

# Anchored in Our Community

*UMass Memorial Health Care — committed to improving the environmental, financial and physical health of the people of Central Massachusetts*

March 2021

## ◆ FROM THE DESK OF ERIC DICKSON, MD

*President and CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care*



**HOPE.** That is what I've seen in the eyes of our health care workers, first responders and high-risk patients these last few months as we've rolled out the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine comes at a time when we continue to see through our community testing efforts that communities of color are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 at a higher rate. That's why it is an important part of our Anchor Mission to put into place mitigation steps — such as the community testing — to help address this disparity. And that is what we're doing when it comes to the vaccine distribution as well. But for the distribution of the

vaccine to work, we need people to want to get the vaccine. And that can only happen through trust.

**TRUST.** Because we have experience with this vaccine with the University of Massachusetts Medical School's participation in the Pfizer vaccine clinical trial, we're well prepared with the right equipment and knowledge to deploy the vaccine safely to patients and our communities. As a researcher myself, I closely followed the clinical trials, and in fact, I enrolled in the Pfizer clinical trial here last fall. Here are a few things I've learned:

- I enrolled in the trial at a time when we didn't know about its safety and efficacy, but based on the results of that trial and the approval by the FDA for emergency use, I believe it has now been proven to be safe and effective.
- The clinical trials showed that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were 90 to 95% effective, and those who developed COVID-19 (those in the 5 to 10% category) had mild cases.
- Some people question the safety of the vaccine because the clinical trials were conducted much faster than other vaccine trials. Clinical studies are highly regulated with strict protocols in place to prevent taking shortcuts and skipping important safety steps. The speed of this process was largely because we are in a world-wide pandemic, so all involved were hyper-focused on making these trials a top priority.

**FAITH.** This vaccine holds the promise of an end to this pandemic. It will take all of us to have faith in our medical experts and actually get the vaccine to put a stop to this horrific virus that has wreaked havoc on the lives of our patients, families, friends, neighbors and communities. I hope you'll take that leap of faith with me. ◆

## ANCHOR MISSION STEERING COMMITTEE

### ◆ CO-CHAIRS

#### **Douglas Brown**

*President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals Inc. and Chief Administrative Officer, UMass Memorial Health Care*

#### **Cheryl Lapriore**

*Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff, Chief Marketing Officer, and President, UMass Memorial Health Ventures, UMass Memorial Health Care*

### ◆ COMMUNITY BENEFITS DEPARTMENT

#### **Monica Lowell**

*Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits, UMass Memorial Health Care*

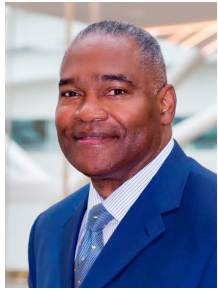
## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

To provide feedback or request more information, email [communications@umassmemorial.org](mailto:communications@umassmemorial.org).



**UMassMemorial**  
**Health Care**

## ◆ IMPROVING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION FROM BEDSIDE TO ROADSIDE



During a season of racial unrest in our community and around the nation, and a worldwide pandemic that has disproportionately affected people of color, Brian Gibbs, PhD, took on the critical role of Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at UMass Memorial Health Care. While these three concentrations have always played an important role at UMass

Memorial, events of the past year have exacerbated the need to take our conversations, and more importantly our actions, to a new level – enter Dr. Gibbs.

“The coronavirus pandemic brought attention to the health inequities in our community and country, but it also exposed the neglect,” explained Dr. Gibbs. “The disparities have existed, and the inequalities have persisted for over 400 years. It’s been under our noses and pervasive and we’ve elected, in many ways, to ignore it. The attention we bring forth now happens to have a convenient reason, and that is the health of all of us is tied to those who have less.”

But it’s one thing to recognize a need, and quite another to address it. After hearing about the steps UMass Memorial leadership is taking to solicit and listen to concerns felt and experienced by our community members of color, in addition to learning about UMass Memorial’s commitment to our Anchor Mission work, through which we are devoting both substantial financial and physical resources toward improving the social determinants of health of our underserved communities, Dr. Gibbs was confident that he wanted to join the UMass Memorial team on this journey and contribute to the pivotal work ahead.

“It starts at the top and I personally couldn’t be prouder or more committed to following the leadership of Dr. Eric Dickson (President and CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care) and Doug Brown (President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals Inc. and Chief Administrative Officer, UMass Memorial Health Care),” shared Dr. Gibbs. “They’re bringing substantive leadership. They’re willing to not only ask critical questions but they’re also willing to be uncomfortable with the answers, answers that are easier for some of us, while many others will struggle to understand the impact of inequality of health and health care. For a health care system to take a lead in this area is impressive to me. I wanted to be part of an institution with this mindset that will allow me to do the work of diversity, equity and inclusion with upstream public health approaches to addressing the social determinants of health — meaning to be able to work from the bedside to the roadside.” ◆

## ◆ LISTENING TO HEAR AND TO HEAL

The unthinkable events of racially charged violence and injustice last spring and summer had a visceral impact on our nation, causing many to take pause. “What was witnessed, in regards to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, was unimaginable, but it was real and part of the history in the Black community,” said Brian Gibbs, PhD, Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at UMass Memorial Health Care. “For the rest of the nation and the world to witness it, and for it to spark such a rallying cry across race, income, social position, education, age and ethnicity, it forced social injustice into the reality of our day-to-day work.” Compelled to take a public stand, UMass Memorial leaders lent their voices and ears, and invited community members to join them in this difficult discussion to help our community learn and heal one step, one conversation at a time.

The health care system took charge by hosting nearly a dozen Health Equity Listening Forums with various community leaders and engaged in additional conversations with the Black Families Together and Worcester’s Community Vaccine groups. “UMass Memorial leaders’ are motivated to listen with an emphasis on hearing,” said Dr. Gibbs. “I believe it was alarming to hear from people of color throughout our health care system and our community about the daily microaggressions, disrespect and discrimination that Black, brown and indigenous people of color experience.” He lauded, “These authentic actions or blueprints that Dr. Eric Dickson and others have outlined, allow for meaningful follow-through to improve upon our workforce culture of being the best place to give care and the best place to get care.” ◆

CHANGE:  
THE CONVERSATION

A DIALOGUE AMONG US ALL  
FOR THE GOOD OF US ALL.





## ◆ OPPORTUNITY ‘TESTS’ YOUNG RECRUITS — AND THEY’RE PASSING WITH FLYING COLORS

As UMass Memorial Health Care continues to respond to the COVID-19 crisis with an all-hands-on-deck approach, partners in our communities remain by the organization’s side, encouraging individuals with a commitment to helping their neighbors take on vital roles at coronavirus testing sites. What’s more, the skills they acquired there may set them on a solid career path to employment within the health care system. What could be more illustrative of the UMass Memorial Anchor Mission and specifically, its hiring pillar, designed to ensure that its employee profile is reflective of the communities it serves?



In partnership with Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) and Quinsigamond Community College (QCC), a number of young people at the cusp of their careers have been working since the fall as registrars and swabbers at the Worcester testing site. The effort has gone so well that testing capacity has increased to an amazing 1,200 people per day on average thanks to the recruits, most in their mid-20s.

WCAC Executive Director Marybeth Campbell noted, “They were ready to work. Having wrapped up with our summer jobs program and gaining training and a number of experiences, the timing was good to extend their work opportunities.” Marybeth praised Jenna Wills and Todd Smith of WCAC, who recommended candidates to UMass Memorial for the testing site positions, with future hiring at the health care system in mind. “Our partnership offers the opportunity for a direct, A to B point of contact and exposure for UMass Memorial to talent in the community. In turn, the hospital’s testing site staff have been extremely welcoming and supportive of these young people, making them feel part of a team and mission.”

Nardy Vega ensures that’s the case as outreach liaison for the UMass Memorial Community Benefits program with oversight of the WCAC registrars. “I tell them about the opportunity they have for a future at UMass Memorial or other hospitals, that they will learn something new through

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training, asking questions and following protocols.” Nardy, who started her UMass Memorial career 20 years ago with a vision to work with patients, knows this is an important moment for the registrars. “I feel like one of them, and I see that they are motivated.”

Nurse Practitioner Michelle Muller, of the UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, oversees the testing program and knows that interactions at the site will aid those enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant program at QCC. “The patient and medical team experiences they gain now as swabbers will make them even more qualified to apply for jobs that match their licenses.”

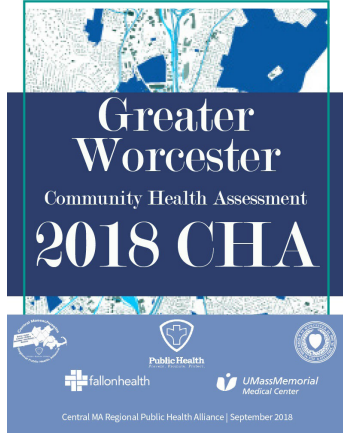


That’s where Kelsi Rodriguez of UMass Memorial Talent Acquisition comes in. She guides eligible candidates through the hiring process, connecting them with contacts within the organization and giving them special attention in preparation for obtaining a position that matches their skills. “We’ve hired 16 people through our Anchor Mission efforts over the last year, working with partners like WCAC and QCC,” Kelsi said. But her work doesn’t stop there, as retention is key to long-lasting self-sufficiency. “I stay in contact with the agencies to brainstorm solutions that break down any barriers to our new employees’ success.” ◆

## ◆ COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

### MEDICAL CENTER'S 2021 HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLANNING UNDERWAY

UMass Memorial Medical Center is currently embarking on updating the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHA). As a not-for-profit hospital, the Medical Center conducts a CHA every three years. To develop the 2021 CHA, the Medical Center is once again joining forces with the Worcester Division of Public Health (WDPH), as the lead agency of the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance, Fallon Health and new partner the Hanover Insurance Company. Previous Greater Worcester CHA/ Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) reports were completed collaboratively with WDPH and Fallon Health in 2012, 2015 and 2018. In addition to these lead partners, CHA reports are developed in collaboration with a wide range of community stakeholders. A CHA is utilized to identify community health improvement priorities, which serve as the basis for Community Benefits strategic planning and the update of the Greater Worcester CHIP. The CHA focuses on Worcester and surrounding towns of Grafton, Holden, Leicester, Millbury, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston, and will be complete in the fall of 2021.



### MARLBOROUGH HOSPITAL CAN'T 'MASK' THEIR EXCITEMENT FOR PPE

In January, 100,000 masks were delivered to UMass Memorial - Marlborough Hospital by the Massachusetts National Guard for distribution to members of the community. This is the second sizeable mask delivery the hospital has received, with 150,000 masks being delivered to the hospital in October 2020. On social media, Marlborough Hospital made sure to thank the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for providing this important PPE and the National Guard for not only making this delivery but for serving our country every day. They shared, "Extra special thanks to the National Guard for taking the time to deliver, carry (four at a time!) and stack these in our warehouse."



### EXPANDING ACCESS, ELIMINATING BARRIERS AT COMMUNITY HEALTHLINK

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently recognized UMass Memorial - Community Healthlink (CHL) as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC). This designation has significant ramifications toward helping CHL grow and change, including expanding access to care and focusing on health equity.

One way CHL has been leading the community in these areas has been through the work of its Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Task Force, whose goal it is to meet national CLAS Standards and improve capacity to serve culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Task Force activities underway include:

- Expanding translation of vital written documents at program level
- Decreasing barriers to accessing interpreter services and expanding use of video and phone interpretation in all CHL programs
- Reviewing CHL policies through a health equity lens
- Planning and implementing cultural competence trainings for all CHL caregivers

While the pandemic eventually will end, the CCBHC designation indicates CHL is well-positioned to expand access and services today and into the future.

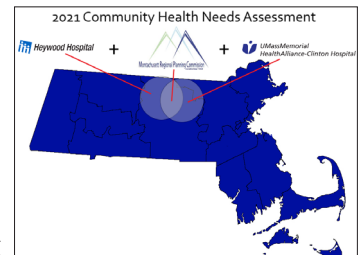


### ANCHOR MISSION: IT'S ALL IN THE COLLABORATION

As UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital gears up for its triennial Community Health Needs Assessment, the Anchor Mission pillar for sourcing expertise at a local level could not ring truer. Further, a collaboration with Heywood Hospital, offered an opportunity to collaborate with another hospital in the region to more effectively service our community.

"The priorities that Heywood Hospital faces will undoubtedly overlap with our own priorities," commented Rosa Fernandez, Director of Community Health and Volunteer Services at HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital. "We already work closely with Heywood on our Community Health Improvement Plan with our CHNA9 regional health network. It only makes sense that we would further collaborate on our needs assessment."

What makes this collaboration even stronger is the relationship with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the consultant who will not only conduct the Community Health Needs Assessment, but also will also additional resources from the HealthAlliance-Clinton internship program to support area students with real-life experience. This will all be accomplished within a budget that projects to save the hospital 33% over the 2018 community health needs assessment.



## ◆ UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE

UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 14,000 employees and 1,700 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. Our member hospitals and entities include UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial - Marlborough Hospital, UMass Memorial Medical Center and UMass Memorial - Community Healthlink, our behavioral health agency. With our teaching and research partner, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, our extensive primary care network and our cancer, diabetes, heart and vascular, orthopedic and surgery programs, UMass Memorial delivers safe, high-quality and compassionate care. Visit [www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org](http://www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org).

To find a physician in your community, call 855-UMASS-MD (855-862-7763). ◆