



Merry Christmas Partners!

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!

Just a few things to say before the close of 2022. If you didn't have your health screening for volunteering within the hospital, please call the Employee Health Office at 715-847-2785 and set up an appointment.

A few of us have already had our health screening and found it to be very simple, just filled out a few short forms, answered a couple of questions, and had our temp and blood pressure taken. After that we were taken down to the lab waiting room for some blood work. We were told that we would be called with the results in approximately a week.

I encourage each of you to consider scheduling a health screening so we can begin volunteering within the hospital soon! We need as many of you as possible to help us with this.

If you feel you are physically unable to volunteer, either in the hospital or with fund raisers, please consider remaining as a supporting member, helping us with a monetary donation at least once a year.

If you are uncomfortable with doing the health screening, we can find other ways in which you can still help us, but we really need as many volunteers to help within the hospital as possible.

I would like to get a more realistic membership list for 2023 so it would be very helpful if you would please contact me as to how you are able to help the Partners. You can call me at 715644-3638 or email me at donnorchrist@charter.net.

The Team Spirit group usually meets monthly on the second Wednesday of each month, but they have decided to meet less often. The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 1 at noon in the conference room.

Partners will be offering their help to this group, and they in turn will help us whenever they can. I have attended several of their meetings and found them to be very informative and only last the hour because the staff has to get back to work!

I'd like to say "Thank You" to the crew that set up the Love Trees, put the lights on and are keeping the chart up. They also posted a couple of signs telling people about the Partners! The Love Lights are slowly coming in, hopefully we will make a nice profit. If you haven't sent in your Love Lights yet, please be sure to do that soon! Our total for Love Lights is moving up, but rather slowly.

I would like to plan on having a potluck sometime in the next couple of months. We won't have a "meeting", just mainly a time to be together and maybe discuss what we want to accomplish in 2023. I will let everyone know when that will happen!

Donella

Community Health Education Report

We have now entered the influenza season while continuing to manage another virus, COVID-19. Vaccines and vaccine boosters are recommended as the front-line defense against these illnesses. The Partners of WHA State Convention was a “booster” for me. To meet more of my volunteer colleagues in person—to receive a hug, a handshake—that human touch so vital to our well-being.

Several convention workshops included a variety of health-related topics, such as joint pain, behavioral/mental health, aging, cardiovascular disease, toxic chemicals, pelvic health, end-of-life conversations, and medication use. An early morning CHE Special Interest meeting was held with good attendance and great participation! The Wheel of Knowledge activity on infectious diseases along with giveaways added fun to the discussion on challenges the CHE chairs are facing.

The last in a series of community health education articles, Common Infectious Diseases-Series 6, covers some of the more common sexually transmitted diseases/infections and Polio. You can find this information on the Partners of WHA website under Health Education.

My term as state CHE chair for Partners of WHA is coming to an end. I have thoroughly enjoyed the role of educator to help inform volunteers and their leaders on health topics related to infectious diseases. A heartfelt “thank you” for your support, interest, and feedback!

Wishing you the best of health today, tomorrow, and in the days ahead!

Sue Schuelke, CHE Chair -

Email: sschuelk@charter.net Copied from “Partners of WHA” November 2022 Newsletter

Public Policy Education Report

The CEO Panel discussion at the Partners conventions has always offered important insights on the operation of the Wisconsin health care system. The makeup of this year’s panel was quite unique, given the young ages and tenure of the participants at their current organizations. Participants included Kyle Nondorf, president and CEO, SSM St. Mary’s Hospital, Madison; Christopher Brophy, CEO, Crossing Rivers Health, Prairie du Chien; David Hartberg, CEO, Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua; and Carl Selvick, CEO, Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls.

The physical and emotional impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on professional caregivers was one issue that was addressed. The panel stated how their entire staff has been impacted both physically and emotionally. Part of this physical and emotional stress was a result of the trauma and timely treatment needed by many patients requiring hospitalization. This challenge to staff meant that more hospital beds were needed, and a multitude of patients required post-treatment convalescence. This was occurring at the same time nursing homes were changing their patient transfer policies. As a result, hospitals were required to “house” patients for an extended period. One critical access hospital reported a patient remaining in their emergency department for almost two days. Black River Memorial Hospital was overwhelmed by 10,000 Afghan refugees housed at Ft. McCoy. Added to that were over 300 births! All this has been impacted by the largest vacancy rate in the registered nursing profession since 2005.

“Allowing licensed professionals to practice to the top of their license” is an ongoing challenge and initiative to which WHA is deeply engaged. This is of particular significance in clinical settings where it has been estimated that up to 80% of medical professional time may

be spent performing nonprofessional activities that do not require the level of training acquired by a physician.

The financial stress on hospitals resulting from the pandemic is another question of considerable importance. Unlike other “non-health care” related businesses, hospitals are not structured to pass on all costs to the consumer. Some comments on those projected costs include: 1) a 50% negative balance on hospital balance sheets; 2) 15% labor cost increases; and 3) increased supply chain costs of over 14%. In addition, during the pandemic all hospitals incurred an increased cost for labor. This was especially true where “traveling nurses” were needed to fill the void of those retiring or seeking less stressful jobs with similar compensation. Added to this is the expectation for continuing wage inflation in health care in two years that would otherwise occur in eight years. These are costs not covered by either Medicare or Medicaid.

One bright light during this time perhaps, was the advancement of telemedicine, particularly in rural areas, and for the behavioral health services that were made available.

The value of volunteers was expressed by each of the panelists. One panelist acknowledged the positive impact of his volunteer organization in the delivery of masks to not only staff, but in making and distributing special masks for children. His decision to join that hospital’s administrative team was positively influenced by the value of volunteers. Another panelist noted the significance in the “Power of Presence” brought forward by the efforts of the volunteers. Through our collective efforts, volunteers bring hope to those who so desperately need just that.

Bill McCullough, PPE Chair

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New Officers Elected

At the 2022 convention, new officers were elected and installed. Officers for January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024 are: Sharon Scott, president; Patsy Pippen, president-elect; Iva Mulhern, secretary; and John Tully, treasurer.

All have been members of Partners of WHA for many years, being involved at the local, district and state levels. Their installation was a visible demonstration of their commitment and dedication to our organization.

Our thanks to these individuals for accepting their leadership positions. With dedicated officers and interested members working toward growth, I am confident we will achieve much success in the years ahead.

Congratulations and best wishes to the new officers.

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Convention 2022 Wrap-up

Partners Convention 2022 was held October 11-13 at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. It was great to be back in person and renew the friendships we have missed. The Theme “Volunteers, Helping Hands, Touching Hearts” was carried throughout. Our keynote speaker, Neil Ihde, was wonderfully uplifting. There were many terrific workshops. The vendors, hospital displays, raffle, and silent auction, were again popular stops. The CEO Panel gave us all interesting perspectives on issues our hospitals are facing. Heather Whittaker, our closing speaker, sent us on our way with a joyful message.

The Wisconsin Awards for Volunteer Excellence (WAVE) were presented, as was the Best of the Best Award. The election and installation of officers was held with Sharon Scott as president; Patsy Pippin, president-elect; John Tully, treasurer; and Iva Mulhern, secretary. Jan Molaska and Peg Larson were honored as outgoing presidents. Betty Oddo invited everyone to Convention 2023, October 3-5 in Stevens Point.

A huge thank you to the local organizations of the Western District for their work preparing for Convention 2022.

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