

HIGHLIGHTS OF HAPPENINGS

Investing in a Healthier Future

Partnership is one of our formal core values at NMC, as we know that community needs are larger than any one organization and that it takes more than even exceptional medical care to help ensure a healthier future for all. NMC is also a not-for-profit organization and one of the largest employers in the region, so we understand we have a formal and informal responsibility to invest in helping address critical issues which impact community health. The Internal Revenue Service calls this “community benefit” – we call it the right thing to do as a community hospital.

NMC’s flexible financial assistance program is a key piece of our approach. We know healthcare costs can be a burden, so we provided approximately \$1.3 million in free care in FY’20 for patients whose incomes are up to 400% of poverty. Our staff works closely with patients to help them through the application process and many are surprised and relieved to find they qualify. We also contribute to and administer the Jim Bashaw Cancer and Catastrophic Illness fund, the NMC Diabetes fund, and the Smiles for Recovery fund which assist patients with related expenses. In addition, NMC provides flexible funding through our care management process to help patients address social determinants that interfere with their recovery and good health.

The benefits NMC receives from participating in the 340B drug pricing program contribute to the level of financial assistance that NMC can make available to patients who meet established criteria. No specific discount or financial assistance is offered to patients that receive drugs under the 340B drug pricing program; rather, patients can apply for NMC financial assistance that is available to all who qualify.

This year, NMC was thrilled to establish a partnership with Vermont Tech and Community College of Vermont to expand nursing education programs here in our community. NMC is sponsoring scholarships for students in the Vermont Tech nursing program and is underwriting a portion of a nursing faculty member and new space for the program.

This is a wonderful way to help make it possible for more students and mid-career adults to enter the amazing nursing profession and care for our community.

NMC continues to invest in the RiseVT movement to embrace healthy lifestyles in Franklin and Grand Isle counties. We have adjusted this considering NMC’s financial challenges. Preventing chronic disease to reduce the demand for costly medical treatments is a vital part of bending the cost curve in healthcare long term. The return on investment is long-term and it is real. The 2019 RiseVT measurement study showed statistically-significant encouraging findings relating to the key health indicator of the children of our community. The national Prevention Institute says, “For every dollar we spend on prevention we see a 5 to 1 return on investment in just 5 years. We simply can’t fix our economy without it.”

Even with the financial challenges of FY’20 and the impact of COVID-19, NMC continues to invest in the fine work of community partners relating to social determinants of care and quality of life locally. These agencies are able to have a positive impact in areas outside NMC’s direct expertise which directly impact the lives of our patients and our staff. NMC is a significant funder of the United Way of Northwestern Vermont and also provides donations and support to partners including: the American Heart and American Cancer societies; Martha’s Kitchen; Northwest Family Foods of CVOEO; Tim’s House; Franklin County Home Health Agency; Franklin County Regional Chamber of Commerce; the Vermont Futures Project; the Howard Center; Special Olympics; Make A Wish; Voices Against Violence; Girls On the Run; Prevent Child Abuse Vermont; the St. Albans Rotary Club; and more.

We live in a wonderful community and still, there are needs that must be addressed. No single individual or agency can tackle the challenges of our community alone. NMC is proud to invest in our community and collaborate with these great partners as we work collectively towards a healthier future for all.

Healthy Hearts

NMC once again hosted a health and wellness activity fair at St. Albans City School in February. The morning-long event was attended by hundreds of families and community members who enjoyed games and activities that encouraged healthy habits. NMC partners with Northwestern Counseling and Support Services on the event, with other partners including the Northern Tier Centers for Health, the Vermont Department of Health, RiseVT, and the Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition.



The Family Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services hosted high-energy fun in the gym at St. Albans City School during Healthy Hearts. Families enjoyed parachute play, a wiggle zone, crafts, a bouncy house, Imagination Playground blocks and more!



Staff from NMC's Family Birth Center hosted a "Dress Your Doll" activity, teaching families about car seat safety and what clothing is appropriate for kids in car seats.



Dr. Laura Bellstrom of Northwestern Pediatrics (in red vest) plays a food fishing game with a few Healthy Hearts attendees.



NMC's Danielle Pothier encourages a young attendee to throw a bean bag of a healthy snack to Hungry Herbie. NMC's Sous Chef Jon Newhard provided the voice of Herbie and encouraged healthy eating by throwing back the junk food.



NMC ELECTS FIRST PRESIDENT OF NURSING STAFF

NMC's Clinical Practice Governance reached a major milestone this year with the election of Tayler Levesque, BSN, RN as the NMC President of the Nursing staff.

Clinical Practice Governance (CPG) is a shared-decision-making structure addressing the clinical care of patients, family and community served by NMC. The CPG model includes Unit-Based Councils representing distinct clinical departments to discuss, investigate and develop plans on healthcare practice.

In the summer of 2019, CPG participants elected Levesque to this new position that advances CPG's work across the community of nurses at NMC. She will provide leadership and the essential perspective of a direct care professional RN at all levels of the organization.

Levesque said that she was thrilled at the opportunity to play a key role in expanding CPG at NMC.

"I believe deeply in Shared Governance (SG), what we call Clinical Practice Governance," said Levesque, "Which is clinical nurses making decisions about their practice and being involved with decision-making at all levels of the organization."

Social Justice

This year, NMC joined in support of the national movement to address racism and discrimination. NMC'ers twice gathered on our front lawn in silent reflection and NMC issued a statement underscoring our commitment to the health and safety of people of color.

Taking more concrete action, NMC contracted with Dr. Mercedes Avila to conduct training for NMC staff focused on improving cultural competence and recognizing implicit bias. Sessions were conducted remotely and each lasted 3.5 hours. Both clinical and non-clinical staff, management, and providers participated in the series of sessions with seven sessions offered on different days at different times.

Session evaluations showed that participants increased their awareness of racial, ethnic, and class bias and increased knowledge of links between racial and health inequities. Participants also shared their desire to tackle issues like language barriers, care accessibility, and bias awareness. We see these steps as part of an ongoing effort to provide exceptional care for all and we are committed to continuing this work.



Minimum Wage Increase.

In January, NMC announced a move toward a \$14 minimum wage for all employees in recognition of the high performance standards carried for all staff as we count on the entire team to provide exceptional care for every patient.

After careful consideration of the needs of employees for a liveable wage and the benefit of strong recruitment and retention on patient care and organizational financial health, this pro-active increase was recommended by NMC's Leadership Team and approved by the community Board of Directors as the right strategy for NMC.

The change was part of an overall wage plan carefully crafted to make the most of NMC's investment in its people. NMC's Leadership Team did not receive raises and management raises were put on hold. By strengthening our ability to recruit and retain top talent in front-line positions like Patient Care Attending, Patient Access, Environmental Services, Restaurant & Catering, Phlebotomy, Switchboard, etc., NMC is better positioned to achieve "excellence and value" in all we do.

The wage increase will help avoid quality employees from being forced to leave NMC to take jobs in other industries simply to make ends meet for their families.

Reducing turnover means less time and money spent on overtime coverage, recruitment costs, and training new staff. Those savings fund the increase and even more importantly, bring greater continuity to our staff which makes exceptional care easier to provide. Avoiding expensive and disruptive churning allows a stronger focus on exceptional care for all of us.



COVID-19 precautions changed the way everyone socializes, and that was especially true at NMC. Many of the events and celebrations we hold to thank our staff had to be shelved right at the moment when we wanted to show gratitude in the biggest way possible. One of the creative ways we inserted some fun back into our atmosphere was to host a couple of outdoor food truck events and encourage staff to take a break, get outside and enjoy a treat. Our thanks go to Pickle's Snack Shack, Scooter's Pretzels and Southern Smoke Foods who provided the culinary excitement – we were glad to support your businesses!



Tobacco Control

In 2020, Vermonters utilized the 802Quits cessation programs to make quit attempts at record numbers. This was likely due to the 2019 E-cigarette or Vaping Associated Lung Illness (EVALI) outbreak combined with the identification of tobacco use as a high-risk category for COVID-19 infection/health risks.

Regional events this year were designed to raise awareness and promote even more quit attempts, helping support those record numbers of quit attempts. Between April and August, the Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition hosted 10 Cigarette Butt Litter Clean Ups in seven municipalities in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.

The Coalition is housed with NMC's organizational structure and supports efforts at protecting our community members from dangerous secondhand smoke and cigarette litter, helping prevent young people from ever smoking or vaping, and

motivating and supporting all who use tobacco and/or vape products to quit for good.



During Coalition events, 111 volunteers including several local businesses, municipality staff, and elected officials worked together to clean up 53,053 cigarette butts in 10 different events.

As a result, 1 municipality will be posting more signs promoting their tobacco-free parks ordinance and several area businesses are working closely with the Coalition to actively promote quitting with their employees.

If you or someone you know is thinking about quitting tobacco use or vaping, getting help through 802Quits is effective and free. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit 802Quits.org. Youth interested in quitting vaping should check out the new mylifemyquit.org for help.

Cigarette Butt Litter Clean-Up 2020 - A Summary

53,053

*Cigarette Butts
Cleaned Up*

27,756

*The most butts picked
up at 1 event (St.
Albans Industrial
Park)*

2,100

*The most butts picked
up by 1 individual at
1 event*

111

Volunteers

10

Cleaning Events

7

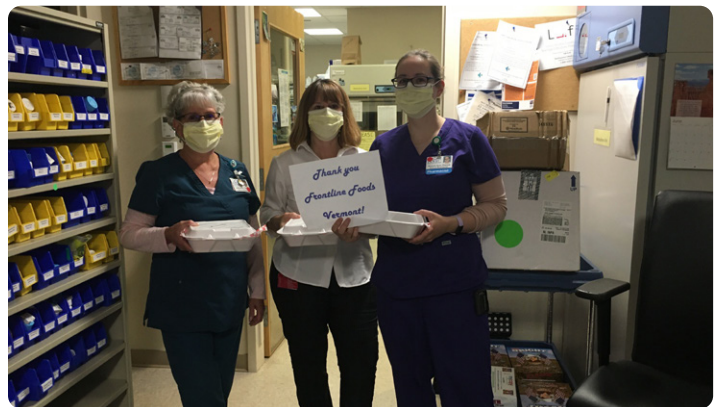
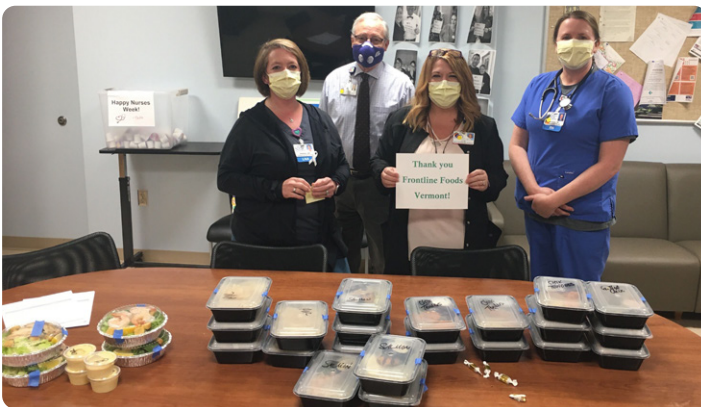
Municipalities

6

*Community
Parks*

Additional Clean-up spots:

- School parking lot
- Hospital
- Boat Launch
- By a Lake
- Library parking lot
- Rail Trail
- Industrial Park
- By a River



Frontline Food Deliveries

During the pandemic, Frontline Foods VT provided an astounding 465 meals to NMC'ers. Frontline Foods is an organization that helps feed frontline healthcare workers and supports local restaurants by collecting monetary donations and then purchasing local meals to share with staff. In our area, Jeff's Maine Seafood, the Drake, Twiggs, Pie in the Sky, and Nelly's all provided food for nearly all NMC offices and departments. The meals were a welcome treat and the staff felt good knowing the community supported their work.

Please note that these photos were posed for quickly, and then staff returned to 6-foot social distancing

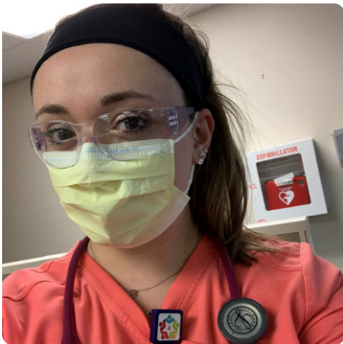
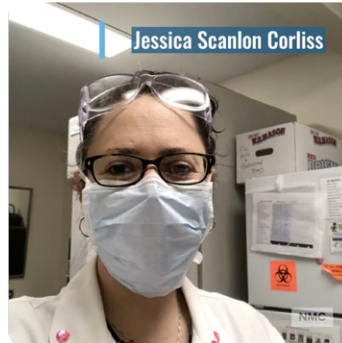


Generously Supporting Our Community

Despite 2020 being a challenging year, NMC'ers rose to the occasion to help support the community and raised over \$29,000 for the United Way of Northwest Vermont.

The funds were raised mainly through individual donations, but NMC also held a highly successful bake sale put on by the Restaurant and Catering team. Five percent of sales in the Courtyard Café for the week also supported the campaign.

During the campaign week, NMC staff also collected nonperishable items which were donated to Martha's Kitchen and Northwest Family Foods. The staff gathered an impressive 500 pounds of goods for the drive.



NMC Strong

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NMC recognized staff with a social media campaign: #NMCStrong. Although we could not high five, fist bump, hug or gather together, it was important that we got to see and share the faces wearing the masks, and say thank you. Staff took selfies and we published them to Facebook and Instagram and played them on digital monitors throughout our hospital. The community feedback on social media was a bright spot during dark days.