

Medical Care – And More

Saratoga Community Health Center (CHC), at 24 Hamilton Street, opened in September, 2013 to fill significant gaps in access to primary care, dental care, and behavioral health services for the uninsured and underinsured in the greater Saratoga Springs region. The CHC is the only facility of its kind in the greater Saratoga region, and is unique as one of just a handful of such centers (non-federally qualified) nationwide.

Since its inception, 2,748 individuals have received primary medical care and 1,282 have accessed behavioral health services. The Dental Program has 3,238 active patients. New in 2017, our Addiction Medicine program has already engaged 879 patients in treatment plans. Overall patient volume grew last year by 28% over 2016, reaching nearly 28,000 patient visits. Staff has nearly quadrupled, from 11 in 2013 to a roster of 41 today.

The CHC primarily targets low-income families and individuals, particularly those who are uninsured or



underinsured. All services are provided regardless of ability to pay. Our Insurance Navigators and Saratoga Hospital Financial Assistance staff help those without insurance apply for low-cost coverage, or enroll them in the Hospital's financial assistance program. Through its Financial Assistance program, the Hospital provides over \$625,000 annually in financial assistance for patients who demonstrate financial hardship to pay for medical services. Additionally, 102 patients were referred to the hospital's health insurance navigation program last year.

Reducing preventable emergency room visits and hospital admissions is a top priority for Saratoga Hospital and the CHC. CHC staff work with Saratoga

Hospital's Emergency Department and Urgent Care facilities to proactively identify and recruit uninsured patients in need of healthcare. The CHC prioritizes those patients who have complex healthcare needs, chronic diseases coupled with mental health issues, or a history of frequent emergency room visits or hospital admissions. On average, the CHC treats 25 new patients each month, including referrals from the Hospital, Shelters of Saratoga, and Code Blue who are in need of immediate physical and behavioral health services and case management. By engaging high need patients in primary care, hundreds of ER and Urgent Care visits are avoided, at a savings of more than \$500,000 per year.

Our talented staff works to continually identify and address existing and emerging needs to improve the overall health and well-being of all patients and their families.

Patients seeking care at the CHC need more than basic medical and dental care. Many suffer from multiple chronic conditions, including mental illness and substance use disorders. They need individual and group therapy. They need assistance with complications related to diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. They need help accessing health insurance, social services, and nutritional food. They need opportunities to learn about wellness and healthy lifestyle choices. They need the ability to access these services in a welcoming environment that is convenient to their homes and workplaces.





Community Support – Your Gifts at Work

For many patients, their connection with the CHC is their first experience with routine healthcare. But, because of the tremendous support we have received from thousands of caring, generous donors like you, we have been able to offer them much, much more:

- » A *Patient Prescription Fund* covers the cost of co-payments for many patients who otherwise might forego getting their prescriptions filled, increasing medication compliance rates and improving outcomes. O'Brien's Pharmacy of Ballston Spa is the CHC's pharmacy partner in this effort.
- » A *Dental Needs Initiative* provides funds to assist patients with costly dental procedures and appliances, which has had a profound impact on their improved health status and increased self-esteem. The CHC is one of only two full-time providers of dental services for Medicaid patients in the region, making this support even more vital and meaningful. This initiative was established by corporate partner Boston Futures Group and generous donor and volunteer, Diane Gilligan.
- » A *Teaching Food Pantry*, stocked primarily through donations from Hospital employees and partner Hannaford, offers items that reinforce messages about healthy eating choices. A Community Garden produces fresh vegetables and herbs to supplement monthly donations from local farmers.
- » A *Nutrition Prescription Program*, funded by a United Way grant through July 2020 during the summer and fall seasons, helps patients understand the impact that food can have on chronic disease. Staff introduce patients to fresh fruits and vegetables that may not be part of their traditional diet, share recipes, and instruct patients on how to read food

labels. Participating patients have been successful in losing weight, lowering their blood pressure, and achieving target HbA1C and LDL cholesterol levels.

- » *Max's Pet Food Pantry* promotes well-being by making it possible for patients to keep their pets and benefit from their companionship.
- » Staff-facilitated group classes in *Nutrition*, *Diabetes Management*, and *Complementary Pain Management* help patients manage chronic conditions and develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The *Diabetes Management* series offers support and education, and the *Complementary Pain Management* course teaches patients to manage chronic pain through mindfulness, yoga, nutrition, and meditation.
- » Formed in 2016, a unique partnership with the Saratoga Springs Lions Club (SSLC), the Lions Eye Institute, and Albany Medical College brings diabetic eye care to patients of the CHC. Screenings are offered once per month for patients who otherwise could not afford them. To date, 83 patients have been screened; six were diagnosed and treated for diabetic retinopathy, two were treated for detached retinas, and two received surgery to repair torn corneas. These were vision saving screenings that would not have been available without this program. Going forward, the SSLC has committed \$50,000 to support program expansion, and add audiology, into renovated space at the CHC. They are also working with the Northeastern Association of the Blind (Albany) to bring low-cost vision exams and pre-school vision screenings to the CHC.
- » Through support from the Saratoga Hospital Volunteer Guild and Saratoga Honda, the CHC purchased a minivan that provides transportation for patients between the CHC, Hospital, and physician offices.
- » Patients of the CHC often suffer from isolation issues. Each year, our friends from Longfellows Restaurant support special holiday celebrations that provide social support for patients. Likewise, our generous CHC staff hosts a Holiday Luncheon for their patients, serving the staff's favorite dishes. Activities like these build closer relationships between staff and community, and encourage patients to engage in healthcare.

Newest Addition – Addiction Medicine

Staff at the CHC recognized a need for substance use disorder treatment among their patients and the greater Saratoga Springs community. In early 2017, space at the CHC was renovated and re-configured to support a fully integrated primary care/behavioral health model, funded in part through grants from the City of Saratoga's Community Development Block Grant program and the Presbyterian New England Congregational Church. A physician specializing in Addiction Medicine was hired, along with support staff, and the program launched March 22, 2017.

The demand for services has grown even more quickly than anticipated, with 879 patients already engaged. Saratoga County, like the rest of the Capital Region, has shown a significant rise in addictions in recent years – particularly opiate addictions. The result has been increased numbers of opioid-related emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths. The availability of treatment programs has fallen far behind the demand for them.

The new Addiction Medicine Program is fully integrated with the primary care and behavioral health services that were already the core of the Community Health Center. The medical, psychiatric and addiction medicine staff all work together as a comprehensive team to address the multiple needs of patients in their care. Through warm handoffs, regular communication, and shared space, the team collaboratively develops patient-centered care plans to retain patients in care and engage them in their recovery.

Plans for the Future – 2018 and Beyond

The demand for programs and services at the CHC has been so great in our community that we are planning to expand yet again – both physically and programmatically. Originally occupying just half of the building, we will soon fill the entire building, adding space for a large new community/training room, offices for our community partners, dedicated space for our Teaching Food Pantry, and the audiology and ophthalmology exam rooms that will be supported by the Saratoga Springs Lions Club. Meanwhile, the Addiction Medicine program will be looking to add new counseling staff to keep up with the growing caseload of patients.

Thank You

The Saratoga Community Health Center was made possible through an extraordinary initial investment by our community of \$3,000,000. Since then, community support has exceeded \$2,000,000, not including the proceeds of the hospital's annual Summer Gala which has contributed an additional \$1,800,000. The CHC endowment currently stands at \$650,623.

The success of our Saratoga Community Health Center would not have been possible without your financial support, your volunteer support, or your emotional support. On behalf of those whose lives have been immeasurably enriched and forever improved, we can't thank you enough.



SARATOGA HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

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