

*PARTNERS OF WHA is committed to advocating for the health of our communities and advancing the success of local health care volunteer organizations, through the coordination and provision of volunteer education, development resources, and leadership opportunities for health care volunteers and their organizations.*

## A Message from the Partners of WHA President

### Greetings, Partners!



Sharon Scott

Welcome to 2023! Although the Christmas ornaments have been safely packed away for several weeks, my hope is the spirit of Christmas will remain with us throughout the year and 2023 will bring goodwill and a joyful journey full of wonderful possibilities!

I am so honored, excited, and a bit nervous to begin my term as your state Partners President.

Following in the footsteps of the 29 past presidents is rather intimidating—each had the tenacity and integrity to place their “signature” on setting goals and diffusing difficulties to sustain our great organization, Partners of WHA. Thank you for entrusting me to place my “signature” alongside these awesome past presidents.

During 2022 we experienced so many “doors” re-opening for Partners and “adolescent” steps taken toward a new normal. Naming a few—many paused volunteers returned to their activities within hospitals, a successful in-person Gift Shop and Fundraising Symposium was held in May, several volunteers “heeded the call” and stepped forward into leadership roles, two webinars offered on volunteerism by the consortium leadership group “Power of Connection” (volunteers/leaders from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa) attended by a number of our own Partners volunteers/leaders, and of course a small but very successful return to an in-person state convention in October.

Although we realized significant positive steps in 2022, there is work to be done as we face the changes and challenges confronting our organization in 2023. I so appreciate the conversations regarding your concerns. If there is any consolation, the overwhelming “theme” is anxiety, confusion, uncertainty regarding hospital support, and of course, declining membership along with fewer volunteer leaders stepping forward. Honestly, I don’t have the answers, but I do have some simple thoughts that may begin the process toward reasonable solutions, and if I can count on your support, together we can renew/refresh our Partners organization at all levels.

- Perhaps concentrating on maintaining our current membership with the powerful tool of communication—

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## A Message from the President-Elect

### Moving Forward

We see change all around us. What our state, district and local organizations have looked like in the past may not be what they will look like in the future. There are challenges ahead. We may need to look around



Patsy Pippin

our communities and extend our hospital/health care volunteer hands to local nursing homes, senior centers, meals-on-wheels programs, and even our local libraries and schools. One thing is certain, volunteers are needed and appreciated every day.

Partners district leaders and local members are the backbone of the organization. A big thank you to all of you. I am looking forward to seeing each of you on Spring Tour. Thanks to everyone for putting your trust in me as president-elect. My heart is truly in Partners of WHA.

I would like to thank Iva Mulhern for working with me on the Partners 2022 Convention. Thank you to the western district locals, the Chula Vista staff and Wisconsin Welcome Center.

Here are some of the financial figures from our convention. The 39 items donated for our silent auction raised \$2,025; the 50/50 raffle brought in \$1,334, and raffle ticket sales amounted to \$1,895.

We received positive feedback on our keynote speaker, breakout sessions, and closing speaker. Other comments included: food portions were too big,

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**A Message from the President...continued from page 1**

memberships can grow when we share our motivation and enthusiasm supporting the organization with others—that old “power of 1+1+1” attitude.

- Perhaps becoming more flexible—our by-laws are certainly solid, and structure is very important in our rather large organization, but might we consider the flexibility to revise language to meet our current needs?—NOT a complete overhaul.
- Let’s not be afraid to change. “It is possible to change, if we have the belief we can.” Yes, Partners survived the pandemic; however, we have reappeared much differently than three years ago. The question before us is, “Are we ready, willing, and able to adapt to the challenges of change?” Opportunities are “out there.” Are you ready to embrace the belief we can change and work toward solutions?

In closing, thank you again for entrusting me with this role of state Partners President. I have a full calendar of events coming very soon. February the state Partners Board of Directors will meet, and I’m excited to work with this group of leaders. April brings the start of Spring Tour. I’m so looking forward to traveling to the seven in-person district meetings and seeing so many familiar and new faces. April will also feature an in-person Advocacy Day. I offer any and all support to our Convention Chair Betty Oddo and her team—an exciting time as I begin my journey in this new position.

The thought I leave...

**WORRYING**

**Is a total waste of time.**

**It doesn’t change anything.**

**It messes with your mind and steals your happiness.**

**May we all worry less and enjoy our happiness more—together we will find solutions and continue to move Partners forward.**

Sharon Scott

262-334-6296 (H); 262-707-3159 (C)

Email: [Dick-sharon-scott@prodiqy.net](mailto:Dick-sharon-scott@prodiqy.net)

**A Message from the President-Elect...cont’d. from page 1**

needed better microphone/sound system quality, room temperatures were cold. Suggestions that were made for future conventions included: having handouts available at displays, arranging workshops on bone health, nutrition, eye health, wellness, and mental health. Working together we can continue to provide excellent education and networking opportunities at our Partners conventions.

UNITY IS STRENGTH.

Patsy Pippin

Email: [pat8apippin@gmail.com](mailto:pat8apippin@gmail.com)

**Spring Tour Schedule**

The spring travel team will have the opportunity to take in a large portion of our beautiful state during April and May. In order to be as efficient and financially responsible as possible, the district meetings have been grouped according to their respective locations. All seven meetings will be in person. The traveling team is comprised of the State President Sharon Scott, State President-Elect Patsy Pippin, State Community Health Chair Cindy Hermel, and State Public Policy Chair Bill McCullough.

April 11	West Central District, Chippewa Falls
April 12	Northwestern District, Park Falls
April 13	North Central District, TBD
April 25	Western District, La Crosse
April 26	Southern District, Baraboo
May 1	Southeastern District, Brookfield
May 2	Lakes District, Green Bay

## Advocacy Day 2023 Registration Now Open

After three years, WHA's annual Advocacy Day will be in-person on **Wednesday, April 19** at the Monona Terrace in Madison! [Registration is now open](#). There is no cost to attend Advocacy Day, but pre-registration is required.

Advocacy Day is one of the best ways hospital employees, trustees and volunteers can make an important, visible impact in the state capitol. Meeting with your legislators and speaking on your hospital's behalf during Advocacy Day is essential to educating legislators on hospital and health care issues.

Advocacy Day 2023 promises a great lineup of speakers and sessions, including a keynote speaker (to be announced), the popular bipartisan legislative panel discussion, followed by a luncheon keynote address from Gov. Tony Evers (invited). A highlight of Advocacy Day is the hundreds of attendees who take what they've learned during the morning and then meet with their legislators in the state capitol in the afternoon.

Assemble your hospital contingent for 2023 Advocacy Day—April 19. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Join more than 1,000 of your peers from across the state to help make this year's Advocacy Day the best one yet!

For questions regarding Advocacy Day, contact WHA Vice President of External Affairs [Kari Hofer](#) at [khofer@wha.org](mailto:khofer@wha.org). For registration questions, contact WHA Education Coordinator [Maria Stuessy](#) at [mstuessy@wha.org](mailto:mstuessy@wha.org).



### Messages from Partners Newly Elected Officers

Ready or not 2023 is upon us. It seems we are already in high gear with our spring board meeting right around the corner. Our local Partners groups are busy as we get back in the swing of things in a hurry.

I am Iva Mulhern, the newly elected state secretary. I am from Prairie du Chien, a member of Partners of Crossing Rivers Health, and a member of the Western District. I have previously served as secretary/treasurer at the district level, have been in many roles at the local level, and most recently, was co-chair of convention 2022 with Patsy Pippin. I feel the organizational skills I have learned over the years will help in this new undertaking. I look forward to serving as your state secretary.



*Iva Mulhern*

*Iva Mulhern, Secretary, Partners of WHA*  
Email: [ijmulhern@mchsi.com](mailto:ijmulhern@mchsi.com)

My name is John Tully. I am starting my second term as treasurer of Partners of WHA. My duties as state treasurer include paying the bills, providing financial reports to the board of directors, and billing the districts for membership dues. I file reports with the state of Wisconsin and tax returns with the IRS. I also prepare the budget and am responsible for maintaining insurance for Partners and a bond on the state treasurer. I keep tabs on our organization's investments, and with help from the executive board, make necessary changes.



*John Tully*

I am originally from Minnesota. Go Vikings! I currently volunteer at Marshfield Medical Center in Rice Lake and Cumberland Healthcare. I have served as president of the volunteers at Rice Lake; secretary/treasurer, chair-elect, and district chair for the West Central district; and 2017 state convention chair.

*John Tully, Treasurer, Partners of WHA*  
Email: [baldduck@citizens-tel.net](mailto:baldduck@citizens-tel.net)

## Community Health Education Report

### *Mental Health is a Crisis*



Cindy Hermel

Ninety percent of United States adults say mental health is a crisis in America, according to an October 2022 CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation poll. *The State of Mental Health in America Report* (2022) confirms the trend in mental health has continued to worsen since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fifty million Americans, (19.86%) have been diagnosed with a mental illness. Of this number, 4.91% have a severe mental illness. A severe mental health disorder is defined as one or more mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder(s) resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

Wisconsin ranks 20th among American states with 20.19% of its adults experiencing a mental illness. This equates to 904,000 Wisconsin residents. States' prevalence of adult mental illness ranges from a low of 16.37% in New Jersey to a high of 26.86% in Utah.

Unfortunately, 16.5% of U.S. children (ages 6 to 17) or 7.7 million, report suffering from at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year. The number of young people experiencing MDE increased over the 2020 dataset. Fifty percent of mental illness begins by age 14. Additionally, two-thirds of psychologists reported seeing an increase in the severity of symptoms among all patients in 2022.

The increase in mental health cases can be attributed, in part, to the rise of social media use, the COVID-19 pandemic, and social trends resulting in smaller family units and less community involvement. In addition, early adverse traumatic experiences, ongoing critical medical conditions, chemical imbalances in the brain and use of alcohol and drugs can be risk factors for mental health issues.

Nearly half of all Americans struggling with their mental health are untreated due to a lack of health care or a lack of knowledge about how to treat their condition. In addition, there is a significant shortage of mental health care providers. In the United States there are an estimated 350 individuals for every one provider.

Over the next two years we will explore many facets of mental health: What are the most common forms of mental illness and what symptoms are consistent with each? What are the causes of mental illness? What are recommended treatments? What can we do to monitor our own mental health and what strategies and techniques can we use to nurture resiliency and good mental health? Who can we partner with to influence positive change in mental health public policy? I look forward to working and learning with you.

Cindy Hermel, Community Health Education Chair  
715-848-3322(H); 715-573-0720(C)  
Email: [clhermel@hotmail.com](mailto:clhermel@hotmail.com)

## Starting Fresh



Leigh Ann Larson

Happy New Year! The beginning of the year is a great time to look forward with hope, fresh eyes, and excited anticipation! This is how I feel when I think about the year ahead and all that 2023 will offer.

It has been three years since the Partners of WHA Board of Directors have met in person at the WHA offices. Their annual spring board meeting will take place in February and we are already underway with preparations. This will be my first in-person spring board meeting that I will attend. This meeting will set the tone for the year, as well as the years to come. A major component of the meeting will be strategic planning. I will assist the group with this, providing some structure to the process and providing context as it relates to WHA priorities.

The measure of success with the meeting, in my opinion, will be the level of engagement, input, and volunteering of roles and responsibilities that takes place. At the end of the day, it is through these efforts that will give us a fresh start to the new year.

If you are interested in becoming more active with Partners of WHA, please contact Partners of WHA President [Sharon Scott](#) or me at the email listed below. Thank you.

Leigh Ann S. Larson, WHA Vice President of Education and Marketing; Executive Director of the WHA Foundation; Partners of WHA Liaison  
Email: [llarson@wha.org](mailto:llarson@wha.org)

## A Tribute to Kay Lyndahl, Newsletter Editor Extraordinaire

Kay Lyndahl has retired as Partners of WHA Newsletter Editor, having served for 18 years. We are so grateful for her dedication and untiring effort.

Kay's interest in journalism began in high school, continued through college and post-college. She used her copy-editing skills throughout her career and during her involvement with various volunteer organizations. Kay served as the editor of the Bellin (Green Bay) volunteer newsletter which then led to her statewide role.

Originally, officers and members snail-mailed articles to Kay for editing, so it was important to keep track of her travel schedule between Wisconsin and Florida. Gradually, articles were submitted electronically. Kay edited newsletter content to ensure that all the important information could be included in each issue. She scoured local and district newsletters to be sure that great ideas were passed on to other members. Kay's talent and generosity have made a tremendous difference for all Partners.

Past Presidents had this to say about Kay...

*Peg Larson, Partners of WHA President, 2021-2022*

"Throughout Kay's tenure, she kept to very tight deadlines. She was also gracious about including my information in the space that was left. Thank you, Kay, for all the wonderful talent you shared over the years. We could not have done it without you."

*Sue Lynch, Partners of WHA President, 2013-2014*

"Over the years Kay has done a fabulous job with the newsletter for Partners. I appreciate all the years she has served and her ongoing commitment to excellence. A well-deserved retirement, Kay. You will be missed by many who always enjoyed reading your work."

*Ann Bergmann, Partners of WHA President, 2009-2010*

"Kay has been a fixture of Partners of WHA. Behind the scenes she put together a great looking piece of interesting material. Whether she was in Wisconsin or Florida the newsletter was created and published at deadline time! Kay was a joy to work with. Happy retirement!"

## Public Policy Education Report

The American Hospital Association (AHA) has issued a new report showing how drug companies' unlawful actions on the 340B Drug Pricing Program are harming both hospitals and patients. To better understand this topic, we need to go back to 1992 when Congress created the 340B Drug Pricing Program to allow providers that treat high numbers of uninsured and low-income patients the ability to purchase certain outpatient drugs at discounted prices and use those savings to "stretch scarce federal resources as far as possible, reaching more eligible patients and providing more comprehensive services." For 30 years, the program has been a critical lifeline for many eligible providers and their patients, especially in the face of chronic underpayments from both Medicare and Medicaid.

An AHA report in April 2022 revealed the results of a brief survey of more than 300 hospitals and health systems to understand the financial and operational impact of drug company's actions to limit 340B pricing to 340B hospitals with community and specialty pharmacies. There are over 1,300 critical care hospitals in the U.S., roughly 21% in the states surrounding and including Wisconsin.

Following are results of that survey.

1. The average 340B critical access hospital (CAH), hospitals with 25 or fewer beds serving rural communities, reported losses of approximately \$507,000 while the average 340B disproportionate share hospital (DSH), reported losses of \$2.96 million. CAHs represented 45% of the survey respondents and DSHs represented 43% of the respondents.
2. On average, CAHs reported 44% of their total savings came from the 340B Program via the community and specialty pharmacies.
3. Overall, 10% of responding hospitals reported \$10 million or more in financial impact, which indicated the magnitude of the harm that drug companies' actions have laid on the 340B hospitals and their ability to care for their patients.

On November 14, 2022, the AHA issued a new report showing how pharmaceutical companies' actions



*Bill McCullough*

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HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital's Wonderland on the River, Nov. 2022

## Around the State

**Volunteer Partners of HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls,** held the 11th Annual Wonderland on the River in November 2022 after a two-year hiatus. Beautifully created tablescapes, a delicious lunch, high school musical entertainment, an inspiring speaker, raffle prizes, and fashion preview raised close to \$5,500. The funds raised this year will support HSHS St. Joseph's mental and behavioral health initiative.

Santa and Mrs. Claus were on site at **Froedtert West Bend Hospital** for the annual poinsettia and lap blanket delivery on December 21, 2022. Poinsettias were purchased from funds raised through volunteer special fundraisers and Well Wisher Gift Shop proceeds. Talented volunteer sewers and knitters provided just over 40 blankets for patients hospitalized over the holidays.

**Gundersen Partners, La Crosse** volunteers provide seamstresses to sew small 8" x 8" squares of cotton or flannel requested by Inpatient Behavioral Health. These "Comfort Cloths" assist patients struggling with anxiety and help soothe their sensory needs. Volunteers have sewn over 1,000 Comfort Cloths that have been given to patients.

### Public Policy Education Report...continued from page 5

continue to unlawfully deny discounts at 340B hospitals and community contract pharmacies and have taken a major toll on the hospitals and the patients they serve, particularly CAHs.

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in August of 2022 will hopefully stem the tide of unlawful pricing actions taken by the drug manufacturing industry. There are two powers granted under this legislation. One, to address the ability of the federal government to negotiate deep discounts directly with drug makers for some of the drugs that cost Medicare the most. Drugs here must be among the 100 most costly to Medicare.

The second power given to Medicare is known as the "inflation rebate." This provision has precedent with Medicaid, which covers over 82 million low-income Americans where the inflation rebate has been used over the past 30 years. The significance of this provision is that it applies to Medicare as well and will take full effect in 2023 with Medicare planning to collect rebate payments for some drugs as early as April 2023. The Congressional Budget Office released numbers in September estimating a savings to Medicare of \$170 billion over the next decade.

Although the Inflation Reduction Act is now law, the details will not be determined until the process known as Rulemaking & Guidance. It is in that process that the price will be negotiated with resulting strong lobbying efforts by that industry.

Progress for sure, but long overdue! Stay tuned.

Bill McCullough, PPE Chair  
Email: [webirish2@gmail.com](mailto:webirish2@gmail.com)

### Reaching Out Deadlines

Issue	Deadline
May 2023	Fri., April 14, 2023
August 2023	Fri., July 14, 2023
November 2023	Fri., Oct. 13, 2023

Partners *Reaching Out* is published four times a year by Partners of Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc. Visit the Partners website at [www.partnersofwha.org](http://www.partnersofwha.org). Direct questions or comments to:

Julie Steiner  
219 E. South St.  
Viroqua, WI 54665  
Phone: 608-606-0892  
Email: [steinerfam@mwt.net](mailto:steinerfam@mwt.net)