:  
\$3,396.00

Use and coordination of donated space (124 hours) for community groups/activities (other than Support Groups).

In addition to the aforementioned Community Benefits activities we provide the following:

Unreimbursed Medicare Services	\$14,749,422.00
Unreimbursed MassHealth Services	7,679,922.00
Unreimbursed Health Safety Net Services	871,231.00
Services written off as part of our internal Financial Assistance Program	142,620.00
Total payment to Health Safety Net	229,214.00
Payment to cover our portion of the operational assessment of the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy	26,144.00
<b>Total Charity Care</b>	<b>\$23,698,553.00</b>

**2010 Annual Budget –**  
**Operating Revenue - \$22,316,571.00**  
**Operating Expenses - \$22,274,372.00**

**Athol Memorial Hospital's 2009 'Biennial Report'** is available online at [www.atholhospital.org](http://www.atholhospital.org).

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