

*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

### Strengthening Member Relationships Takes Teamwork



Sharon Scott

I'm sure the "child" in each of us bemoans how quickly this summer is passing. I hated fractions, so my dad cleverly patterned the summer months so I might "see" how fractions work. He divided the summer months into fractional units— $1/3$  = Memorial Day,  $2/3$  = 4th of July and  $3/3$  or  $1$  = Labor Day. Even at my "seasoned age" I hate the thought that summer is nearly over. I do hope good times and memories are being made for each of you.

There is no question membership continues to be a major issue for Partners. Losing the wonderful volunteers (approximately 200) from Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, and St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls through the closing of their hospitals was a blow to Partners, but more significantly to the volunteers. The volunteers were active in leadership roles for Partners and significant service/fundraising for their respective hospitals. Unfortunately, members from Partners of Stoughton Hospital, Southern District and Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, Southeastern District have voted to rescind their membership with Partners of WHA. Thank you, **Julie Steiner**, President-Elect, **Terri Donlin**, Southern District Chair, and **Sue Schuelke**, Southeastern District for reaching out to the two groups. Although the final decision was difficult, we do respect it and wish the groups continued success within their hospitals. At a future time, we will welcome their return to our organization.

For every disappointment there is a positive to be found. I am extremely proud of the collaborative vision of **Donella Christenson**, **Ginny Bosse**, **Ann Bergmann**, **Ramona Hornischer**, **Lynn Krohn**, **John Tully**, **Julie Steiner**, **Peg Larson**, and **myself** to bring together three struggling districts—West Central, Northwestern, and North Central—into one district. Per procedure, as Partners State President, I have received their letter of intent stating the will of their seven local organizations to merge into one

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## A Message from the President-elect

### Have a Heart for Partners

It's been a busy summer for Partner's leadership—assisting with the merger of three districts, corresponding and meeting with member groups who are choosing to drop their membership in Partners, and working to fill leadership positions at both the state and district levels.



Julie Steiner

West Central, Northwestern and West Central Districts are awaiting approval of their request to merge into a new Northern District comprised of seven local organizations, namely Stanley, Cumberland, Ladysmith, Park Falls, Wausau, Merrill, and Medford. The Partners Board will be voting on this merger request and Donella Christianson and Ramona Hornischer will serve as co-chairs of the new district, each having one year left in their current term as District Chair(s). Ann Bergmann will serve as Chair-elect of the new district. Remaining district leadership roles are currently being recruited.

We have been hard hit with a decrease in member organizations. The biggest factor for this is the inability of locals to maintain and recruit members and leaders. Unfortunately, there is no magic formula to curb this trend. As many of us baby boomers and traditionalists choose to cut back or retire from volunteering, there is no

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

district carrying the Northern District name. Completing the formal merger will take place during the October Partners Board of Directors meeting.

Housekeeping issues include:

1. I am extending the **Mary Licht** convention scholarship deadline to September 1. The criteria and application form are available on the Partners website--- [Partnersofwha.org](http://Partnersofwha.org) under the forms tab. The 2023 convention awarded three scholarships with two recipients attending.
2. This is election year for our organization. Please consider expanding your leadership role. Direct questions to Immediate Past President Peg Larson at [pegvoluntr@hotmail.com](mailto:pegvoluntr@hotmail.com) or 920-420-2482.
3. During the Annual General Membership meeting, the new By-Law addressing Members-at-Large will be presented for approval.
4. Convention 2024 is a short three months away--- **October 1-3**, Holiday Inn, Stevens Point. Please encourage your members to attend.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks for the many cards, texts, and prayers extended to me. My treatments have gone well, and the weekly labs show superior results. I have reached the remission phase. Going forward to cure my Leukemia, I will receive a Bone Marrow transplant on August 22. My donor is our daughter, Cathy. In the weeks leading up to my hospitalization, I will continue to address all issues regarding Partners. Due to the intensity of this procedure and the follow up care, I will be hospitalized for approximately 4 ½ weeks. My biggest concern/disappointment involves attending convention. I will be there in spirit but unable to attend in person.

*Make a habit of reaching out to people  
just because they crossed your mind.*

Sharon Scott

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*A Message from the President-Elect  
(cont'd. from page 1)*

one to pick up the slack. Locals are choosing to focus their efforts on serving their hospitals and are discontinuing their membership in Partners. We need to work together to develop a retention strategy that fits changing member needs and interests for all levels of our organization and one that allows us to connect with a younger demographic.

Partners is looking for district leaders in both the Lakes and Southeastern Districts. Lois Kreeger and Sue Schuelke have served us well in their district chair leadership roles, but they have opted to step down. Thus far their attempts to find replacements for their positions have been unsuccessful. As a district chair your duties include serving on the State Board of Directors as a voting member; presiding over district meetings; and maintaining communication with local presidents. A complete job description may be found at [www.partnersofwha.org/leadership-handbook](http://www.partnersofwha.org/leadership-handbook) article 14.3.

At the state level the nominating committee continues to seek candidates for President-elect, Secretary and Treasurer. Job descriptions for these positions may be found at [www.partnersofwha.org/leadership-handbook](http://www.partnersofwha.org/leadership-handbook) article 14.1.

If you are passionate about the future of Partners, we need you! Yes, leadership roles come with higher responsibilities and expectations, but if you have a heart for Partners and a passion for our mission, you will be a welcome addition to our leadership team.

Julie Steiner, Partners President-elect

Email: [steinerfam@mwt.net](mailto:steinerfam@mwt.net)

## Thank you Vernon Memorial Healthcare and Friends of VMH

Partners of WHA recently received a very generous donation of \$2,000 from Friends of Vernon Memorial Healthcare (VMH) and \$1,000 from Vernon Memorial Healthcare. This was totally unexpected and very much appreciated. It will help us continue our mission of providing education, training, and support to all our Partner members across the state of Wisconsin. In a time of cutbacks and reorganization it is extremely pleasant to have organizations who are willing and able to step up and go against the norm.

Accompanying the donation was a letter expressing gratitude for the “invaluable support and dedication” that Partners has provided to not only VMH but to hospital volunteer organizations across the state. The letter further stated, “This financial gift is intended to help support the incredible work you continue to do. Your organization’s dedication to service and care aligns with our values and we are honored to support your endeavors.”

## Partners of WHA, Inc. President's Annual Compiled Districts Report

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023	
Districts reporting	7
Member organizations	43
Member organizations reporting	31
Total individuals in member organizations (adults and teens)	3,775
Hours of service	285,235
Number of fundraising projects	74
Total dollars donated to hospitals or others	\$930,770
Scholarships given - number	136
Scholarships given - dollars	\$233,500
Number of legislative contacts	910
Number of public policy newsletter articles	58
Number of health education projects	30
Number of health education newsletter articles	86

### Bylaws Change Proposed

A proposal will be brought to the general membership meeting during our October convention with language changes that will add a Member-at-Large membership status as recommended by the Strategic Planning and By-Laws committees. The Partners board proposes to revise:

#### 4.1 Eligible MEMBERS to read:

- a. Membership in Partners of WHA shall be open to all organized groups of healthcare volunteers.
- b. Members-at-large are individual volunteers, not a member of an organized group of healthcare volunteers in the State of Wisconsin who wish to be a part of Wisconsin Partners.

#### 4.2 Approval of MEMBERS and Members-at-large. In order to become a member or member-at-large, an applicant that satisfies the requirements in Section 4.1 must:

- a. Submit an application for membership to the President or Secretary in writing and on forms provided by Partners.
- b. Be approved by a majority vote of the Executive Committee, which approval may be withheld in the Executive Committee's reasonable discretion; and
- c. Pay the prescribed annual dues.

#### 4.5 Voting Delegates

- a. Each MEMBER shall be entitled to two (2) voting delegates (each a "Member Voting Delegate").
- b. Each member-at-large shall be entitled to one (1) vote.

10.5 Each Member Voting Delegate, Member-at-large, and Special Voter shall be entitled to one (1) vote on matters in which Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-large and Special Voters are entitled to vote. Current Partners Voting Directors and all past presidents of Partners are collectively, the "Special Voters."

10.6 Quorum. Upon proper notice of the Annual Meeting or a special meeting, a majority of the Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-large, and Special Voters entitled to vote at the meeting, represented in person, shall constitute a quorum. If a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of the majority of the Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-Large, and Special Voters represented at the meeting and entitled to vote on the subject matter shall be the act of the MEMBERS unless the vote of a greater number is expressly required by law, these Bylaws, or the Articles of Incorporation.

If you have questions about these proposed changes, contact any member of the Bylaws Committee: Julie Steiner, Sharon Scott, Iva Mulhern, John Tully, Donna Nelson, Terri Donlin, Ginny Bosse, Peg Larson, Robert Schuck.

A Message from the Immediate Past President

## Nominees Sought for Partners Leadership



Peg Larson

The Nominating Committee of Partners of WHA is seeking candidates to represent all members of the organization in the offices of President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Nominations for these three offices will be accepted until September 1, 2024.

**Qualifications/Prerequisites:** Candidates must be a member of Partners of WHA, have served on the Partners of WHA State Board for at least one year, be able to attend two Board of Directors meetings per year and attend the Partners annual convention.

**Process to apply:** Nominations need to be submitted by September 1, 2024, to Peg Larson, chair of the Nominating Committee. Election and installation of new officers will be held on October 2 at the Partners annual convention. Nominations must include the nomination form (found on the Forms page in the Resource Center tab of the Partners of WHA website, [www.partnersofwha.org](http://www.partnersofwha.org).) Consult the Partners website or a member of the nominating committee ([Peg Larson](#), [Ramona Hornischer](#), [Bev Lazar](#), [Mary Rose Willi](#) or [Julie Steiner](#)) with questions or for additional information.

**Completed forms:** Send a completed nomination form and photo to: Peg Larson, Partners of WHA Immediate Past President, 110 Stoney Beach Road, Oshkosh, WI 54902 or [pegvoluntr@hotmail.com](mailto:pegvoluntr@hotmail.com).

*"I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I woke and saw that life was service,  
So, I acted and behold, service was joy!"*  
- from Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel Laurette in Literature – 1913)

Thank you for your dedication!

Peg Larson, Immediate Past President  
Email: [pegvoluntr@hotmail.com](mailto:pegvoluntr@hotmail.com)

## Emotional Intelligence

According to the Oxford Dictionary, emotional intelligence (EI) is “the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.”



On Wednesday, September 11 from 1:00 to 2:00 pm, Molly Mackey, an author, speaker, and trainer of leaders, will speak on emotional intelligence. She is the founder and chief learning officer of the “LEAdERNship Institute. She believes that by intentionally intersecting the ongoing journeys of leadership and learning we can create better leaders and Better Leaders = Better Lives. Molly will focus on explaining emotional intelligence and emphasize specifically how volunteers can use EI while volunteering at their hospital positions to help patients, families, and hospital staff.

This presentation will be via Zoom through our Midwest collaboration, Power of Connection. Watch your email and the Partners of WHA website for a registration link.

## Convention 2024 Beyond Par

Before we know it, our annual Partner’s convention will be here. Plans for informative and educational workshops are moving along.

Our theme is Volunteers - Diamonds in the Rough. Be sure to wear your knickers, argyle socks, or your favorite golf attire throughout the convention except for Wednesday evening when we will be installing Julie Steiner as our new President of Partners of WHA. Attire on this evening will again be formal, Dressed to the Nines, for dinner.

Registration materials and the convention brochure will be made available soon. All forms will be able to be accessed on our Partner’s website. As soon as the schedule and speakers are confirmed, it will be posted.

An Eddie Bauer throw, valued at \$130 is being added to our raffle prizes. I’m looking forward to welcoming you to the Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Stevens Point, October 1-3.

Sheree Schaefer, Convention Chair



## Growing Pains



Leigh Ann Larson

Happy summer! I hope you are all enjoying the sun of Wisconsin and continue to do so over the next several months.

I came across a quote the other day that made me think of the Partners of WHA.

***“Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. It’s the only way to grow.”*** If I knew who originally said this, I would give credit to him/her. Healthcare is an ever-changing

proposition. Workforce, financial structure, compliance regulations, community needs, etc. are never the same from one day to the next. With change comes uncertainty. With uncertainty comes feeling uncomfortable. We, as human beings, typically do not like to feel uncomfortable.

Partners of WHA continues to evolve. In this, there are bound to be these moments of feeling uncomfortable. Our instinct is to “get out” of these feelings and to get back into a place of normalcy and what we are used to. I am going to challenge you, however, to “get comfortable with being uncomfortable.” As the quote says, “it’s the only way to grow.” When new ideas come your way in how to hold meetings, live in the uncertainty of not knowing whether this is a good idea. When a different agenda is proposed for the annual convention, live in the uncertainty of not knowing whether people will be receptive to this new idea. When there is discussion regarding the structure of state regions, live in the uncertainty of not knowing if you should change and make that leap. I think you will be surprised at the growth you experience.

Until next time,

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)

## WAVE Award

They say the second time around is better. Since this is the second consecutive year I have had the opportunity to chair the WAVE Awards I am hoping this holds true.

By now the deadline for awards submission is past. The committee and I are hoping we have a large number of volunteer organizations who applied from which to select our winners.

Each member of the committee will score the submissions individually. The committee will then come together to select the winners. It is a difficult job, but it is enjoyable to read about all the wonderful things volunteers are doing to support their hospitals and communities.

This year’s committee members are:

- Pauline Lundgren from the Northwestern District
- Linda Holdorf from the North Central District
- Linda Gillette from the Western District
- Leigh Ann Larson from Wisconsin Hospital Association
- Pat Freeders, Chair from the Southern District

Convention is just around the corner. Hope to see you there to celebrate the winners.

Pat Freeders, WAVE Award Chair  
Email: [patfreeders@gmail.com](mailto:patfreeders@gmail.com)

## Strategic Planning Committee Report

The Strategic Planning Committee has worked together to develop “member-at-large” bylaws, allowing an individual membership in Partners of WHA if belonging to a hospital volunteer group with membership in Partners is not possible. The proposed bylaws are printed in two (2) issues of *Reaching Out*, per Partners bylaws. The proposed bylaws will be presented for approval by members at the October 2024 convention.

The convention will incorporate some changes this year based on a completed survey done in the fall of 2023, along with input from convention chairs, as well as comments from volunteers and convention attendees.

With declining local member organizations in the Northwestern, West Central, and North Central districts, discussions of a merger began. Voting took place at spring district meetings and a request for approval has been submitted to Partners President Sharon Scott. The new district will be known as the Northern District. More information will be provided in *Reaching Out* and at our October Partners convention. We continue to work on a written guideline/procedure for the merging of districts for future reference.

Terri Donlin and Sherry Jelic, Co-chairs of Partners of WHA Strategic Planning Committee

# Public Policy Education Report

## Cybersecurity & Healthcare

Why has so much attention been given to this topic recently and why specifically to the healthcare industry?

In June of this year, WHA concluded its annual Wisconsin Rural Health Conference where panelists from M3 Insurance and Ghostscale addressed the topic, “The Rise of Smart Threats: How Artificial Intelligence is Changing Ransomware and Social Engineering.” The presentation was attended by nearly 300 Wisconsin hospital leaders and focused on how artificial intelligence is changing the threat landscape in health care, including how it may allow relatively unsophisticated bad actors to create social engineering and ransomware schemes that can cripple large organizations. A summary of that meeting was published in the [June 27, 2024 Valued Voice](#).



Bill McCullough

Following are some findings from that conference discussion.

- The health sector continues to be a top threat due to a constantly evolving threat landscape that occurs due to changes and innovations in care delivery.
- Continued fissures in the health care supply chain
- Antiquated hardware and software utilized by some hospitals

Despite some progress being made on security frameworks for email systems, the threat has continued to rise, and so have the premiums paid by the health industry for cybersecurity, some as much as 100%. Further, healthcare facilities are attractive targets for cyber criminals considering their size, technological dependence, sensitive data, and unique vulnerability to disruptions. A recent article published in April 2024, by Artic Wolf, addressed “The Top 18 Healthcare Industry Cyber Attacks of the Past Decade.” The average cost of a healthcare breach in the USA was listed at \$10.93 million. That number has increased by over 53% in the past three years. The number of incidents has been growing as well, with over 500 incidents in 2023.

Healthcare tends to be a lucrative resource to “bad actors” for several reasons:

- A growing shortage of security talent
- Expanding digitization
- A growing ecosystem of interconnected medical devices distributed across physical locations
- The sheer volume and value of the data contained in healthcare organizations
- A large user base that may lack security training and proper identity hygiene

The article further stated that while the data stolen may have little immediate value to the thief, it can be resold on the dark web to other cyber criminals who, in turn, sell it to other cyber criminals. The result could include social engineering attacks on the victims of the original breach whose stolen credentials are then used to hack into other organizations.

In July 2022, Advocate Aurora Health with 26 hospitals across Wisconsin & Illinois was hacked due to their improper use of a common website tracking device that led to the exposure of the data of three million patients. Specifically, Meta Pixel is used on patient portals where sensitive patient information is stored. This hack caused Personal Health Information (PHI), to be disclosed. Meta Pixel is used by many healthcare providers across the U.S.

In March of this year, Change Health, a U.S. health insurance billing firm responsible for one in three patient records in the U.S., was a ransomware victim by BlackCat/AlphV. United Healthcare, owner of U.S. Health Insurance, has not yet divulged the ransom, expected to be over 22 million dollars. The ransom was, however, paid to prevent more downtime. The fallout has included disrupted payments to doctors and healthcare facilities, and the inability to bill for services as well as difficulty billing for and filling prescriptions. The organization manages 15 billion claims per year, and \$1.5 trillion in healthcare claims annually.

President and CEO of the American Hospital Association Rick Pollack stated, “The Change Healthcare cyberattack is the most significant and consequential incident of its kind against the U.S. healthcare system in history. When all is said and done, the total tally may reach \$1 billion or more.”

Stay tuned as this is no doubt a story that has an evolving sinister plot!

Bill McCullough, PPE Chair

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# Community Health Education Report

## *An Overview of Children's Mental Health*



*Cindy Hermel*

Children with good mental health experience a positive quality of life and function well at home, in school, and within the general community. These children reach developmental and emotional milestones as expected, learn, exhibit good social skills, and can cope and stay resilient when faced with disappointment or other challenges.

Mental disorders among children are exhibited by serious problems in the way they typically learn, behave, and handle their emotions. This may cause distress, conflict, and unhappiness. Many children occasionally experience fear or display disruptive behavior. However, if these symptoms are serious and persistent and interfere with activities at school, home, or play, the child may be diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report on children's mental health used data from several sources to assess mental health and mental health disorders in children from 2013 to 2019. Poor mental health among children continues to be a substantial public health concern. The most common mental health disorders include attention-deficit/hyperactivity (ADHD), anxiety, and depression. The report emphasized the importance of exploring and understanding how indicators of good mental health, such as emotional well-being and resilience, impact and support children's mental health.

Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Children's mental health is strengthened by supportive relationships and environments and can be put at risk by stress and negative experiences. Struggling with emotions and behavior is a normal part of growing up. Mental health is measured by the normal ups and downs of modern-day life, which may or may not reach a level of persistence and severity to be considered a mental health disorder.

Gathering accurate information about children's mental health and mental disorders can be difficult. Currently, the United States does not monitor the full range of mental health and well-being indicators among children and adolescents. Federal agencies are in the process of expanding current systems to include a broader range of disorders as well as indicators of good mental health. In addition, these agencies are trying to build capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to promote and protect children's mental health.

Boys and girls of all ages and ethnic backgrounds living in all areas of the country can experience mental health disorders. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine estimates 13-20% of children living in the United States (one in every five children) experience a mental health disorder each year.

Mental health disorders are chronic health conditions that last a long time and often don't completely go away. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical to helping children modify their behaviors so they have fewer problems in school, at home, and in forming friendships. The most successful interventions are reflective of a collaboration between parents, the child's pediatrician, and school personnel. Early diagnosis and the development of a treatment plan relies on effective medications and/or behavior modification plans with consistency in expectations and support.

*Cindy Hermel, Community Health Education Chair*

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## Apply for the Mary Licht Memorial Scholarship



*Mary Licht*

Mary Licht, state president of Partners in 2017, lost a courageous battle with breast cancer in September 2017. Mary's dedication, enthusiasm and love

of Partners shone brightly through her service as president of her local organization (Partners of Portage Hospital), Convention chair, Partners webmaster, and Southern District chair. Mary's family wished to continue Mary's legacy by establishing The Mary Licht Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship awards a first-time convention attendee their registration fee of \$175. Two (2) scholarships are available in 2024. The application can be found on the Partners website on the Forms page in the Resource Center. Please consider and encourage a member of your organization to apply. **The application deadline is Sept. 1.**

## Around the State

**Cumberland Healthcare Volunteer Partners** are pictured with their “Traveling Gift Shop.” On June 8, 2024, they were one of the vendors at the annual Festival of the Arts.



*Cumberland Healthcare Volunteer Partners Traveling Gift Shop.*

**Aspirus Merrill Volunteers** put together a patriotic July 4th raffle basket fundraiser. Brenda is pictured selling raffle tickets.



*Aspirus Merrill's 4th of July raffle*

Nine new **Aspirus Wausau volunteers** recently trained as cuddlers in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Aspirus Wausau Hospital. They are pictured with two of the hospital's respiratory therapists. The cuddlers are orientated and trained to provide one-on-one contact and a warm and comforting environment for the neonates.



*Aspirus Wausau volunteer neonatal cuddlers*

**Volunteers of Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus** raised \$100,000 to create an endowment to allow their scholarship fund to remain perpetual. The scholarships are offered to high school seniors entering human health fields.



*Volunteers of Prairie Ridge Health, Columbus*

### Reaching Out Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
November 2024	Friday, Oct. 11, 2024
February 2025	Friday, Jan. 10, 2025
May 2025	Friday, April 11, 2025
August 2025	Friday, July 11, 2025

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:

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