From WV Hospital Association

**WV Hospitals Doing More With Less**

By Joe Letnaunchyn, President and CEO West Virginia Hospital

Much has been written about the benefits of healthcare coverage expansion to West Virginia hospitals through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). With more West Virginians having access to coverage than ever before, the goal of a healthier population is within reach. West Virginia hospitals are doing their part with less resources to regularly improve the health of their communities.

Some have indicated that with more individuals being insured, West Virginia hospitals are experiencing a “windfall of savings.” It has been suggested that these “savings” present hospitals with an opportunity to make meaningful changes in the health outcomes of state residents and “that if hospitals would direct a fraction of this windfall to fund community efforts, West Virginia could make major strides in reducing obesity, smoking and drug abuse.

On behalf of the 66 member hospitals and health systems in West Virginia – many of which are the largest employers and economic drivers in West Virginia, I would appreciate the opportunity to share the other side of the story – a story that includes providing healthcare to 1.8 million people; employing more than 46,000 healthcare professionals across the state; purchasing millions of dollars in supplies and services, and investing millions of dollars in capital projects right here in West Virginia.

Statistics are beginning to filter in, and it’s true that in the first year of healthcare coverage expansion under new marketplace options and Medicaid expansion, the landscape for hospitals has certainly changed. Hospitals have seen about a 47 percent reduction in uncompensated care, according to figures reported by West Virginia hospitals to the West Virginia Health Care Authority. However, these statistics only tell half the story.

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**Proud Father**
Pictured at right are SJMH’s Director of Engineering Chuck Chabanik, with his visiting son, Chase. Chase was in for the holidays before relocating to a military base in Kentucky. Chase worked at SJMH a few years ago but is now following in his father’s military footsteps. Chase will be stationed with the 101st Airborne Division of the Army.
Annual Trip to Canaan Valley Resort
Sponsored By SJMH Social Recreation Committee

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*Beginning level group lessons are for skiers age 7+ and snowboarders age 9+. Age 5 and under ski rental $15

Reserve your spot now! Contact Crystal Frazier at 304-997-8649 or cfrazier@stonewallhospital.net.
Reservations and payment in full must be received by WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2016 in order to guarantee discounted rate!
Beginning in 2010, upon passage of the ACA, hospitals began the advance funding of Medicaid expansion through significant payment cuts for treating Medicare patients. These cuts were built into the ACA as a way to cover the cost of Medicaid expansion.

In West Virginia, more than 70 percent of patients that hospitals treat are covered by either Medicaid, Medicare, or some other government funded program. However the reimbursement rates to hospitals for caring for these patients is below the actual costs of providing care to these patients.

The initial 10 year impact of the ACA cuts in WV hospital Medicare payments was an estimated $1.3 billion. Since then, that estimate has increased annually as additional hospital payment cuts are continuing to be implemented. Currently, Medicare reimburses below cost so any additional benefit of Medicaid expansion has been offset by losses experienced on the Medicare side. In fact, Medicare on average reimburses only 88 cents of every dollar in costs of treating Medicare patients.

Being one year removed from Medicaid expansion and new marketplace options, along with other payment changes, not to mention economic, demographic, and regulatory challenges throughout the healthcare industry, the landscape still remains undefined.

It has been further suggested that as a result of these “savings” West Virginia hospitals could fund a variety of community efforts to promote wellness. Ask any hospital in this state and they will share with you the many programs they’re initiating to help reduce the state’s tobacco use as well as combat the substance abuse problem, among many other demographic challenges. According to some, hospitals “should be using this new source of funding to make real improvements in the health of communities throughout the state.” Perhaps our hospitals’ patient care mission is being overlooked. Hospitals are continuously involved in countless community projects, outreach programs and services beyond their walls – at no cost to the community.

As the largest segment of healthcare in West Virginia, hospitals are leaders in keeping people healthy through a variety of initiatives and a strong commitment from other stakeholders like physicians, nurses, patients’ families, and the patients themselves. It is, and must be, a collaborative effort and it often starts with hospitals taking the lead in identifying and prioritizing community health needs. For years, West Virginia hospitals and health systems have conducted both formal and informal assessments of their communities’ health needs. They take into account input from persons who represent the broad interests of the community served and often include an implementation strategy to meet identified health needs.

Offering resources and securing access to care to improve health remains a significant and high priority for our hospitals and health systems. So is promoting wellness and reducing obesity and its corresponding chronic diseases, not to mention combating the state’s most pressing problem of substance abuse. Our “windfall of savings” is not tied to the amount of charity care we provide, but rather it’s the promise we make 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to keep people healthy, improve the direct care experience for those who are sick, and reduce the overall cost of providing care for all.
The Staff of SJMH has always been generous with all of the fund-raising efforts we have done here. One of the more gratifying is the annual Adoption of Salvation Army Angels by staff. Approximately twenty children were adopted this year and it took several carts to carry all of the gifts to the Bennett’s Firestone truck, which in turn took them to the Armory for distribution. None of this is possible without Our Neighbor’s work and the generosity of you, our employees.

Soc/Rec is selling FIRST AID KITS for $8 each... see Julia in Marketing.

Surgery staff members Connie Sears (on left), December Employee of the Month Paula Donaldson (center), and Tonya Stewart (right) celebrated Paula’s honor at the monthly recognition event. Princess Tonya even made a cute crown for Paula. Connie is the January honoree and Tonya has also been an Employee of the Month in the past.