

# West Central District Winter/Spring 2023 Newsletter

## Greetings from Your Chair...

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As 2022 comes to a close it is a time for reflection of the blessings of the past year but anticipation for 2023. Is there light at the end of the tunnel? But of course, we as Partners are survivors and have found that we are adaptable. This is a learning curve for us, but we will come through stronger than ever.

On the down side, Osceola and St Croix Falls have dropped out of our District. My optimism in no way diminishes the problems the Pandemic has created for our organizations. Our District Board is saddened by these departures and hope, at some future time, they will be able to rejoin.

Highlights of 2022 were Convention 2022 and the Fall District Meeting...in person!!! It was so good to connect with colleagues and friends. It was also great to get a sense that WHA is strong, viable and moving forward.

Now on to 2023 which is going to be an exciting year for our District. Donella Christianson will be installed as our new Chair. She has been a strong and active supporter of Partners and will bring her experience and expertise to the position. As our new Chair, she will be selecting a PPE and CHE for the District. Ann Bergman has agreed to be chair elect and Mary Rose Willi for secretary/treasurer. I feel this will be a formidable board. If there are any other nominations of course they will be considered.

### **SAVE A DATE**

Spring District Meeting - April 11, 2023, hosted by HSHS St Joseph's Hospital - Details to follow

Convention 2023 - October 3-5, 2023, Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, hosted by West Central District

Theme - Today's Dream - Tomorrow's Reality

As most of you know plans have been underway for quite some time and I am so thankful for all of you and the way everyone has responded to this event. It is a large undertaking but tho' we are small we can do this with everyone working together. Lots of ideas have been presented and we are open to any others that would help make this successful. I will be sending out more details as they are finalized.

In closing, I want to say how blessed I feel to be part of this organization and the people I've met and the friendships I've made. Thanks to Donella Christensen, Jaci Fuller, Steve Werner and Marge Geissler for their support the last two years.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Betty Oddo  
West Central District Chair  
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**“Many of us are more capable than some of us...  
But none of us is as capable as all of us.”  
-unknown**

## A note from the Secretary/Treasurer...

Thanks to all who attended the West Central District meeting in Eau Claire, at HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital October 26, 2023. Notices will be sent regarding the Spring District meeting in the near future, to be hosted by St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls.

There has been no activity financially since the last report, however with the spring district meeting and the 2023 State Partners of WHA convention, we may have some expenses.

I am sorry that St. Croix and Osceola Volunteer Partners have dropped out of the Partners of WHA West Central District. So, now our District has only four Hospital volunteer groups - Cumberland, St Joseph's, Sacred Heart and Stanley.

If you have any questions regarding the West Central District financial status, please contact me.

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The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.  
The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.  
- Sir Winston Churchill

NOTES FROM YOUR CHAIR-ELECT (to be Installed as  
Chair at the spring 2023 District meeting)  
DONELLA CHRISTIANSON....

Partners with Our Lady of victory Hospital has changed our name to Partners with Aspirus Stanley Hospital, but we are not officially volunteers of the hospital as of now! We have been in the transition to Aspirus as Partners for part of 2021 and all of 2022.

We were never “trained” as volunteers since we began in the 1980’s, so this is rather a hard adjustment for us. Aspirus seems to have a few “hoops” we need to jump through before we can begin any kind of volunteering with the Hospital. Most of our members feel this is more than they care to go through just to volunteer and most of them are older members.

One of the “hoops” we found out is that we have to be volunteering in the hospital within 30 days of our health screening. As of now, we have no idea what we will be doing as volunteers.

When we are all done going through the hoops, we may end up with about a half dozen volunteers to carry all of the load! I feel that 2023 will definitely be the deciding year as to whether we will continue to exist. I really hate to see our Partners disband since west Central district is already down to four organizations, counting Stanley!

I would like to thank Betty Oddo for her leadership; these last two years, especially with everything that has been going on during her leadership term. Betty is also the State Convention Chair for 2023, and needs our help and support, so let’s show her what we can do working together. Also thank you to Jaci Fuller for serving as our secretary/treasurer the last two years. Both of these leaders have done a fantastic job!

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## NOTES FROM THE 2023/24 CHAIR-ELECT...

(to be installed at the Spring 2023 West Central District Meeting)

I think many of you know who I am, but let me formally introduce myself. Ann Bergmann is a wife, mother, grandmother, currently director of Volunteer Services at Cumberland Healthcare; Past-President, Partners of WHA, Past Member and Chair, Committee on Volunteers of the American Hospital Association. I have accepted the open position of Chair-Elect of the West Central District.

With that said...I've been around hospital volunteering for a long time! Hospital Volunteer Leadership has become a passion of mine. The Volunteer Partners of Cumberland Healthcare's Mission Statement is: Cumberland Healthcare Volunteer Partners strive to improve the quality of our customer's experiences by being the volunteer organization of choice in the Cumberland area. People have many ways to give of their time and talents. The Pandemic has brought this to the forefront. With our hospitals closed down, our volunteers found other ways to spend their leisure hours, other places to give of themselves, or they were concerned for their own health.

Leadership has a job ahead, to either revitalize our organization. Partners of WHA, or to look at the future of hospital volunteering through a different lens. Input is always needed. Feel free to contact me for any questions and share your ideas how we may Build Back Better!

Happy New Year,

## Ann

**“We do not remember days... We remember moments.”**

**PUBLIC POLICY REPORT (PPE)..**

### **WHA Advocating for Year-End Health Care Priorities**

The Wisconsin Hospital Association brought a group of hospital leaders to Washington, D. C. on Dec. 6-7 to advocate with Wisconsin’s congressional delegation for hospital and health system year-end priorities. Many of the hospital leaders participated in an Advocacy Day event hosted by the American Hospital Association on Dec. 6. Multiple members of Wisconsin’s congressional delegation told WHA’s group of hospital leaders that because the current continuing resolution ends on Dec. 16, they expect Congress to pass a one-week short-term continuing resolution to fund the government through Dec. 23, which would give Congress more time to negotiate a larger spending package that may include several hospital priorities, although nothing is certain at this time.

WHA has been advocating for Congress to extend the rural hospital designations for Medicare-Dependent and Low-Volume Adjustment hospitals that are currently slated to expire Dec. 16. These designations provide for at least 16 Wisconsin hospitals to receive more than \$19 million in higher Medicare payments annually and are essential in reducing the losses these hospitals take on Medicare patients. Due to their smaller size, these hospitals do not have the volumes of commercially insured patients necessary to offset the losses they would take at normal Medicare rates, which, on average, reimburse hospitals at about 73% of what it costs them to provide Medicare services.

The group of hospital leaders also advocated for Congress to continue funding incentives to participate in Medicare’s value-based payment programs, which currently expire at the end of the year. Medicare spends less on average to cover Wisconsin Medicare patients than the national average, and yet Wisconsin health care providers are not typically rewarded for this. Value-based payments are one of the few Medicare programs that reward

Wisconsin health care providers for providing high-quality and low-cost health care.

Since April of this year, WHA has been working to build support for making permanent many of the regulatory flexibilities hospitals have had access to under the public health emergency (PHE). The current PHE is expected to last **through** mid-April, but after that the fate of these regulatory flexibilities is uncertain. WHA has advocated for four main flexibilities, including:

- Continuing Medicare's coverage of telehealth by eliminating geographic and site restrictions.

- Making the Acute Hospital Care at Home Program permanent.

- Eliminating both the 96-hour condition of payment for **critical access** hospitals along with the 96-hour average-length-of-stay condition of participation.

- Eliminating the requirement that patients stay in a hospital for three midnights prior to Medicare covering a nursing home stay upon a patient being discharged.

The hospital leaders participating in these Capitol Hill visits described the immense challenges hospitals are dealing with in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that make these continued flexibilities essential tools for hospitals. Hospitals continue to deal with extremely tight capacity challenges due to the ongoing workforce shortage and the lack of adequate nursing home beds to which patients can be discharged once they complete their hospital stay.

In addition to all these priorities, the WHA's group of hospital leaders also discussed the financial challenges that exist in 2022. Inflation has increased the cost of supplies and the workforce shortage has greatly increased the cost of labor, yet Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements remain stagnant, and it is very difficult to pass along cost increases to commercial insurance because employers are also feeling the pinch of inflation. With all these challenges, many hospitals have been running large operating deficits in 2022. WHA's group of hospital leaders asked Wisconsin's congressional delegation to support adding additional hospital relief in a year-end congressional spending package, such as a reduction in the physician and home health cuts scheduled to take effect in 2023, a return of the 2% sequestration holiday, and for the Senate to pass the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care legislation, which makes many improvements to the prior authorization process under Medicare Advantage.

WHA will continue to monitor developments in Congress as the end of the year approaches.

(Adapted from an article in the December 8, 2022 Valued Voice Newsletter)

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## **COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION (CHE) REPORT...**

Your diet plays an important role in protecting you from infectious diseases. A healthy immune system depends on eating a balanced, healthy diet on a regular basis.

Certain vitamins and minerals contained in foods are key to an immune-boosting diet. These include Vitamins A, C, D, E; folate/folic acid, from, selenium and zinc. You can find these vitamins and minerals in both animal and vegetarian foods, fresh (is best) or frozen.

There are many foods that one can include in their diet to boost the immune system. Here is a list of the more common foods: citrus fruits, watermelon, papaya, elderberry, kiwi, button mushrooms, spinach, broccoli, sweet potato, red bell peppers, yogurt (low fat), almonds, tea, oysters and other shellfish. Spices such as garlic, ginger and turmeric are also beneficial.

You may have heard the phrase “eat the rainbow”. Eating a variety of colorful foods, any lists above, is important for a strong immune system and overall good health.

From the Partners of WHA website

Health Education

Resources: [health.clevelandclinic.org](https://health.clevelandclinic.org)

[www.healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

[www.webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com)



