

Western District Spring Newsletter
Spring 2025

District Chair updates:

Welcome Spring! Even though the weather has been a rollercoaster lately, it is so good to see green grass green buds on trees and bushes, and tulips and daffodils starting to bloom. I have always loved the newness of spring. A new beginning full of new life.

At our spring Western District meeting on April 23, 2025, hosted by the Friends of Vernon Memorial Healthcare we elected new officers.

Cindy Chicker-Chair/1st 2-year term (Partners of Richland Center)

Ellen Zwirlien-Secretary/2nd 2-year term (Partners of Crossing River Health)

Pat Franks-Treasurer/2nd 2-year term (Partners of Black River Hospital)

Ruth Skelly-Community Health Educator (Partners of Crossing River Health)

We continue to have open vacancies for chair elect and public policy educator. I encourage you to discuss in your local organizations to find individuals to serve these positions. Having a full slate of leaders is essential in continuing the business of what we do as Partners of WHA on a local, district, and state level.

Our spring meeting was a dynamic day filled with great information, conversation, and motivation. We had a wonderful cooking demonstration for the program, that left us all with some recipes and ideas of “intuitive eating”. We were also joined by the State WHA Partners president Julie Steiner, and president-elect Cindy Hermel. Every spring the state board visit the districts to give an update. We were updated about the importance of WHA Partners and the benefits from belonging. The officers also shared information about reformatting the upcoming annual convention. In response to feedback received from members a new format is being planned for the convention which will be held October 7-8, 2025, at Stoney Creek Inn in LaCrosse, WI. More information will be shared regarding speakers and plans for the day.

We also discussed leadership and membership issues. The state WHA Partners developed last fall an at-large membership option to assist those volunteers who may no longer have a local organization. The board has received 3 applications for membership thus far. Discussion also centered around declining local memberships and we were all encouraged to ask someone to come to a meeting. Sometimes a simple ask is all that is needed to encourage others to join.

We all need to be ambassadors of our local, district, and state organization.

We also had a suggestion at the fall district meeting of bringing back the tradition of having the district pay the expense of attending the fall convention with a drawing of those attending the spring meeting. Patsy Pipping won the drawing and will be attending the fall convention.

Leadership can be intimidating, but please consider getting involved in your local, or district level. For me personally, volunteering to the district chair-elect 6 years ago has given me new friendships and opportunities to serve with a wonderful group of people. This is my last newsletter as the western district chair. I became district during 2020, none of knew what we were doing, or how we would emerge from the pandemic. I can tell you that I never felt overwhelmed, because I had the support and guidance of so many. I have never been a part of such a supportive and inclusive group. I encourage and challenge you all to take a chance and step into a role of leadership on the local or district level We need to have leaders to step into

these roles to have our groups remain sustainable. If we don't have officers, we will not be able to continue the important work we do. The urgency and need are real.

I would like to thank the Western District for your dedication to your local, district, and state events. We are a strong and large district and have many gifts to share. You do a wonderful job serving your hospitals and supporting WHA Partners mission and work.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your district chair these past 4 years. You will be in very capable hands with Cindy Chicker. Please help and support her as she begins her new role.

Advocacy Day:

Advocacy Day was held April 9th, 2025 in Madison, WI. 1200 health care leaders, providers, hospital staff, trustees, and volunteers attended the annual event. It was the largest Advocacy Day in WHA's history. Matt LaFleur, coach of the Green Bay Packers participated in a fireside chat with WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. A bipartisan panel was part of the morning, and our luncheon speaker was Department of Health Services Deputy Secretary Deb Standbridge. To end the day attendees had the opportunity to meet with their state legislators to provide specific examples of how hospital are providing access to high quality health care in Wisconsin communities. It was a great day! If you did not attend this year, please join next year, February 25, 2026.

News from Districts:

- The Boscobel Partners group is struggling with having volunteers and having them step into leadership roles. Their CEO and Foundation director have taken on the challenge and are wanting to keep their partners connection. The State and Western District officers have offered them assist and guidance.
- Gundersen Partners are celebrating 75 years of serving their hospital! In honor of this they are giving a financial gift to their hospital to support the EmPATH program. EmPATH units deliver acute interventions for behavioral healthcare patients by moving them out of hectic emergency departments into a calm and therapeutic setting. This unit will be the first of its kind in Wisconsin. The unit is expected to open early 2026.
- The Friends of Vernon Memorial Healthcare have funded a Nustep for therapies, a respiratory support device, and funds for the "Bundles of Joy" project. They also have several fundraisers coming up, including Geranium sales, Memorial flag sale, Nutman Sale and Brat Sale.

Reminders:

Local presidents please remember to bring a report of your organization activities to the spring and fall district meetings. With getting out of practice since the shutdowns, it is just a gentle reminder of this requirement. It assists with adding information for the newsletter and helps us celebrate your successes or lift you up in your struggles.

Upcoming Dates:

- WAVE award applications are due July 25, 2025. See WHA Partners website for application.
- Fall Convention October 7-8, 2025, at Stoney Creek Inn LaCrosse, WI

Enjoy your spring and summer. Take time to enjoy the beauty around you. Thank you for your support and dedication to the WHA Partners.

With gratitude,
Donna Nelson
Western District Chair