



 **UMass Memorial** Health

# RENEWED CONNECTIONS

2023 COMMUNITY BENEFITS REPORT

# Our Community Benefits Mission

UMass Memorial Health is committed to improving the health of all those it serves and addressing the health problems of those experiencing poverty and other medically underserved populations. Our commitment also includes tackling social conditions – unemployment, lack of housing and access to healthy food – that negatively impact our community’s health and wellness.

## What Are Community Benefits?

Community Benefits are programs and services not-for-profit hospitals provide to improve community health. These programs and services focus on identified community needs and address health disparities among disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. Community Benefits must meet one of the following criteria:

- Improve access to health care services
- Enhance the health of the community
- Advance medical or health knowledge

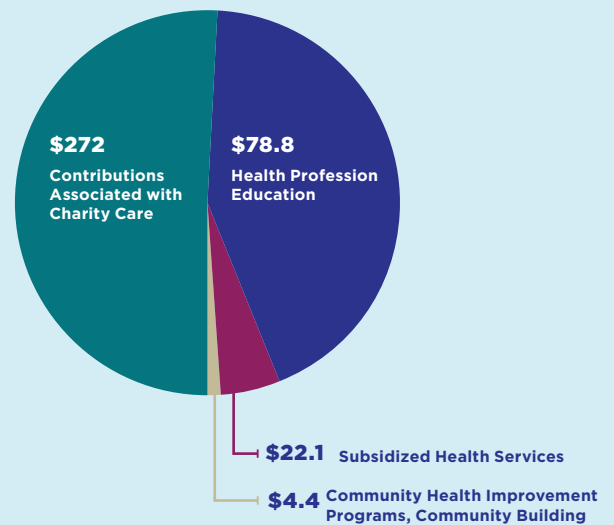
In 2023, UMass Memorial Health contributed \$377.3 million to positively impact the health and well-being of the communities we serve. Our Community Benefits contributions support charity care, subsidized health services, education of health professionals, research, community-based programming and partnerships. In addition, \$164.5 million in other non-Community Benefits expenses were absorbed through bad debt write-offs and Medicare shortfalls.

## Report Highlights

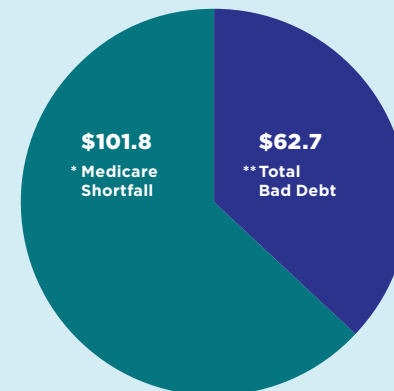
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**Cover:** UMass Memorial Health caregivers from left: Miriam King, Recovery Coach; Caryn Cote, RN, Emergency Department Case Manager; Oscar Sierra, Supervisor Medical Interpreters/Medical Interpreter; Rebecca Osterfield, Community Healthworker; and Jose Archila Quezada, Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service Program Coordinator (story page 4).

2023 Community Benefits  
Total: **\$377.3 Million**



Other Significant Expenses:  
**\$164.5 Million**



\* **Medicare Shortfall:** Net loss incurred for the cost of providing services to Medicare patients versus income received from the Medicare program.

\*\* **Total bad debt:** Expenses for receivables that can no longer be collected are written off.

## Dear Community, Partners and Friends

This year marked a year of continued community commitment by UMass Memorial Health. We doubled down on our mission to serve our communities by fostering a culture of collaboration across our health system grounded in our collective mission to address health disparities and achieve equitable health outcomes for our most marginalized populations. Our commitment is authentic, compassionate and empathetic to an individual's physical, mental and emotional health needs and social care needs, such as housing, employment and food.

This past year also marked a chance to renew relationships with our community partners, adapt to our patients and community members' needs and reflect on how we can continuously improve. In these pages, you will see highlights of the work of our caregivers and community partners throughout Central Massachusetts, and we believe you will be as proud as we are of our teams' achievements.

These highlights also include our Determination of Need funding (page 25) to support community programs that promote population health and address critical community health care issues. You will learn about the Fitchburg Arts Community Project (page 21), a \$45-million, 68-unit housing project that gives artists preferential access (page 21). And our Kraft Community Care in Reach mobile clinic (page 8) and Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (page 10) as they continue to offer services to our most vulnerable population and improve health access by providing health care directly in our community.

Our Anchor Mission work continued to grow in all four pillars: local investment, purchasing, hiring and volunteerism. One of the ways we support our community is through investment loans, for example, working to help build homes for two deserving families, one in Worcester's Main South neighborhood, as well as partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build another in Sturbridge (page 20).

The highlights in this report are a reminder that by working together, we can improve the health of our community and ensure that people feel welcome and heard, all in our effort to end health inequities and racial disparities among those most vulnerable.



*Eric W. Dickson, MD*

**Eric Dickson, MD**  
*President and CEO*  
*UMass Memorial Health*



*Elvira Guardiola*

**Elvira Guardiola**  
*Chair, Community Benefits Committee*  
*UMass Memorial Health*

## UMass Memorial Health Leadership

### UMass Memorial Medical Center

Justin Precourt, DNP-RN, Interim President  
 Mario Florez, Senior Director, Community Benefits

### UMass Memorial Health - Harrington

Edward Moore, President and CEO  
 Angela Chviek, MBA, CMA, Senior Director,  
 Strategic Planning, Philanthropy & Outreach

### UMass Memorial Health - Marlborough Hospital

Charles Cavagnaro III, MD, FACP, Interim President  
 Ellen Carlucci, Vice President, Development, Marketing  
 and Communications

### UMass Memorial Health - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital

Charles Cavagnaro III, MD, FACP, Interim President  
 Patricia Pistone, Senior Director, External Affairs



# Reaching Out in the Community

The heart of UMass Memorial Health are our dedicated, community-focused team members. Our incredible caregivers strive each day to address health inequities, racial disparities and other barriers faced by our most vulnerable community members. Their service and impact reach far beyond our hospital walls, connecting and collaborating with local partners to provide our community with the care and services when and where they need them. We would like to highlight a few of these team members who represent the thousands of UMass Memorial Health caregivers who served our patients and community members with skill, compassion and humanity throughout 2023.



Caryn Cote, RN, provides care to one of her patients.

**Caryn Cote, RN**, Emergency Department Case Manager  
UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital

After 31 years as a registered nurse, Caryn Cote, RN, finally works exactly where she's meant to be. As a case manager in the Emergency Department (ED) at HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, Cote combines her clinical expertise with compassionate care to make a significant difference for her patients.

As the ED doctors and nurses focus on providing acute medical care, her role is to address the complex emotional and psychosocial needs of patients and their families whose lives are upended by unexpected trauma. Cote works to develop relationships with local agencies to help patients and families heal long after they leave the hospital.

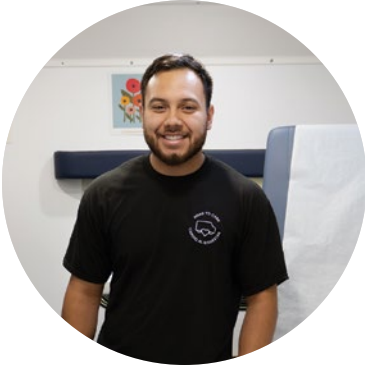
For example, Cote helps connect unhoused diabetic patients who come to the ED with community resources for safe insulin storage and transportation to their medical appointments, which can help avoid unnecessary visits to the ED.

“I just try to give these patients and their families the resources they need to navigate the system,” she said. “It’s not handing them a list of organizations; it’s sitting down and making phone calls with them and showing them how to advocate for themselves. It’s all about building relationships in the community so we can give them a warm handoff to the next phase of their care after they walk out our doors.”

As an ED case manager, Cote plays a crucial role in coordinating patient care, ensuring efficient use of resources, facilitating communication among health care providers, patients and their families, and advocating for patients’ rights and needs within the health care system.

A co-worker who nominated Cote for a nursing award wrote, “Caryn Cote is the nicest and kindest nurse I know. She advocates for patients so hard that it often keeps her here well after hours. An emergency room is the most unpredictable of clinical settings and Caryn never fails to immediately rise to any situation in front of her.”

## REACHING OUT



Jose Archila Quezada prepares the Road to Care mobile clinic medical room for patients.

### **Jose Archila Quezada**, Program Coordinator, Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service UMass Memorial Medical Center

As an aspiring physician, Jose Archila Quezada leaped at the opportunity to work with UMass Memorial Health's Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service (Road to Care). "Seeing people my age, homeless and addicted, with everything against them, and seeing how these doctors treat them with such skill and compassion and humanity. ... this experience isn't just helping me see the provider I want to be; it's allowing me to see the person I want to be," Archila Quezada said. "Everyone is going through something. Theirs is just more open and visible."

A native of Marlborough, Archila Quezada graduated in 2022 with a degree in applied biomedical science from the University of Massachusetts Lowell and is attending UMass Chan Medical School in the fall of 2024.

As a venue-based mobile medical clinic, Road to Care provides health care to people experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder. Many have had negative health care experiences and mistrust the system, which is why the Road to Care team focuses on building trust and relationships, looking beyond the addiction or disease to see and treat the whole person. As program coordinator, Archila Quezada was responsible for a Road to Care team of six providers, two paramedics, a data analyst and a social worker as they serviced six Worcester sites across five days a week, according to Jillian Joseph, MPAS, PA-C, Co-Director, Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service.

"Jose is thoughtful, thorough, organized, empathetic, enthusiastic — kind and caring but appropriately firm with the patients and he keeps our clinic sessions running smoothly," she said. "He excels at his role, and we will miss him greatly."



Recovery Coach Miriam King interacts with clients during a weekly drop-in luncheon for coaches and peers.

### **Miriam King**, Recovery Coach UMass Memorial Health - Community Healthlink

Miriam King has lived through the devastation of addiction. Her husband struggled with alcohol use disorder and died of alcohol-related causes at 49. She has also watched other family members struggle with addiction.

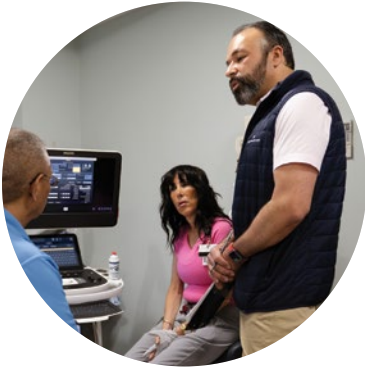
King, formerly a public educator, decided to use her heartbreaking life experience to become a recovery coach. "This is truly a calling, not a job," she said. "I have seen what the disease does to those addicted and their families, and I know how important it is to have an ally to say, 'There is help for you. You are a beautiful, worthy human being and you are not alone. I am on your side, and I am here for you.' Maybe if I had heard those words said to me 20 years ago, I wouldn't have suffered as much."

Drawing from their own experience, strength and hope, recovery coaches help those in recovery navigate their journey and support them in making the next best steps. King underwent hundreds of hours of training and preparation for her state exam to become a certified addictions recovery coach through the Massachusetts Board of Substance Abuse Counselor Certification. She is also a Massachusetts certified peer specialist.

"My role is to build trust, to listen empathetically, ask questions, and help them identify and overcome the obstacles that are challenging them," she said. King carries a caseload of about 10 peers. She meets with everyone at least once every 21 days, in addition to a weekly drop-in luncheon for coaches and peers.

"Community Healthlink has been incredibly supportive in developing my gifts and talents to not only be an asset to them but also to achieve my own growth."

## REACHING OUT



Oscar Sierra (right) translates information from caregiver Patricia D'Aguiar Sibley, RCS, to a patient.

### **Oscar Sierra**, Supervisor Medical Interpreters/Medical Interpreter UMass Memorial Health – Harrington

As a young boy, Oscar Sierra accompanied his Spanish-speaking parents and grandparents to their medical appointments, serving as an informal interpreter. Born in Puerto Rico, he moved to Southbridge with his family at six and witnessed firsthand the struggles of people facing language barriers.

Today, as supervisor of Medical Interpreter Services at Harrington, Sierra's compassion, infectious joy and humanity have made him a beloved caregiver. "Language is such a barrier with health care. I break down those barriers for my patients. I'm their voice, and I am their advocate," he said. "I treat my patients like family. I can get a lump in my throat when having to give bad news, but there is a gift in being able to look them in the eye and speak their language. They know that someone cares."

Colleagues marvel at Sierra's "above and beyond" attitude and the special bond he creates with the patients he serves.

"I am very thankful to know that there are caregivers who are willing to go the extra mile. I was moved by your compassion and willingness to help," a mammography technician at UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital in Fitchburg wrote after Sierra deftly managed a scheduling mistake with a patient. "Patients in the Harrington and Southbridge area are so fortunate to have you in their corner."

For Sierra, it is a privilege to serve the patients of his community. "I love every minute of it. I can't wait to wake up every day and come back to work."



Community Health Worker Rebecca Osterfield replenishes books at the Little Free Library located at the entrance of Marlborough Hospital.

### **Rebecca Osterfield**, Community Health Worker UMass Memorial Health – Marlborough Hospital

Rebecca Osterfield was always interested in a career in health care. It wasn't until her role as a community health worker at Marlborough Hospital that she found her true calling. "Being a community health worker is all about what Marlborough Hospital can do to help the community become healthy and stay healthy outside of the hospital walls," she said.

A native of Fitchburg, Osterfield was married, working part-time and raising two children when she decided to return to school. "It was a lot of late nights and early mornings. I would come home exhausted, and my oldest would say, 'Okay, Mom, it's time to do our homework,'" she laughed. "They kept me on track."

Throughout college, Osterfield worked at UMass Memorial Medical Center as a per diem scheduler. Following her graduation from Worcester State University in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in public health, she accepted a role as Marlborough Hospital's sole community health worker, where she runs a range of programs, including educational seminars and events providing information on everything from healthy nutrition to opioid harm reduction.

An essential part of her job is collaborating with other organizations to bring health information into the community. For example, she recently partnered with Hudson Public Schools to coordinate a health and wellness fair at Hudson High School, providing education on the impact of cellphone use on posture and healthy food behaviors.

"Rebecca has been such a valuable member of our team," said Ellen Carlucci, Vice President of Development, Marketing and Communications. "She has worked tirelessly to establish new relationships with our community partners, enabling Marlborough Hospital to better address the needs of our patients and the residents of the communities we serve."

# Providing Access to Food

Health inequities continue to rise across the United States and within our local community. These inequities often begin in childhood and continue into adulthood and across generations. Food insecurity and access to nutritious food are key drivers of health outcomes throughout one’s life. One of the ways UMass Memorial Health is helping to address the impact of food and nutrition insecurity is through the Food is Medicine program.

Food is Medicine is centered on two interventions to provide equitable access to resources. The first is Fresh Connect, a program that provides pre-paid debit cards to purchase healthy foods at many local grocery stores in the Worcester area. In 2023, this program was offered at the UMass Memorial Health Medical Center – Cancer Center and the UMass Memorial Medical Center – Children’s Medical Center.

The second intervention is Growing Places’ RX Food FARMacy, which was offered to patients at UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Simonds-Sinon Regional Cancer Center and Fitchburg Family Practice.

Patients who identify as food insecure or with other economic insecurities are provided information and enrolled into Rx Food FARMacy. This program provides patients access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment, Healthy Incentives



Jessica Hansen (left) and Caitlin Blake from Growing Places distribute food at the mobile market at UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital.

Program (HIP) education, and access to fresh produce either through local mobile food markets or home delivery. In addition, recipes and referrals to other community resources are provided.

Patients are referred to both Food is Medicine interventions by UMass Memorial Health providers, registered dietitians and social workers. With a goal to enroll 300 patients into interventions from across the UMass Memorial Health system, 330 were enrolled in 2023. Since the Food is Medicine program started in fiscal year 2022, the program has assisted 380 patients.

## Partnerships

UMass Memorial Health is committed to partnering with other community organizations as well as local and state policy and advocacy efforts to address food insecurity, promote healthy eating and provide nutritious food access in food-insecure areas. One of those partnerships is with the Center for Food Equity. This umbrella organization includes the Worcester Food Policy Council, the City of Worcester Task Force on Food Security and the Central Mass Snap Coalition, which are focused on equitable food access for Worcester.

Some of our other food collaborations highlighted in this report include the Regional Environmental Council’s youth programs, YouthGrow and UGROW (page 18), where youth learn how to grow food; the Anchor Mission purchasing pillar, which includes increasing the purchasing of local produce from minority and women-owned businesses at UMass Memorial Medical Center’s cafeterias (page 21); and supporting The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster to provide access to nutritious food and education for families (page 24).

“We are fully aware of the food crisis in our country, state and community. The populations we serve are not immune to the barriers to food access that perpetuate food insecurity. We need to stand on the shoulders of our leaders and our partners to help us address these barriers. We will continue to do that by committing our resources as the leading health care system in Central Massachusetts to support the efforts of our champions and local organizations through collaborative partnerships.” Mario Florez, Senior Director, Community Benefits Department, UMass Medical Center; and Patricia Pistone, Senior Director, External Affairs, HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital.



# Bringing Hope: Road to Care Mobile Addiction and Mental Health Service

In 2020, UMass Memorial Health was awarded a five-year contract by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Addiction to target opioid disorder in at-risk individuals.

The Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service, equipped with a vehicle from the Kraft Family Foundation, provides venue-based health care services at locations in Worcester accessible to those experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder, with a goal to reduce morbidity and mortality and break down barriers such as lack of transportation and mistrust in health care.

Services include primary care management, acute care, opioid addiction treatments, screenings for sexually transmitted infections, case management and referrals to social support services. No appointments are required; anyone can walk up to the mobile unit and receive care. “This is good medicine delivered by skilled, compassionate caregivers, meeting this population where they need it, when they need it,” said Kavita Babu, MD, Co-Director, Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service, and Chief Opioid Officer. “While we’re not able to solve larger societal issues of grief, homelessness and poverty, we experience remarkable stories of recovery and people reclaiming their health and lives. Through this program, we can offer decency and humanity and a chance at life.”

“  
This is good medicine delivered by skilled, compassionate caregivers, meeting the population where and when they need it.”

**Kavita Babu, MD, Co-Director Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service, and Chief Opioid Officer**

In fiscal year 2023, the program had 3,699 clinical encounters and 869 unique patients — **a 76% increase over the previous year**, reflecting both an increase in demand and an expansion of staff available to help meet that demand.

The staff expansion included two family physicians to the team with expertise in women’s health and Hepatitis C and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus); two Worcester paramedics with vast expertise in opioid harm reduction and prevention; a social worker with skills to guide patients with issues such as housing applications,



The Kraft Community Care in Reach mobile clinic brings addiction services to community members weekly at the St. John’s Food for the Poor Program at St. Francis Xavier Center in Worcester.

insurance and connection to other resources; and a part-time recovery coach who works with patients and providers to organize referrals for mental health appointments.

The regular presence of the mobile clinic at established locations each week has contributed to the program’s success. One of these locations is the Worcester Public Library in Salem Square. For those struggling with homelessness, substance use disorder or both, the library’s central location has become a safe, welcoming space, with common areas set up with comfortable seating, online and print guides with community resources for laundry, showers, emergency shelter and more.

Since June 2023, the Road to Care mobile clinic has visited the library for two hours weekly, treating about 50 patients a month. Nearly 80% are receiving the drug Suboxone® for opioid use disorder, while others are treated for substance use-related wound care, diabetes and common cold and flu symptoms, according to Christina Connolly, the library’s Community Resources Manager. When the mobile clinic leaves, library staff continue the frontline work, routinely administering NARCAN® Nasal Spray for overdose reversals, CPR, first aid and mental health first aid, which they all have trained in.

“Checking out books is the least of what we do. We are in the people business, and because of where we are located, these are our people,” said Jason Homer, Library Executive Director. “There is a movement in libraries towards trauma-informed care. It’s about building relationships, about leading and serving with compassion. The Road to Care mobile clinic is one very important piece of how we address

*Continued on next page*



## TACKLING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND MENTAL HEALTH

a global problem on a local level, providing the medical care this population needs in a place where they are comfortable and have built trust. We are so grateful to have Road to Care here.”

Road to Care also partners with AIDS Project Worcester, Eliot Community Human Services and other organizations whose outreach workers are embedded in the community and connected to this vulnerable population. In November 2022, the dental team from the UMass Memorial Health Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (page 10) joined the Road to Care team at St. John’s Catholic Church one Friday per month to offer dental cleanings and screenings, as well as referral dental appointments for patients with more complex dental care needs.

“These are people who are suffering, and there are so many barriers they face in accessing health care,” said Jillian Joseph, MPAS, PA-C, Instructor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, who became the co-director of the Road to Care Addiction Service in 2023. “This is work that needs to be done, and we are so fortunate that UMass Memorial Health is putting efforts toward this significant health crisis in such a meaningful way.”

### St. Paul Consortium: Addressing Adolescent Mental Health

The St. Paul Consortium Mental and Behavioral Health Equity Initiative provides mental health counseling and clinical observation to Gardner, Leominster and Fitchburg students. Professional counselors create safe spaces where students can discuss their feelings in one-on-one sessions. With funding from UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, the initiative reached more than 800 students in four schools from PreK to 12th grade. To date, more than 50 students have received ongoing counseling.

In addition to working with students directly, counselors encourage families to support a student’s mental health at home. They also hold informational sessions to raise awareness and reduce stigma about adolescent mental health.

### Hector Reyes House

UMass Memorial Health supports the medical director position at the Hector Reyes House, a 25-bed residential addiction treatment center for Latino men in Worcester.

The program serves an average of 80 Latino men each year, helping to provide treatment options for recognized health care disparities for Latinos. On-site medical care and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are available to residents to reduce relapse and ease the transition to independent living. “With the UMass Memorial Health partnership we have had primary care, psychiatric and infectious disease doctors treating a highly marginalized and underserved population of whom many have not sought medical care in years,” said Nicole Bell-Pena, Grants and Marketing Manager, Latin American Health Alliance.



Erik Garcia, MD, Associate Professor of Family Medicine, with more than 30 years caring for homeless adults in Worcester, (left), with Kavita Babu, MD, Co-Director, Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service, and Chief Opioid Officer.

### CommunityHELP

Search for free or reduced cost services like medical care, food, job training, and more



Busque servicios gratuitos o de costo reducido como atención médica, alimentos, capacitación laboral y más

[communityhelp.net](https://communityhelp.net)



CommunityHELP connects area residents and their health care providers to free and low-cost services for food, housing, transportation, health care, education, employment and legal issues. Built on the multilingual search platform, FindHelp.org, CommunityHELP is a cooperative effort between UMass Memorial Health and Reliant Medical Group, which provides primary and specialty care to patients throughout Central and MetroWest Massachusetts.

CommunityHELP is one way UMass Memorial Health is delivering patient-centered and culturally appropriate care that addresses the complexities of everyday life that impact health.

*For more information, visit [communityhelp.net](https://communityhelp.net).*

# Ronald McDonald Care Mobile Team Expands Services

A visit to the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (Care Mobile) is often the first introduction to the health care system for medically underserved families and individuals in our community. Launched in 2000, the Care Mobile provides access to medical and preventive dental services to 10 low-income neighborhoods in the City of Worcester and Clinton, as well as preventive dental services to 24 public schools in Worcester.

Traveling to schools, community centers, churches, housing complexes, food pantries and family shelters, care is given regardless of insurance status and walk-ins are welcome. Made possible through a partnership between UMass Memorial Health and the Ronald McDonald House Charities New England, four caregivers staff this first-of-its-kind prototype: a community outreach liaison, a clinical coordinator, a dental hygienist and a nurse practitioner. They help guide patients to enroll in health insurance, find primary care providers and share social support services information based on social drivers (sometimes called determinants) of health screenings for health insurance, housing, transportation, education, employment, food insecurity and other social support needs.

Collaborations are critical to the successful support of these patients, and the Care Mobile team has many.

Since November 2022, the Care Mobile dental team has partnered with the Road to Care mobile clinic team (page 8) one Friday a month at St. John's Catholic Church in Worcester to offer dental screenings to those experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder; referring those with more complex dental care needs for dental appointments. The Care Mobile team held multiple mobile community flu vaccine clinics at women's shelters, family shelters and retirement homes and they continue to expand their visits to local communities. At the request of the City of Fitchburg Public Health Department, in August 2023 the team provided physical exams and dental cleanings to a number of Fitchburg and Leominster children.

In July 2023, a collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health brought dental and medical services to specific migrant family shelter hotels in Shrewsbury and Marlborough. With an influx of migrants coming to the state, it made sense for the Care Mobile team, experienced in guiding people new to the area with medical support, to help. The team offers semi-urgent sick visits, family planning, consultations, medication refill appointments, physical exams and dental cleanings.



From lower left then clockwise: Rafael Gonzalez, Care Mobile Coordinator; Stacy Hampson, RDH, Dental Program Coordinator; Nardy Vega, MA, Outreach Liaison; Brianna Soares, FNP; and Michelle Muller, FNP, Care Mobile Manager.

“If someone is new to the country and comes to us for care, it’s our job to educate them on how the medical system works and their health care opportunities and resources. They can’t get a job without being healthy. So that comes first,” said Michelle Muller, FNP, Care Mobile Program Manager, and Manager of Community Benefits Operations.

## Worcester COVID-19 Stop the Spread Program Comes to an End

The program administered more than 119,000 tests, held more than 300 testing days and administered more than 12,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

Since July 2020, the UMass Memorial Health Ronald McDonald Care Mobile team was critical in providing COVID-19 education, vaccinations and testing as part of the Worcester Stop the Spread COVID-19 testing site operated by UMass Memorial Health and the City of Worcester. While the state’s Mobile Vaccine Equity Enhancement Program ended in January 2023, UMass Memorial Health’s testing program continued until March 30, 2023. Between October 2022 and March 2023, more than 1,632 free tests were distributed, and 428 vaccinations administered.

# Community Lifeline: Mobile Crisis Support Services



Pictured from left: Community Healthlink's Adult Mobile Crisis Intervention team: Bertha Dancause, Anne Volcy, Mykenzie Rixford, Kelly D'Angelo, Heidi Moreno, Wendy VanVoorhis, Toni Corcoran, Stephan Coddington, Kiana Rose, Matthew Cyganik, Nicole Maldonado and Molly Lafalam.

UMass Memorial Health – Community Healthlink's Adult Mobile Crisis Intervention (AMCI) provides skilled, compassionate support, crisis assessment, intervention and stabilization services for adults during difficult times, particularly those experiencing a mental health crisis, substance use crisis or both.

Trained professionals work with individuals in crisis and, when appropriate, family members or other supportive people in their lives. Anyone can use AMCI, and insurance is not required. "Our goal is to meet the client where they are most comfortable, in person or via telehealth, in their home or wherever they need us," said Danielle, Rose, LICSW, Vice President of Crisis Services.

AMCI operates two mobile crisis centers, one in Worcester and one in Leominster, serving 30 surrounding communities. If a patient prefers to meet at a center, AMCI provides transportation to get them there.

Paul MacKinnon, COO of UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, applauds the work of AMCI. "There is tremendous value in addressing these issues in a community setting that doesn't require the acute medical care services of an emergency room," MacKinnon said. "It is healthier for patients to remain out of the hospital if they don't need to be there, and it reduces the strain on emergency departments and the health care system. That is a win-win for everyone."

## Operating Two Community Behavioral Health Centers

In 2023, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services selected Community Healthlink to operate two of the Commonwealth's 25 Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs). "As a CBHC, we have access to quicker appointments for therapy, medication and other services, which contributes to

our overall goal of getting these community members connected to the resources they need and keeping them out of the emergency rooms," Rose said.

Emerging from the pandemic shutdown, team members have transitioned from primarily on-site visits to being in the community daily. AMCI added several new team members last year and now provides case managers along with clinicians during visits.

In addition to adult services, Community Healthlink was one of the first agencies in Massachusetts to provide youth mobile crisis intervention services when the Commonwealth launched its Children's Behavioral Health Initiative in 2009. A clinician and a crisis support worker also go to homes and provide on-site and telehealth options as well. This team often provides support in schools and at the Department of Children and Family Services residential programs.

Anyone needing assistance can walk into one of the centers or call the triage line at 866-549-2142, the State Behavioral Health Help Line at 833-773-2445, or the 988 National Suicide Hotline. Interpreter services are available free of charge.



Our goal is to meet the client where they are most comfortable, in person or via telehealth, in their home or wherever they need us."

Danielle Rose, LICSW, Vice President of Crisis Services





Through this pilot program, mothers also learned how to navigate the health care system and find resources to promote their babies and their own health.

### Supporting High-Risk Pregnant Patients

UMass Memorial Medical Center’s Maternal-Fetal Medicine Department continued the implementation of a pilot program connecting a bilingual – in English and Spanish – community health worker with high-risk Latina patients to improve health for mothers and babies and positively impact infant mortality rates. The pilot program was part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) grant received by the Worcester Division of Public Health in 2018.

Approximately 47 patients enrolled in the pilot program in 2023, which included home visits with the community health worker and referrals to community resources based on social drivers of health needs such as food insecurity and nutrition.

### Grandparents Raising Grandkids

Senior Connection’s (formerly known as Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging, Inc.) Grandparent Raising Grandkids program provides a comprehensive approach to services for grandfamilies — families where grandparents are raising their grandchildren. These families often come from a community of color, speak a language other than English and are unable to access the resources they need.

Over the past decade, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, children raised by grandparents have increased 30% in Massachusetts. Of those grandparents, the majority face some significant challenges: many are still working, may live in poverty, have a disability and are single. These families are often understudied and underserved.

In 2023, Grandparents Raising Grandkids launched a resource center to connect grandfamilies with needed services. Often interacting with up to eight different government agencies, families can now access these services through a central location. For example, case managers working with grandparents and community partners like Community Legal Aid can assist with issues such as custody.

“The funding that Senior Connection received in 2023 from UMass Memorial Health has been critical in launching our Grandparents Raising Grandkids Resource Center, which serves as a one-stop-shop connecting grandfamilies with the resources that they need to thrive,” said Ethan Belding, Senior Connection.

Since August 2023, this first-of-its-kind grandfamily resource center has registered 362 families and assisted hundreds more at community events.

*Learn more about the center at [seniorconnection.org](http://seniorconnection.org).*



### Central Mass Oral Health Coalition

To address a high rate of tooth decay among children in the City of Worcester due to a lack of fluoridated water, the UMass Memorial Medical Center’s Community Benefits Department supports the Central Mass Oral Health Coalition. This effort coordinates access to dental and restorative services to low-income and uninsured children in 24 Worcester public and charter schools.

Outreach Liaison Nardy Vega, MA, assists a Worcester Public School student into the Care Mobile for dental services.



# UMass Memorial Health - Harrington Community Education Series

“As registered dietitians, we see firsthand the impact of the Community Education Series, which gives us the opportunity to share important nutrition information and empower community members to take control of their health.”

Melanie Cohen, MS, RD, LDN, Lead Clinical Registered Dietitian, Harrington



Led by instructors (back row from left), Debora Ferron, RN, Craig Lagevin, and Jason Osbourne, RN, participants of Empowerment Youth Camp receive their Hands Only CPR certificates.

Launched in the summer of 2023, this new community education series was prompted by needs raised in the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment, which focused both on individual personal wellness habits and behaviors, as well as broader questions about community health and barriers to medical care.

Held in community spaces in the Southbridge area from one to three times a month, the programs are led by clinicians and subject-matter experts and have addressed topics including fall prevention, incontinence and urological conditions, depression, cancer, genetic counseling and testing, nutrition for healthy aging, peripheral artery disease, diabetes and foot ulcers and vascular disease. Financial counseling programs, addressing MassHealth, copays, insurance and other financial topics, have been held in both English and Spanish.

“This Community Education Series is very data driven, combining the data from our Community Health Needs Assessment, feedback from community focus groups, and input from providers and caregivers about questions and topics most raised by their patients,” said Angela Chviek, Senior Director, Strategic Planning, Philanthropy and Outreach.

That data gathering is ongoing, including surveys of program attendees and input from the hospital’s Patient and Family Advisory Council providing feedback on interests for future programs.

Southbridge Community Television has begun filming the programs and publishing them on their website. The point person for the series, Marysol Cruz, Outreach and Inclusion Manager, has begun tracking those virtual attendance numbers and developing new surveys to capture areas of interest for future programs.

The seminars have been consistently well-attended and well-received, with general attendance of 15 to 40 per program, Cruz explained. Feedback from both providers and attendees has been overwhelmingly positive.

“As registered dietitians, we see firsthand the impact of the Community Education Series, which gives us the opportunity to share important nutrition information and empower community members to take control of their health,” said Melanie Cohen, MS, RD, LDN, Lead Clinical Registered Dietitian, who led a nutrition for healthy aging program for residents and family members at the Sturbridge Senior Center. “We value nutrition education as a powerful tool in helping to prevent and treat chronic diseases and enhance the overall quality of life for our community members.”

The Community Education Series complements Harrington’s outreach efforts, which include participation in local events and in group settings, providing health screenings and education for all ages.

### Addressing Cancer Disparities

UMass Memorial Medical Center's Community Benefits Department has partnered with the UMass Memorial Health Cancer Center to address disparities — particularly among people of color, ethnic and linguistic minority groups — in accessing cancer care and preventive screenings.

Community Benefits and Cancer Center teams focused on breast, colon and lung cancers and partnered with grassroots community-based organizations in providing education to vulnerable at-risk populations. Community-based organizations have included social service providers, faith-based organizations and churches, public housing sites, food pantries and community coalition groups.

In 2023, two education and outreach events were held at El Buen Samaritano Food Program, Inc, a Worcester non-profit providing food relief and other services to individuals and families. The Cancer Center team shared the importance of breast cancer and colon cancer screenings with food pantry participants through conversation, breast anatomical educational models, educational pamphlets, and guidance on signing up for health insurance and finding a primary care provider. Materials were provided in English and Spanish.

### Multicultural Community Health Fair



The Worcester Multicultural Community Health Fair: Promoting Healing Hope and Health Equity was held on Saturday, September 9, 2023, at the YMCA Fuller Family Park. Sponsored by UMass Memorial Health in collaboration with MyHealth Matters, Inc., the City of Worcester Department of Health & Human Services, the YMCA of Central Massachusetts and the Upper Room Family International Church. The fair brought health resources to the community in a family-friendly setting. The goal was to break down barriers faced by vulnerable community members related to basic preventive care, chronic disease, and access to culturally and linguistically aligned health education and resources. Volunteers helped with health screenings, administered blood glucose tests and blood pressure checks, provided health education and offered counseling on colorectal health, cardiovascular health and other medical conditions.

### Pediatric Asthma Intervention

In 2023, Community Health Worker Stephanie Mesa, was hired by UMass Memorial Medical Center (Medical Center) to support the Pediatric Asthma Intervention program. This program helps reduce school absenteeism, hospitalizations and emergency room visits among high-risk asthmatic children in Worcester — where rates have been historically higher than the state's rate. Visiting homes, Mesa focuses on asthma triggers and educates patients and families on medication adherence, for example using inhalers, and provides referrals to community organizations for social drivers of health resources, including Community Legal Aid, if asthma triggers require landlord remediation.

Mesa receives referrals from the Medical Center's Pediatric Pulmonary and Pediatric Primary Departments. Once a referral is made, she meets with each patient and their family three times over a six- to eight-month period to ensure interventions benefit the patient. In August 2023, Mesa began collaborating with El Buen Samaritano Food Program, Inc. in Worcester to provide asthma trigger education and outreach by hosting an educational table during food pantry hours and at their wellness events.



*Those with mobility-related disabilities and their caregivers participate in a nature activity accessible to all.*

### Nature-Based Learning Experiences

Mass Audubon provides education that makes nature-based activities more accessible and safer for people with mobility-related disabilities and their caregivers. Through UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital’s Determination of Need funding (page 25), Mass Audubon partnered with North County Land Trust, Inc. to create accessibility workshops to help individuals overcome mobility issues on trails in Fitchburg and Princeton.

The program served 84 individuals and provided shared equipment such as trail rollators (to help assist with moving across various terrains), freedom chairs and walking poles to ease nature exploration. According to program surveys, 75% of participants left with an increased knowledge of how to make nature activities more accessible, and the same percentage reported an improvement in their social, emotional, mental and physical health.

“HealthAlliance’s funding supported Mass Audubon’s goal to provide inclusive and equitable access to nature for all through our nature-based accessibility series,” said Jenn Madson, Regional Director, Central Mass Audubon.

### UMass Memorial Medical Center Injury Prevention Center

**Child Passenger Safety:** This car passenger safety educational program teaches proper installation of car seats and provides free car seats to parents with financial need. Each 30-minute appointment includes interactive education from a certified car passenger safety technician to teach proper installation. In 2023, 68 car seats were distributed, and 124 were inspected and safely installed.

**Goods 2 Gardens (previously known as Goods for Guns):** In partnership with the Worcester Police Department, the Worcester Department of Public Health, the Worcester County District Attorney’s Office and other community stakeholders – this program provides grocery store gift cards in exchange for unwanted firearms. Participants also receive gun safety education and are offered free gun trigger locks to help end gun violence, promote safe gun storage and maintain safe neighborhoods. Goods 2 Gardens works with police departments from 17 surrounding communities in Central Massachusetts. In 2023, more than 217 firearms were collected and repurposed into gardening tools.

*According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2022, there were more than 45,000 fire-arm-related deaths in the United States. Also, in the U.S. that year, injuries from firearms were one of the five leading causes of death for people ages 1 - 44 and the leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1-19.*



*Photo far left: Muriel Cleary, MD, Pediatric Surgery, UMass Memorial Medical Center, addresses the press about the Guns 2 Gardens event held on December 10, 2022.*

*Photo near left: A display featuring samples of gardening tools made from unwanted firearms from previous take-back events.*



# Youth Initiatives at UMass Memorial Health - Marlborough Hospital

The Marlborough Hospital team recognizes that sometimes the little things make a big difference. Three hospital initiatives — Tools for School, Little Free Library and Kits for Kids — are making life a little healthier and easier for hundreds of local children. “Life can be scary for children facing challenges, whether it’s being in the hospital, having limited access to books or transitioning back to school full time after the pandemic,” said Rebecca Osterfield, Community Health Worker, Marlborough Hospital, who directs the youth initiatives programs. “These programs are our way of embracing these kids and showing them they are valued.”



## Tools for School

“Tools for School” (photo left) provides kids in the community with backpacks filled with school supplies to prepare them for a new school year. During 2023, Marlborough Hospital collaborated with the Community Cupboard team of the United Way of Tri-County, which builds and donates backpacks each year for kids of all ages heading back to school. The Marlborough Hospital team gathered supplies for teens, including adult-sized backpacks, notebooks, binders and protractors, and assembled and donated 24 fully stocked backpacks.



## Little Free Library

In August of 2023, in collaboration with city and public school officials, Marlborough Hospital launched the “Little Free Library” at the front entrance of the hospital (photo left). Studies have shown that books in children’s hands improve literacy. Fostering a culturally diverse and sensitive environment, the library brings health and wellness books to patients with limited English proficiency and those who may not have access. Books are available in Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole and multiple other languages. “From cookbooks and grief management to word searches and early reader books, the library’s goal is to promote literacy as well as health literacy,” Osterfield said.



## Kits for Kids

Caregivers and the community came together in 2023 to build 150 “Kits for Kids” for pediatric patients in Marlborough Hospital’s Emergency Department (ED) and the Marlborough Community Cupboard (photo left). Kits for Kids is a Marlborough-based non-profit that helps children in foster care or medical facilities by providing age-appropriate kits, including a stuffed animal, socks, hand-knit items and their own toiletries for teens. ED staff spoke of a little boy so frightened when he needed an X-ray, but holding his stuffed animal calmed him during the procedure. “Coming into the hospital can be a frightening time for children,” Osterfield said. “Getting a bag filled with goodies is a wonderful distraction, and also lets children know that we care about them.”



## UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital: Promoting Positive Youth Development

The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster’s Youth Mental Health Support through Exercise, Expressive Arts, and Movement Therapy Program implemented holistic approaches to address the mental health needs of youth. Launched in June 2023, the program uses yoga, meditation, movement therapy and expressive arts to engage children and help them communicate their feelings in a safe space.



We have a lot of data to support the need for kids to have different forms of expression. If you are not in therapy, or cannot afford therapy, we still want to be able to address it.”

Elizabeth Coveney, CEO, The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster

Determination of Need funding from UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital supports the yoga program. It ensures that children have the necessary materials, such as yoga mats, journals, craft items and crystal jar-making kits, and helps them participate regardless of their family’s finances.

“I would say the genesis of this [program] is that we witnessed a dramatic increase in youth mental health, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. We have a lot of data to support the need for kids to have different forms of expression. If you are not in therapy, or cannot afford therapy, we still want the ability to be able to address it in some form or fashion,” said Elizabeth Coveney, CEO, The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster.

Through the grant, the club’s wellness center has also created pamphlets providing families with community resources and mental health organizations if they need further assistance.

## UMass Memorial Health - Community Healthlink C.A.R.E.S. Club

The CHL C.A.R.E.S. Club (Create. Achieve. Respect. Elevate. Succeed.) program offers middle school youth and their families supportive services through mentoring, academic help, individual counseling and psychoeducation groups.

Launched in 2019 and funded in part by a state grant, the C.A.R.E.S. Club provides clinicians and case managers serving nearly 60 students in three area schools: Knox Trail Middle School in Spencer, Worcester East Middle School and Sky View Middle School in Leominster.

Students are referred to the program by either parents or educators, with the goal of improving their performance at school, helping their relationships with friends and family, and developing lifelong skills to manage conflict and emotions. In addition to scheduled sessions and activities, students can go to a clinician for immediate assistance.

“The pandemic and the transition back to full-time school has had a significant impact on students,” said Licensed Social Worker Gwen Gagne, one of the program’s full-time clinicians. “After the isolation of the pandemic, some kids are still struggling with making and maintaining friendships and relationships. So, a lot of our work is asking, ‘How can we support you and get you back on track not only academically but socially as well?’”

Engaging with students consistently every day over the past year has transformed the program and the students, enabling clinicians to strengthen trust and relationships. The students enter a two-year program, and because children grow and change, team members must be flexible and adapt as students’ needs change.

Beyond the school day, the C.A.R.E.S. team also works with students after school, providing a homework help group with support from staff and other students. They also take the students into the community — for example, to a park, library or community event — for meaningful, guided social interaction with peers and family.



When so many of our students are struggling, having the C.A.R.E.S. Club available is an enormous asset.”

Alison Sandberg, Guidance Counselor, Knox Trail Middle School

The program has dramatically impacted all three schools, both academically and socially. Knox Trail Middle School Guidance Counselor Alison Sandberg, said, “When so many of our students are struggling, having the C.A.R.E.S. Club available is an enormous asset. It is such a relief for the family to know that their child is feeling supported, and it is so great to see the students not only learn to advocate for themselves but to also have the confidence in the program that they know will help them feel better so they can then successfully complete their day at school.”

# Regional Environmental Council: Food Justice Programs

These programs connect urban and rural sectors of the food system, develop entrepreneurial food projects and support urban agriculture in Worcester. Two of these programs connect youth to growing food: YouthGROW and UGROW.



Teens from YouthGROW help grow 50 varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs at YouthGROW farms at Bell Hill and Main South.

In 2023, YouthGROW, a year-round agricultural-based youth development and employment program for young people, employed 16 teens in their spring cohort (a 50% increase from the previous year) and 40 teens for their summer intensive six week, 20-30 hours each week. They received training and hands-on education in urban farming, nutrition, food systems, life and job skills. In the summer session, they supported the production of more than 50 varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs at the Bell Hill and Main South farms.

They participated in four service-learning trips to visit and support other farming projects and with other staff and community partner projects, including working with UGROW (see below) to build garden beds at several Worcester schools.

Using state-developed educational surveys, the Regional Environmental Council discovered that youth participants' knowledge of conventional and organic farming increased by 40% throughout the six-week program and that 94% believed that YouthGROW helped them learn about being a leader.

Said YouthGROWER Deztany about their experience, "One thing I learned this summer was community; being at Bell Hill Farm allowed us to create a family almost. I also learned how to be more of a leader and get out of my comfort zone speaking to new people."

## UGROW

With renovations completed at the Grant Square Community Garden in Bell Hill, the UGROW program supported 20 community gardeners with free seedlings, garden planning support, community building events and hosted 12 free workshops with 188 participants in 2023. Together with YouthGROW, they hosted a block party and picnic to celebrate the reopening of the Bell Hill YouthGROW Farm and Grant Square Community Garden (photo left).

Through surveys of garden coordinators, the Regional Environmental Council learned that 61% agree they eat more fruits and vegetables, and 78% are teaching family and friends about gardening because of working in a community garden.



# Navigating MassHealth Insurance Redetermination

In April 2023, the nation’s COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ended, and MassHealth began a state-wide one-year redetermination period, which required patients to be redetermined for program eligibility. Within the year, patients received a letter notifying them when it was time to reapply. If they were found to be ineligible for MassHealth, patients would be phased out of and would need to find new coverage.

During a chaotic and confusing time, UMass Memorial Health’s redetermination process provided patients with clarity, support, and, most importantly, new insurance coverage.

UMass Memorial Health Financial Counseling Director Magda Rodriguez and her team prepared in advance for the number of individuals needing support services during this transition. They hired more staff, expanded office hours, used their call center and opened a temporary office on Belmont Street where individuals could receive in-person help.

Financial counselors met with patients to determine their eligibility and helped them choose the proper health insurance plan that fit their needs and budget. They even helped patients determine if their employers had health insurance benefits they could use. This was particularly helpful since many were uninsured or low-income. “We became a bridge between the patients and MassHealth since we were getting applications facilitated on their behalf to MassHealth,” Rodriguez said.

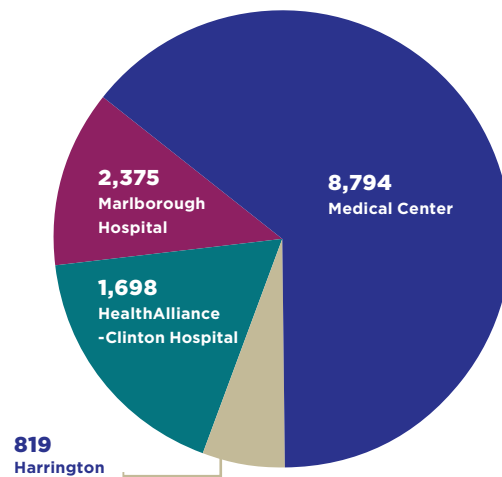
Those ineligible for MassHealth were offered the opportunity to purchase a health plan through the Massachusetts Health Connector program. “Our growing concern during that period was having established patients lose coverage in the middle of some form of treatment. So, undertaking that task to ensure patients were not losing coverage was key,” Rodriguez said.

Ultimately, the insurance redetermination process was successful and received positive patient feedback. Another favorable outcome was that the department could connect patients experiencing food insecurities to SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) run by the U.S. Government.

Rodriguez added that compared to the same period the year before, the volume of financial assistance applicants increased by 65%, and UMass Memorial maintained a 95% MassHealth program approval rate.

“One of the biggest strengths of our team is that we don’t leave anything on the table. We want to make sure that we can find what the patient is truly eligible for. Kudos to the team that we have because they truly care about patients,” said Rodriguez.

MassHealth Applications Approved During Redetermination Period by UMass Memorial Health Location



## Medical-Legal Partnership

The Medical-Legal Partnership’s (MLP’s) Advocacy for a Healthy Community brings legal aid lawyers, private lawyers and clinicians together to address the health-harming legal assistance and equal justice of low-income, Medicaid-eligible pediatric and adult primary care patients. MLP works closely with providers at four UMass Memorial Medical Center clinical practices to help address the social drivers of health that negatively impact patients. In 2023, the MLP processed 183 referrals for possible health-harming legal issues and conducted an additional 70 legal consultations and eight trainings.

# Anchored in Our Community

In 2018, the UMass Memorial Health Board of Trustees committed to redirect 1% of their long-term investment portfolio, or \$4 million, to address social drivers of health in economically challenged neighborhoods. In 2021, when UMass Memorial Health – Harrington joined the health system, another \$4 million was committed to invest in the Harrington service area. Anchor Mission investments, in the form of low-interest loans, focus on four pillar areas: local investment, hiring, procurement and volunteerism. The following are examples of investment loan projects highlighted in fiscal year 2023:



UMass Memorial Health President and CEO, Eric Dickson, MD, volunteers to help build the Sturbridge home.

## LOCAL INVESTMENT

### Making Homeownership a Reality in Worcester and Sturbridge

UMass Memorial Health is committed to supporting building safe, affordable housing for first-time home buyers and those who meet low-income thresholds. In 2023, the dream of homeownership came true for one family in Sturbridge and another in Worcester.

#### Sturbridge

On March 13, 2024, leaders from UMass Memorial Health celebrated the dedication of a home built by Habitat for Humanity Metrowest/Greater Worcester.

To make this possible, the town of Sturbridge donated a 1.3-acre parcel of land, and UMass Memorial Health provided a \$225,000 loan to Habitat for Humanity to build it. Volunteers spent hundreds of hours building the house alongside the family who now lives there. Among the many volunteers were Eric Dickson, MD, President and CEO of UMass Memorial Health, and Ed Moore, President of UMass Memorial Health – Harrington, as part of the Anchor Mission volunteer program.

To be eligible to purchase this single-family, 4-bedroom, 2-bath home, applicants income had to be at or below 30% (total household no more than 60%) of the current HUD Worcester median income with a maximum selling price of \$233,200.

The family selected had been renting an apartment where they turned the living room into a bedroom for their children, with no yard to play in or much privacy. Watching the building of the house from the beginning, the family noted that “...this home would be a dream for all of us.” Thanks to Habitat for Humanity and partners like UMass Memorial Health, the family now lives in an affordable home.

#### Worcester

Despite working two jobs, a Worcester resident questioned whether owning a home for his family would come true. Thanks to a partnership between UMass Memorial Health and Worcester Common Ground (WCG), on Friday, March 31, 2023, they received the keys to their half of a new duplex. In 2020, through the Anchor Mission Investment Committee, UMass Memorial Health provided a line of credit to WCG for purchasing properties for first-time homeownership and affordable rentals in the



Those involved in making homeownership a reality celebrate with the new owners.

*Continued on next page*



## ANCHOR MISSION

Piedmont neighborhood of Worcester. Eligibility was targeted to families whose household incomes were at or below 80% of the average median income in the Worcester area.

“Worcester Common Ground’s development of high-quality, permanent, affordable housing for neighborhood residents who otherwise could not afford a home of their own is entirely consistent with UMass Memorial Health’s Anchor Mission. It’s great to see the fruits of this partnership become a reality and allow families to become first-time homeowners,” said Jim Leary, Vice President of Government and Community Relations at UMass Memorial Health.

## LOCAL INVESTMENT

### Supporting an Arts-Focused Community

The City of Fitchburg found a way to solve the need for local housing while prioritizing its art community through an ambitious renovation strategy. The Fitchburg Arts Community Project is a \$45-million, 68-unit housing project that gives artists preferential access. This new complex, scheduled to be completed in early 2025, will take over the space once occupied by the former B.F. Brown Middle School, the former Academy Street School Annex and the historic city stable. The \$150,000 loan from UMass Memorial Health was integral to making this project a reality.

The art-focused community will bring together artists and those who enjoy the arts to continue bolstering the local creative economy for all residents. The new space is one of the projects that will beautify downtown, make the streets more walkable, and showcase Fitchburg’s arts and culture opportunities. The project is spearheaded by the nonprofit NewVue Communities and supported by many local community organizations. “UMass Memorial Health’s loan in 2023 was one of the key moments for us to bring this project to fruition. They took a big risk on a small organization at a crucial time on a super-complicated, historic, adaptive reuse project in Fitchburg. We are very grateful for their support,” said NewVue Communities Executive Director Marc Dohan.



Rendering of the new 68-unit housing project in the City of Fitchburg scheduled to be completed in early 2025.

## PURCHASING

### Supporting Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses

As part of the purchasing pillar, UMass Memorial Health aims to increase purchases of goods and services from local, women- and minority-owned businesses. Jessie Curran, the Sodexo Sustainability and Wellness Manager at UMass Memorial Medical Center (Medical Center), has been instrumental in this effort by creating strong links between the Medical Center and locally owned food vendors. With her team, Curran has fostered stronger relationships within the community, focusing on two key initiatives: the “I’m a Local” series and building long-term supplier relationships.

The “I’m a Local” series invites vendors to showcase their products and interact with caregivers in the Medical Center’s cafeterias. Some participating Worcester businesses have included Mint Kitchen & Bar, OHANA Food for Life, Bri’s Sweet Treats and Sentie’s Kitchen in Southborough. The response from vendors has been positive, providing them with increased visibility and sales. OHANA Food for Life, for example, reported selling seven times more meals at the Medical Center in one day than on a typical day of lunch sales.

Establishing sustainable, long-term relationships with local food suppliers is essential for a consistent and reliable supply chain. A partnership with Worcester Regional Food Hub to distribute products to the Medical Center from local suppliers like Little Leaf Farms in Devens is one example of supporting smaller vendors regardless of their size or distribution capabilities. Connections like these lay the groundwork for future expansion and collaboration, benefiting local suppliers, the community and UMass Memorial Health.



Ohana Food for Life owners serve food at the Medical Center as part of the I’m a Local series.

### HIRING

#### Fostering a Future in Health Care

UMass Memorial Health’s Workforce Development team’s NextGen Program offers work-based learning opportunities for young adults interested in exploring health care careers. This program provides 15 Worcester high school students paid summer jobs in entry-level or administrative roles to help them gain new skills and knowledge for future careers in health care. Eligible students can also participate in a cooperative education opportunity in their senior year to further advance their skills. “Our NextGen Programs help high school students gain practical workplace skills while introducing them to the range of occupations in our industry. This is both a short-term and long-term investment in our community and the care we deliver,” said Kelly Aiken, Director of Workforce Development and Planning.

In the summer of 2023, Rhaissa, a Worcester Technical High School biotech student, was hired by Laboratory Administration Operations to help with equipment checks and filing lab slides. In this role, she created an inventory and storage system, and collaborated with other laboratory departments to donate extra office supplies and small lab equipment to keep them out of landfills. Donations were sent to the non-profit Partners for World Health or local UMass Memorial Health school affiliations. At the end of her summer experience, Rhaissa was hired as a student in the Lab Pathology Department, helping meet her senior year work-based learning requirement.

### VOLUNTEERISM

#### 2,000 Children Learn to Skate

Since 2017, the nationally acclaimed Worcester Railers’ “Skate to Success” program has introduced more than 8,000 students to skating and hockey — at no cost. The program provides transportation, a healthy lunch and instruction from hockey team members. From September 2022 through March 2023, 2,000 fourth graders from 27 Worcester Public Schools learned to skate with the assistance — both on and off the ice — of 50 caregivers from UMass Memorial’s Anchor Mission volunteer program.

Said UMass Memorial Medical Center Facilities Department Dispatcher Jacquelyn White about her volunteer experience, “Their faces light up with a few words of encouragement, and when they actually get out there, their excitement really comes through with big ear-to-ear grins — a feeling of accomplishment is a tremendous feeling for these students.”

Skate to Success is one of the many Anchor Mission volunteer opportunities that allow caregivers to work outside of their traditional roles to enhance the health, financial stability and safety of their neighbors in need.

#### Anchor Mission Pillars



##### LOCAL INVESTMENT

Allocate system long-term investment funds to address social drivers of health and economic opportunities through collaboration with financial and philanthropic organizations, local government and housing authorities in the region.



##### LOCAL HIRING

Partner with community-based organizations that serve vulnerable populations to mitigate barriers to employment, identify growth opportunities and formalize a hiring pipeline.



##### LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Build opportunities for local purchasing and vendor contracts.



##### VOLUNTEERISM

Expand upon the network of UMass Memorial Health caregivers who volunteer in ways that improve the health of the people living in the communities our health system serves.

# Determination of Need Funding

Under Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations, health care organizations must file a Determination of Need funding (DoN) application when capital improvement projects are planned for its facilities, with 5% of expenses dedicated to community health. In 2023, UMass Memorial Medical Center and UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital committed funds to support programs that promote population health and address the critical health care issues in the community.

## Legendary Legacies: Providing Support to Worcester Food Pantries



Photo left: Program Director Gary Goyette, stands next to the newly wrapped van for The Legacy Transport program, which was purchased with funds from UMass Memorial Medical Center. Photo right: Participants unload fresh produce and food from the Worcester County Food Bank and bring to the food pantry at El Buen Samaritano Food Program, Inc., one of the six food pantries the program services.

The Legacy Transport pilot project is a pioneering initiative by Legendary Legacies, a Worcester-based entrepreneurial nonprofit targeted to men of color who have either been gang-affiliated or incarcerated. This pilot program, designed to enhance the operational efficiency of local food pantries in Worcester, has already established successful partnerships with four food pantries, and increased the efficiency of food transportation from the Worcester County Food Bank to these vital community resources — estimates suggest that transportation time has been reduced by 50%. By facilitating the weekly procurement and delivery of food items, Legacy Transport ensures a reliable supply chain, providing much-needed support to food pantry volunteers who can sometimes be overwhelmed by the demands of their work.

Supported by a coalition of community stakeholders — including the Worcester County Food Bank, Reliant Foundation, Worcester Community Action Council and UMass Memorial Health serving as the principal funder — Legacy Transport places significant emphasis on professional etiquette training for its participants.

This focus aims to equip individuals with essential interpersonal skills and appropriate workplace conduct, preparing them for success in broader employment opportunities while contributing meaningfully to community welfare.

“Information is different from skill; you get information in a classroom, but skill you get by doing,” said Ron Waddell, Executive Director of Legendary Legacies. “The ability to empower our participants with these skills while providing for their community is transformative. Multi-issue resolutions are what is needed in our complex society.”

This initiative supports the logistical needs of food pantries and fosters workforce readiness among participants, contributing to holistic community healing and economic mobility. Legendary Legacies’ goal is to eventually expand this service throughout Worcester County, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable community support, economic empowerment and the well-being of residents.



# Nourishing Communities: Empowering Food Security

Food insecurity is a pressing issue impacting communities across the country. To help address this issue in northern Worcester County, The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster's Nourishing Communities Program assesses immediate food needs, provides nutritional education, teaches children safe culinary skills and fosters a sense of connection through family nights.

The Boys & Girls Club serves a nutritious meal to children daily but realizes that their families may also go hungry. Through a partnership with Growing Places, a nonprofit serving North Central Massachusetts, The Boys & Girls Club provides up to 30 families with 20-pound boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables each Thursday, including recipe cards to help ensure healthy meals at home.

## Importance of Education

In addition to providing access to food, education is a crucial component of the Nourishing Communities' success. For example, the Healthy Essentials Program teaches children a holistic view of food and nutrition.

Family Nights spotlight healthy food and different cultures. These nights are multipurpose. They allow children to gain a deeper appreciation for other cultures and try foods they might not otherwise have access to. They also bring families together to enjoy a healthy meal in a welcoming space.

“  
A huge part of this program is the sustainability for the families, which is why we educate them on nutrition and how nutrition affects your physical and mental health.”

Elizabeth Coveney, CEO, The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster

The Culinary Program teaches children everything from hygienic food preparation to safe knife-cutting and food skills. The goal is to give them the skills to prepare healthy meals safely as they grow up. They learn everything from selecting healthy recipes and food preparation to cooking and cleaning up.



Children sample food during a Family Night at The Boys & Girls Club.

A Determination of Need grant (see page 25) from UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital funded new equipment essential to the kitchen, such as pots, pans, cooking utensils and dishware. The financial support also funded knife kits, cutting boards and safety gloves for the children in the Culinary Program, and supplied the groceries for Family Nights and stocked the kitchen with reusable tools for serving meals.

Healthy nutrition is an essential building block for children's development. Food insecurity is a hardship that many are quietly facing, especially in families from marginalized groups. With support from HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, Nourishing Communities is eliminating barriers to nutrition and providing children with life skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

“A huge part of this program is the sustainability for the families, which is why we educate them on nutrition and how nutrition affects your physical and mental health. We don't just want it to end when this grant ends. We want them to be educated and continue to make healthy meals at home,” said Elizabeth Coveney, CEO, The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster.



## UMass Memorial Medical Center

In 2023, the Medical Center completed the distribution of Determination of Need (DoN) funds from their 2017 University Campus renovations and 2018 Surgical Center in Shrewsbury, which was developed in collaboration with its partners, the Reliant Medical Group and Shields Health. The grants awarded totaled \$2.58 million, with \$1.4 million distributed by Shields Health.

Funds were distributed to nonprofits focused on food insecurity, mental health and housing to improve community health services in vulnerable areas across Greater Worcester. Thirty-four grants were distributed with Shields Health funding 18 and the Medical Center funding 16 with grants between \$20,000 and \$150,000. The grants included \$150,000 to the Worcester Community Action Council and \$100,000 each to Genesis Club House, El Buen Samaritano Food Program, Inc. and Legendary Legacies (page 23).

“Fostering better health outcomes starts at the community level. We are honored to present these 16 organizations with well-deserved grants that will bolster their ongoing efforts to improve access to high-quality, health-related resources in Central Massachusetts,” said Eric Dickson, MD, President and CEO of UMass Memorial Health.

## UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital

Over five years (from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2024), HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital will have distributed \$2,350,000 in community benefits through DoN funding from their Emergency Department Capital Project. Approximately \$1.5 million was made available between 2022 and 2024, with an estimated 40% allocated in 2022, 30% in 2023 and 30% planned in 2024.

In 2023, grants were awarded to 19 organizations to support programming, purchase equipment and develop new initiatives. The grant funding was divided into three tiers: 11 organizations received Tier I funding of up to \$10,000, eight received Tier II funding of up to \$50,000 and one received Tier III funding of \$300,000 over multiple years. Highlighted in this report are four of these initiatives: The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster received \$10,000 for a youth mental health program (page 17) and \$50,000 for a new kitchen (page 24); Mass Audubon received \$9,153 for an accessible nature trail (page 15); and St. Paul Consortium received \$50,000 for a mental and behavioral health program (page 9). Below is a list of the Tier I, II and III recipients.

### TIER I RECIPIENTS (Up to \$10,000)

Able to Serve New England  
Catholic Charities Worcester County  
Clear Path for Veteran’s NE  
Ellie Fund  
Ginny’s Helping Hand, Inc.  
LUK Crisis Center, Inc.  
Mass Audubon  
North Central Mass Faith Based Community Coalition  
Spanish American Center  
The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster

### TIER II RECIPIENTS (Up to \$50,000)

Community Health Connections  
LUK Crisis Center  
Montachusett Recovery Foundation  
Montachusett Veteran’s Outreach Center  
New Vue Communities  
St. Paul Consortium  
The Boys & Girls Club Fitchburg and Leominster  
United Way of North Central Mass

### TIER III RECIPIENTS (Up to \$300,000 over multiple years)

Health Equity Partnership of North Central Mass (CHNA9)

## RECOGNITION AND AWARDS



### Dr. Kavita Babu Recognized for Her Dedication to Opioid Crisis

Kavita Babu, MD, UMass Memorial Health's Division Chief of Medical Toxicology, Co-Director of Road to Care Mobile Addiction Service, and Chief Opioid Officer, was honored in 2023 with two prestigious awards for her relentless commitment to ending the opioid epidemic: the Josie King Hero Award and the title of Hometown Hero.

The Josie King Hero Award, named after 18-month-old Josie King, who tragically died in 2001 due to medical errors, was established by the Josie King Foundation. This award recognizes individuals dedicated to fostering a culture of patient safety.

Along with her colleagues, Dr. Babu has tirelessly championed opioid-use reduction and the incidence of overdose and related deaths by developing innovative strategies for opioid safety, overdose prevention, compassionate care and advanced surveillance of emerging drugs. One of those strategies was a collaboration with the Kraft Foundation and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to secure a grant for the Care Reach in Reach mobile clinic (page 8). This mobile clinic brings addiction-prevention and overdose-prevention messaging and resources directly to vulnerable communities in Central Massachusetts. Their efforts have led to measurable improvements and numerous changes in how addiction care is delivered.

Also, in appreciation of her ongoing efforts, Dr. Babu was honored as a Hometown Hero and invited to throw the ceremonial first pitch at the Worcester Red Sox baseball game on July 7, 2023.



### Family Medicine Physician Dr. Robert Babineau, Jr. Retires

With a career in family medicine spanning more than 50 years, UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital physician Robert Babineau, Jr., MD, retired in 2023, leaving a family legacy of dedicated, compassionate care to patients in Fitchburg and surrounding communities.

After finishing medical school at Tufts Medical School and a residency at Santa Monica UCLA Hospital in 1976, he joined his father's Fitchburg Family Medicine practice and helped him establish a Family Practice Residency Program.

The two practiced together for 10 years until Dr. Robert Babineau Sr.'s retirement in 1986. Across their medical careers, they cared for patients for 72 years straight at Fitchburg Family Medicine. "That is what I call continuity of care," he said.

While the community no longer sees him at Fitchburg Family Medicine, they may see him playing golf or overseeing "Gallery at 759," a high-end collectibles shop on Main Street that he opened in September 2023. The gallery showcases his second lifelong passion for collecting memorabilia.

## UMass Memorial Medical Center Named Best in State for Serving Underserved Populations

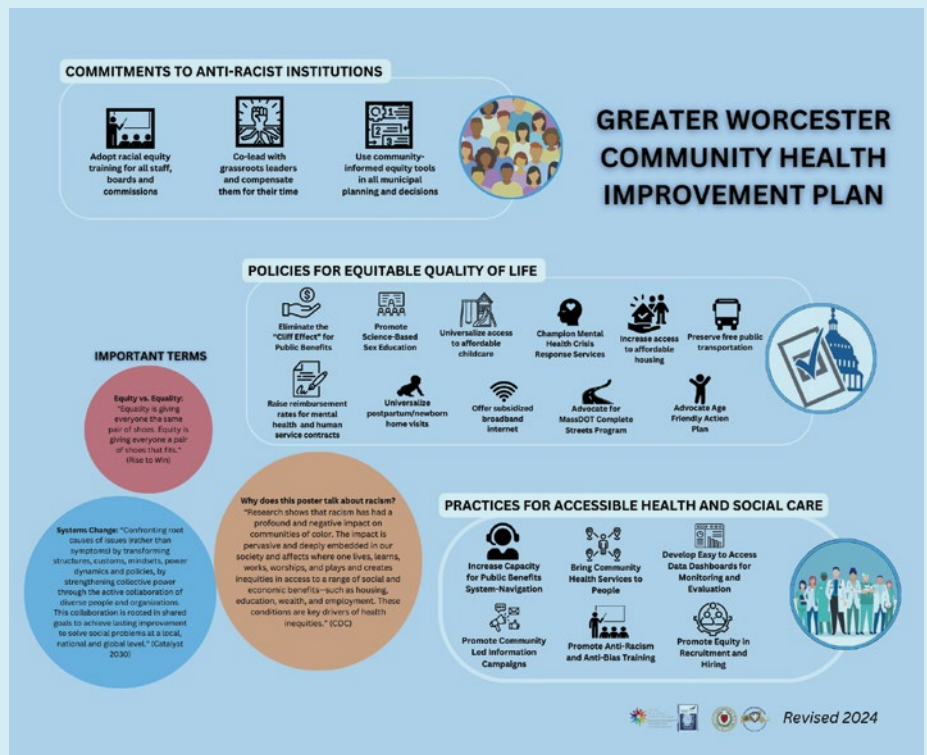
A new ranking by U.S. News & World Report named UMass Memorial Medical Center one of the best Regional Hospitals in the nation for providing equitable access. The only Massachusetts hospital to make this list, the Medical Center was recognized, along with 53 other hospitals from 26 states, for serving low-income patients from varying racial backgrounds to provide high-quality medical care. According to U.S. News, this ranking was based on the Medical Center's recognition as a 2023 Best Regional Hospital and meeting two of three criteria for: the percentage of patients from socioeconomically deprived communities, racial and ethnic patients and Medicaid or low-income patients.

# Community Health Needs Assessments

As part of a not-for-profit health care system, every three years, each hospital within the UMass Memorial Health system conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) specific to its service area. Each CHNA identifies its community health issues and is developed in close partnership with community health stakeholders, social service providers, advocates, community residents and organizations to develop strategies to address barriers to care, health outcome disparities and gaps in health care service.

Based on the findings, the hospitals collaborate with community partners and local health departments to develop and update the local Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and adopt a three-year Community Benefits Strategic Implementation Plan to align with the CHNA and CHIP. In 2023, UMass Memorial Medical Center completed their 2024 CHNA in collaboration with the City of Worcester’s Division of Public Health, Central Mass Regional Public Health Alliance, the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester and Fallon Health.

The Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester was a facilitating partner in the development of the 2021-2026 CHIP, and have updated the plan to address health needs identified in the 2024 CHNA (see poster right). UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital also began its CHNA process in 2023 with community partners, and will complete its assessment report in collaboration with Heywood Healthcare by September 30, 2024.



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- Cover, page: 4, 5, 6, 10, 11: Collin Hamilton Studio
- Page 3: (Elivra Guardiola): Robert Carlin Photography
- Page 7, 26 (Dr. Babineau): UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital
- Page 8, 9: Matt Wright Photography
- Page 13: UMass Memorial Health – Harrington
- Page 15: Mass Audubon (trail)
- Page 16: UMass Memorial Health – Marlborough Hospital
- Page 18: Regional Environmental Council
- Page 21: NewVue Communities (rendering)
- Page 23: Legendary Legacies
- Page 24: The Boys & Girls Club of Leominster and Fitchburg

## Caring for Central Massachusetts Communities



Largest health care system in Central Massachusetts



Largest provider of safety net care in Central Massachusetts



Supports a dedicated financial assistance program that provides free or discounted care to qualifying patients and their families



Invests in community-based programs and initiatives that address social drivers of health



*Top row: Coggshall Park, Fitchburg; Worcester Union Station, Worcester. Middle row: Caring for our patients. Bottom row: Webster Town Hall, Webster; and Marlborough Soldier's and Sailor's Monument at First Baptist Church, Marlborough.*



UMass Memorial Health is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with 17,000 caregivers and 2,100 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group. We are the clinical partner of UMass Chan Medical School. Our comprehensive system includes UMass Memorial Medical Center, UMass Memorial Health – Harrington, UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial Health – Marlborough Hospital, and UMass Memorial Health – Community Healthlink. Together, we impact every aspect of life in the region by making health and wellness services available to everyone, at the bedside, in the clinic or community, or even at home, advocating for social equality and providing economic stability and opportunity. There are many ways to heal. We pursue them all. Relentlessly. Visit [www.ummhealth.org](http://www.ummhealth.org).

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