

# Anchored in Our Community



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

December, 2019

## ◆ FROM THE DESK OF ERIC DICKSON, MD

*President & CEO, UMass Memorial Health Care*



In October, I had the honor of accepting the Game Changer award from the Worcester Chamber of Commerce on behalf of UMass Memorial Health Care. The award was presented to us for our Anchor Mission work, which includes our four pillars – local investing, hiring, purchasing and volunteering. What I said in front of the crowd of business owners and community partners is the truth: the real “game changers” are our 13,000 frontline caregivers who are deeply dedicated to our Anchor Mission and to caring for the communities we serve every day.

Another important milestone in our Anchor Mission strategy is that we are one of 14 health systems nationwide, and one of two in Massachusetts alongside Boston Medical Center, that are joining together as part of the Healthcare Anchor Network to invest more than \$700 million collectively to address health, housing and economic inequalities so that we all can create stronger, healthier communities.

Why are we doing this? Simply put, it is the right thing to do. As the largest health system and largest employer in Central Massachusetts, we’re uniquely positioned not only to care for patients in this region, but also to leverage our resources to help address social determinants of health, such as economic, racial and environmental resource disparities, that we know affect health outcomes up to 80%.

This kind of “place-based investing” creates healthy and thriving communities by increasing available capital for positive social, economic or environmental impact. It supports local and diverse business development and empowers low-income community members to create, manage and own their own businesses.

There are so many variables and hidden barriers that negatively affect the health and livelihood of people in our communities that we realize our concerns had to extend beyond the walls of our hospitals. Through our Anchor Mission work, we get to meet our patients where they are, and work with them to help address many of these issues in a nonclinical setting. I’m proud to say this work has energized our system and our caregivers as well. Thank you to all of our caregivers for making our Anchor Mission work possible. ◆

## ANCHOR MISSION STEERING COMMITTEE

### ◆ CO-CHAIRS

#### **Douglas Brown**

*President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals and Chief Administrative Officer*

#### **Cheryl Lapriore**

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

### ◆ COMMUNITY BENEFITS DEPARTMENT

#### **Monica Lowell**

*Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits*

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

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



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*Health Care*

## ◆ EMPLOYEES ARE 'PILLARS' OF VOLUNTEERING

Forget 3-D. The Anchor Mission initiative at UMass Memorial Health Care is in "4-D."

While the majority of health care systems across the nation deploy investing, hiring and purchasing pillars to execute their Anchor Mission strategies, UMass Memorial has added a fourth dimension to addressing social determinants of health in its communities – a volunteering pillar. By harnessing the enthusiasm of its employees who volunteer, the health care system is giving its Anchor Mission a whole new scope.

"We know volunteering is already happening on an extraordinary scale at UMass Memorial, and we don't want to get in the way of that," said Kate Behan, director of clinical affiliations and volunteering committee co-chair. "We simply want to encourage, support and recognize it in a systematic way, while providing a social determinants of health focus and impact."



*Following the Pharmacy Department's strategic planning retreat to update and align their department goals to the organization's True North goals, the team chose to participate in a volunteer opportunity at the Greendale YMCA where they refreshed paint in the main lobby.*

The committee, comprising members from each UMass Memorial entity and the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is establishing an infrastructure, including a community volunteering policy and an awareness campaign to engage the 14,000-strong employee ranks.

A first step is understanding the scope of activity already taking place in local communities. Employees that currently volunteer are invited to contact Kate or committee co-chair Becky Martella, and offer information, not only about what they are doing, but also their volunteering "insights and input" to inform best practices, Behan said. This effort will complement a registry the committee plans to launch in early 2020 on the UMass Memorial intranet, the Hub, to encourage additional participation.

"An employee interested in supporting our Anchor Mission volunteer pillar can enter their name in our database, a sophisticated system from Salesforce that will help us

communicate about volunteer opportunities in their area," Kate explained. Upon registering, employees will receive an Anchor Mission volunteer t-shirt. "Our hope is that the community will grow to recognize these bright yellow t-shirts as our UMass Memorial employee volunteers!" ◆

*For more information, contact Kate at [kathryn.behan@umassmemorial.org](mailto:kathryn.behan@umassmemorial.org) or Becky at [rebecca.martella@umassmemorial.org](mailto:rebecca.martella@umassmemorial.org).*

## ◆ BALANCING HEALTH AND A HEALTHY ECONOMY



As the investing pillar team meets with community leaders to discover ways to improve the health of residents in Central Massachusetts, one opportunity continues to rise to the surface – and it couldn't come at a more pivotal moment for our region.

"Low-income housing is a current focus for us," said Robert Feldmann, senior vice president of finance and corporate controller at UMass Memorial Medical Center, and co-chair of the health care system's Anchor Mission investing committee. "As Worcester and surrounding areas improve economically, housing costs are increasing, and people are being displaced. We're identifying partners behind projects that don't force people out."

For low-income families and individuals, access to affordable housing is critical to their long-term health, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, which publishes an annual analysis of housing data. "Affordable homes provide vulnerable families with the stability they need to thrive, to improve their health, education, and economic outcomes," said Diane Yentel, NLHC president and CEO, upon release of a recent report. "Housing instability increases the likelihood of job loss, eviction, and homelessness, negatively affecting a family's physical and mental well-being throughout their lives."<sup>1</sup>

*"Affordable homes provide vulnerable families with the stability they need to thrive, to improve their health, education, and economic outcomes."*

Another report, sponsored by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, brings that message home. In October, a yearlong housing and economic study conducted by Smart Growth Economics LLC, revealed Worcester's resurgence, and its impacts. Report author Mahesh Ramachandran underscored that "in order to continue the growth and vibrancy of the region, a balanced and inclusive housing strategy is critical."<sup>2</sup> Ramachandran continued that "if unaddressed, housing challenges such as under-supply and substandard units could stall Worcester's economic growth."<sup>2</sup>

*“As Worcester and surrounding areas improve economically, housing costs are increasing, and people are being displaced. We’re identifying partners behind projects that don’t force people out.”*

UMass Memorial is addressing this burning issue now, while exploring others that promote health *and* economic growth, such as business development in underserved areas. With \$4 million dedicated to a four-year investing initiative, “we are identifying projects for our Board of Trustees, who are connected to our communities and understand each proposal’s potential,” said Bob. “We expect to have deployed at least \$1.5 million by the end of 2019.” ♦

**Sources:**

1. <https://nlihc.org/news/us-has-national-shortage-more-72-million-affordable-available-rental-homes-families-most-need>
2. <https://www.telegram.com/news/20191025/growing-pains-housing-issues-in-worcester-are-possible-buzzkills>

## ◆ UMASS MEMORIAL PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS GROWING PEDIATRIC ASTHMA CONCERNS

In 2018, Worcester ranked as 12<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation for estimated asthma prevalence and related emergency department (ED) visits and fatalities by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA). According to AAFA’s 2019 Asthma Capitals Report, Worcester’s ranking has improved, dropping to #30.

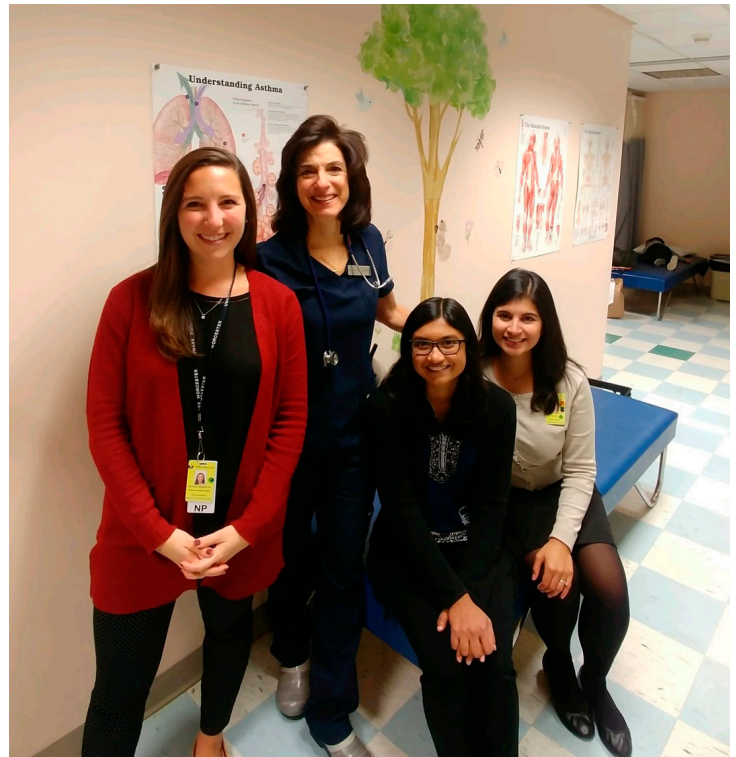
Between 2009-2011, rates of pediatric asthma-related ED visits in Worcester were double the state. In 2014, UMass Memorial Medical Center established and continues to co-chair a multisectoral Pediatric Asthma Home Visiting Intervention/Task Force to reduce school absenteeism, hospitalizations and ED use among asthmatic children. Partners include two community health centers, Worcester Public Schools (WPS)/Head Start, the Worcester Healthy Homes Office and Community Legal Aid (CLA). Community health workers address home triggers, provide education and make referrals to CLA to resolve triggers requiring landlord action. A Policy Committee focuses on environmental triggers in WPS and a “Hospitalized-Patient” program operated by pediatric pulmonology at the Medical Center connects patients to the intervention.

Despite improvements in Worcester’s national ranking, with 3,500 asthmatic children in WPS, chronic absenteeism remains a concern. The Medical Center’s medication adherence program, Asthma Link, helps to address this by enrolling 85 to 100 high-risk students annually and coordinating controller medications to be given by school nurses. The hospital’s pediatric pulmonology team also provides training to WPS nurses.

A preliminary study of Asthma Link conducted by Michelle Trivedi, MD, MPH, pediatric pulmonologist at the Medical Center, showed that the 86 children (ages 6-18) enrolled in the program between 2012 and 2015 exhibited significant pre/post-intervention decreases in:

- ED visits and hospital admissions
- Asthma rescue medication refills
- School absences and oral steroid use

“The Asthma Link program has been invaluable to our patients and the children in this community,” said Dr. Trivedi. “As a pulmonologist, I witness the challenges that families face to provide their children with a daily asthma medicine, and, as a consequence, the poorly controlled asthma that these children experience resulting in preventable ED visits, school absences and asthma attacks. The Asthma Link program has considerably improved the lives of many of these children, by ensuring that children with high-risk asthma receive their daily preventive inhaler with their school nurse.” She explained, “I see firsthand that these children have less asthma attacks, fewer emergency room visits/hospitalizations and better school attendance. Additionally, we have opened the lines of communication between the medical providers in the clinic, school nurses and families about these children’s asthma.” ♦



*Pictured, members of the AsthmaLink program from left, Melissa Condren, NP, pediatric pulmonology, UMass Memorial Medical Center; Gina Goggins, school nurse, Norrback Elementary School; Shushmita Hoque, MD candidate '21, UMass Medical School; and Michelle Trivedi, MD, MPH, pediatric pulmonology, UMass Memorial Medical Center.*

## ◆ COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

### PILOT ASTHMA INTERVENTION EXTENDS TO NORTH COUNTY

In 2018, UMass Memorial Medical Center applied for and received a grant from the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative to expand our successful, community-based Pediatric Asthma Home Visiting Intervention to North County through a pilot program. Using the Medical Center's community health worker (CHW) model and building from Montachusett Opportunity Council's Childhood Lead Prevention program, a CHW was dispatched to conduct home visits to identify and address triggers. Unlike the Medical Center's program, the North County program accepts referrals from both the Head Start (pre-kindergarten) – approximately 500 families, and WIC programs – about 7,000 enrolled. During the pilot, team members work closely with local pediatrician and UMass Memorial



HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Board of Trustees Chairman, Fernando Catalina, MD, who educates and refers families to the program. The pilot program included nearly 50 referrals.

*Pictured, Magda Rodriguez, left, a UMass Memorial community health worker, educates a young North County family about the use of healthy and natural cleaning supplies in the home to prevent asthma triggers. Photo credit: Dany Pelitier*

### WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR ...

**COMMUNITY** – In 2017, UMass Memorial Health Care partnered with Reliant Medical Group to establish CommunityHelp, an online directory of community resources created to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in the communities we serve. CommunityHelp centralizes access to the resources needed by community members to overcome some of life's challenges such as legal aid, medical care, food, job training and more. Additionally, CommunityHELP built a referral process to bridge the gap between health systems and community organizations. Last month, representatives from more than 40 agencies across Central Massachusetts, attended a CommunityHelp retreat to review CommunityHELP system updates, learn about the UMass Memorial Health Care Anchor Mission and to deepen the integration of the CommunityHELP platform within community programs. There are 1,600 Worcester County program resources currently listed on the CommunityHelp site: [communityhelp.net](http://communityhelp.net).



*Pictured from left, Lisa Kippax, Strategic Initiative Director, Elder Services of Worcester Area; Joanne Gravell, program director, Family Services of Central MA; and Christine Cernak, senior director of Longitudinal Care, Office of Clinical Integration, UMass Memorial Health Care.*

### NEW PARTNERSHIP/PILOT ADDRESSES AT-RISK PREGNANCIES

The Maternal-Fetal Medicine and Community Relations departments of UMass Memorial Medical Center are partnering with the Worcester Division of Public Health to pilot a community health worker (CHW) intervention in Maternal-Fetal Medicine. The funding, provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) REACH Grant, supports a CHW to address breastfeeding and linkages to community supports for social determinants of health among at-risk pregnant and lactating women. "Of the at-risk Latino populations in the nine census tracts of Worcester, many are served by the UMass Memorial system," said Cathy Violette, NP, Maternal-Fetal Medicine Division at UMass Memorial Medical Center. "Community Workers promote linkages connecting at-risk prenatal populations with local community services to improve health promotion efforts."



*Photo on left, left to right, UMass Memorial Medical Center team members Kim Reckert, community health manager, Department of Community Relations; Monica Lowell, vice president, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits; Ellen Delpapa, MD, chief, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine; and Cathy Violette, NP, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. Photo on right, Rosimeire Luiz, community health worker intern, UMass Memorial Medical Center.*



### MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH COUNCIL HEALTH CARE STAR AWARD

Monica Lowell, vice president, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits, was awarded the prestigious Massachusetts Health Council Health Care Star Award for being a community and health leader. Under Monica's direction, the UMass Memorial Community Benefits Department develops and implements innovative clinical/community linkage models to address health disparities and overcome barriers to accessing care and services among at-risk populations. Efforts include the UMass Memorial Ronald McDonald Care Mobile program, which provides medical and preventive dental services at 10 neighborhood sites and 20 schools across Worcester. Other programs include a pediatric asthma home-visiting intervention that utilizes community health workers to identify and address environmental triggers in the home, programs providing jobs skills and employment opportunities for inner-city youth, development of urban gardens to address food insecurity, a first-time homeownership program that resulted in 25 homes in the Bell Hill neighborhood, and others.



## ◆ UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE

UMass Memorial Health Care is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 13,000 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). ◆