

# ENGAGEMENT

## Highlights

### NMC'S WORK ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Since January 2023, NMC has been working with consultants from The Creative Discourse Group (TCDG) on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging – both as an employer and a healthcare-providing organization.

As part of the work, NMC recently adopted a statement of commitment which was crafted through an inclusive and collaborative process based on input and feedback from staff.

“Just like the work we’ve done toward becoming a High-Reliability organization, we know that becoming an equitable employer and healthcare provider is a journey,” said Chief People Officer Ryan Hamel. “We are excited to have taken this step on that path – making a visible commitment to the work.”

*We are committed to cultivating an environment where our patients, community, and team members ALL feel exceptionally cared for, welcome, seen, heard, and celebrated.*



#### *Here is the statement:*

*At Northwestern Medical Center we are committed to providing equitable care for our community to fulfill our mission of exceptional care.*

*We do this by being inclusive, valuing our differences, and intentionally focusing on and enhancing safety, quality, empathy, and respect, as an employer and as a healthcare organization.*

*We are continuously learning, reflecting on, and addressing the root causes of inequities because we value our diversity and the strength that it provides our organization.*

In addition, NMC is nearing completion on a year-long work plan with TCDG that included an assessment phase, development of a core team to take on the work, a four-part training for leaders and a two-part training for all staff.

Along with the work facilitated by TCDG, other health equity work is underway at NMC. Here are just a few examples:

- The Family Birth Center is revamping the artwork on the unit to feature local families and families of diverse makeups.
- A quality project is underway at NMC to build solid systems for collecting race, ethnicity, and preferred language data, as well as sexual

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- orientation and gender identity.
- NMC continues to learn about and celebrate diverse cultures during holidays and recognition weeks.
- NMC hosted a staff training with the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi Interim Chief Joanne Crawford.
- NMC began offering an addition to employee badges to allow staff to identify their pronouns or languages that they speak.
- The hospital is seeking to improve the translation and interpretation services offered, and improving wayfinding with the translation of maps and, in the future, signage.
- NMC joined the national Perinatal Improvement Collaborative to improve maternal health with a component of the collaborative relating to eliminating inequities in care and outcomes based on race, socio-economic status and other factors.

NMC published publishing the commitment statement on our website, along with blog posts to provide regular updates to the community about our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging journey.

## NMC ADVOCATES FOR HELP FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT IN MANAGING OUT-OF-CONTROL PATIENTS OR VISITORS

This year, Progressive Care Unit Director Danielle Boudro, RN, testified before Vermont's Senate Committee on Health and Welfare about how healthcare professionals are assaulted and traumatized on a regular basis.

"I am taken aback by the sheer number of incidences – simply in the last week – on our inpatient unit," Boudro said. She shared stories from NMC caregivers that involved staff being abused with kicks, scratches, and death threats.

Boudro provided testimony as the Senate committee worked on a bill (S.36) that permits law enforcement to directly arrest a person who interferes with health care services rather than just issue a citation. Governor Phil Scott signed the bill into law in May.

"As healthcare professionals we have come to work to provide care to a vulnerable population of individuals ... and yet, our healthcare professionals are being assaulted and traumatized on a regular basis. This is unsustainable."

Health care is disproportionately impacted by workplace violence versus all other industries--and workplace violence is increasing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, health care workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries in 2018. The amount of workplace violence incidents has been increasing at hospitals in Vermont, with the state's largest hospital reporting over 500 incidents last year --- approximately 1.5 incidents per day.

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR STAFF

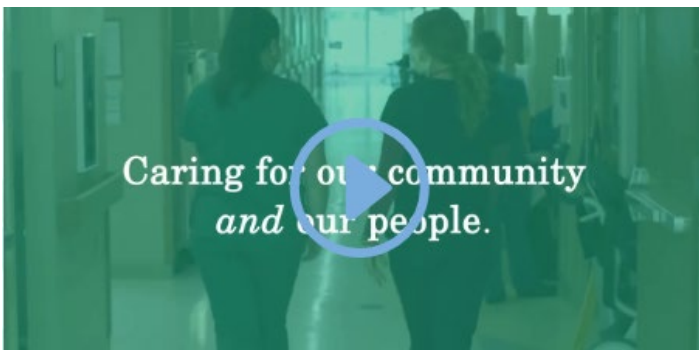
This year, NMC shared perspectives from our team members about their jobs, their passion for healthcare, what it's like to work at NMC. Here are some examples of their inspirational messages, in their own words.

### *Corey Rivers, RN:* **COMING HOME**



Corey Rivers is the Nurse Manager of NMC's Medical-Surgical inpatient unit. During the pandemic, he left NMC to become a traveling nurse and now he's back at NMC. In this video, he talked about why he came back to where he belongs. [Watch Video](#)

### *Bobbie Billado, RN:* **FAMILY FEELING**



Bobbie Billado, RN, is the Clinical Operations Supervisor for NMC's outpatient practices. In this video, she talks about the close-knit nature of our team and our community at NMC. "We're here for our patients, but we're here because we truly care about the people we work with, too. It's a big family." [Watch Video](#)

### *Tracy Raftery:* **PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AT NMC**



Patient Access Representative Tracy Raftery talks about how NMC's small size and patient focus gives a personal feeling to the care we deliver. [Watch Video](#)

### *Bonnie Day:* **MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**



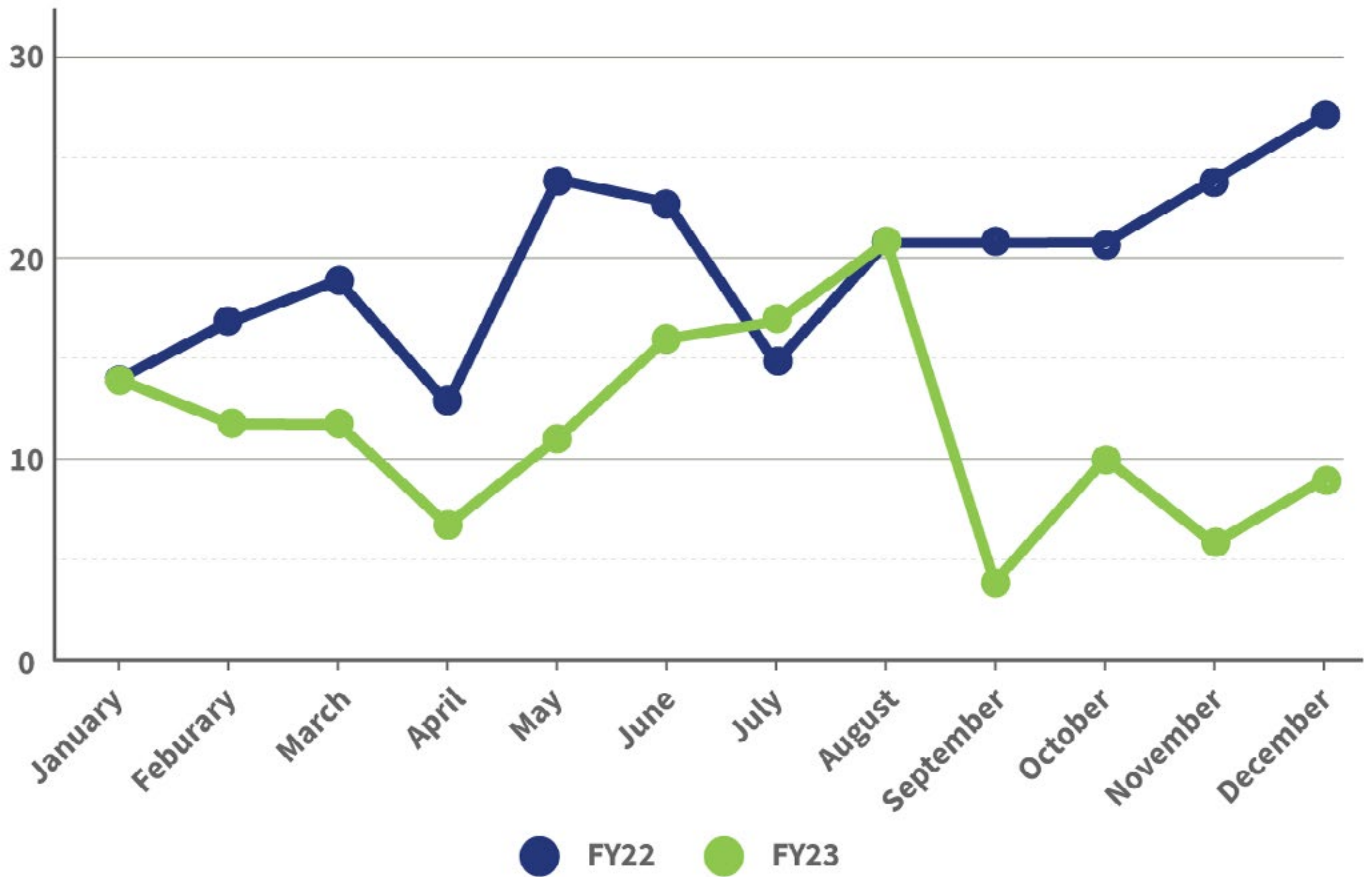
Bonnie Day has been a Radiologic Technologist at Northwestern Medical Center for 31 years! Hear her talk about the ways NMC grows and evolves to meet community needs. [Watch Video](#)

### *Jess Scanlon:* **COMMUNITY**



Jessica Scanlon is the Lead Lab Tech at NMC. Hear her talk about her passion for our community and the importance of that community connection in our work at NMC. [Watch Video](#)

## Improving Staff Turnover

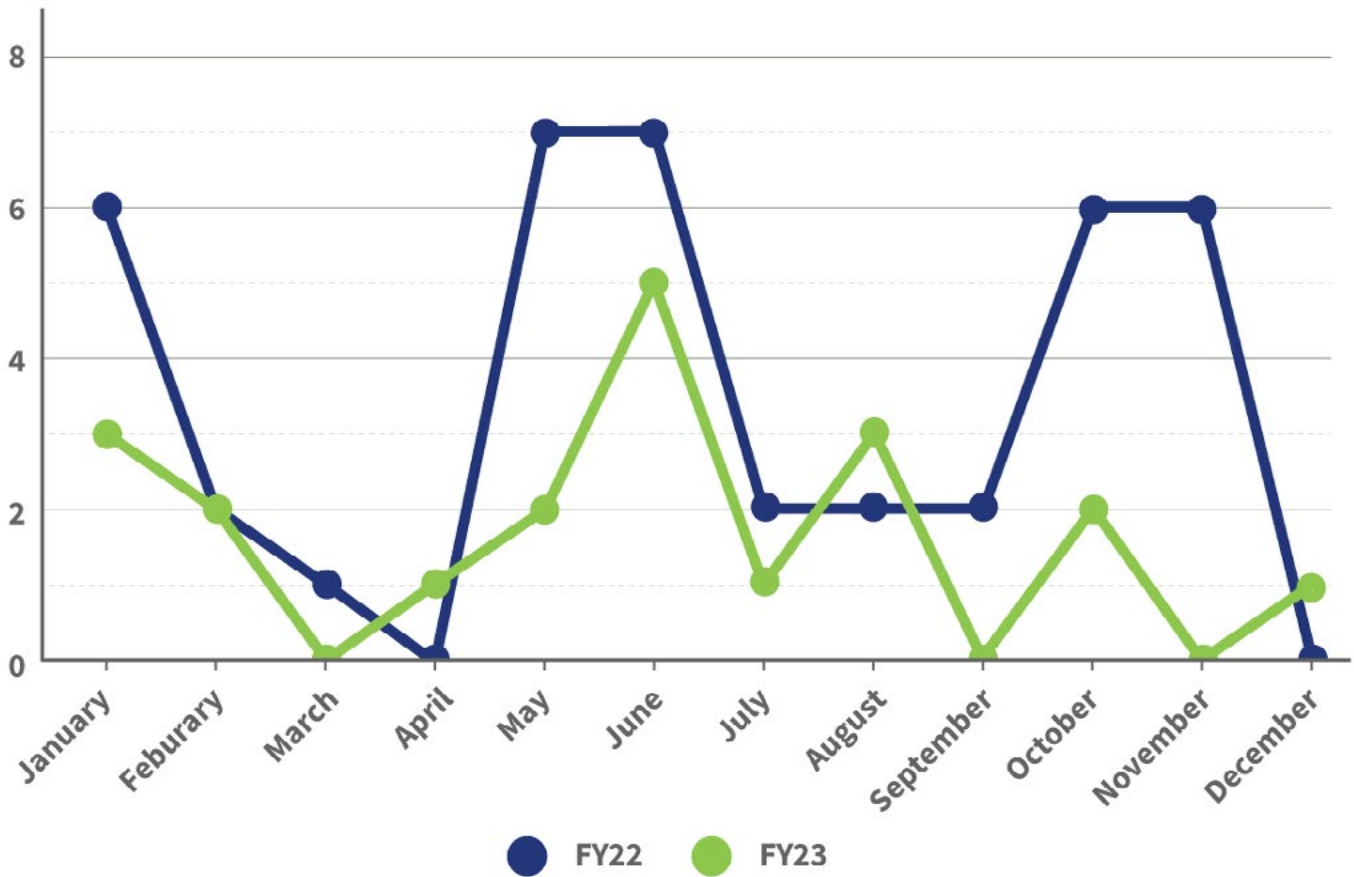


NMC has focused on strengthening employee retention and is seeing strong improvements in the numbers of staff leaving the organization, which is called “separations.” These separations include both voluntary and involuntary exits. There was a 41 percent reduction in the number of separations from Fiscal Year 2022 to 2023.

There was also an improvement in the total turnover rate, which includes both the rates of staff joining and leaving the organization. NMC saw an 8 percent reduction in turnover, down to 21.8 percent from the 29.8 percent experienced in 2022. The national average for healthcare is 25.9 percent.



## Improving Nursing Turnover



NMC experienced an even greater improvement in the numbers of nurses leaving, with a 51 percent reduction. In Fiscal Year 2022, 41 nurses exited the organization and in 2023, that number was 20.

## GROUNDBREAKING FIRST COHORT OF STUDENTS KICKS OFF NURSING APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



*Congratulations to apprentices beginning their pathway to Registered Nursing. Pictured from left to right: Karen Casavant, Hannah Brannon, Caleb Rudden, Jill Cross, Corrine Powell, Kamryn Taylor.*

This year, NMC welcomed a first cohort of employees to a groundbreaking nursing apprenticeship program, made possible through a strategic partnership between the hospital, Vermont Talent Pipeline (VBR), Vermont State University (VTSU), Community College of Vermont (CCV), and Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). This initiative marks a significant milestone in healthcare education and workforce development in Vermont.

Corrine Powell works full time in the Food Service department at NMC. She is one of the aspiring nurses who began classes. Corrine is already enjoying the challenge of Anatomy and Physiology I in her first semester. Nursing had always been a consideration of Powell's, but she pursued a different undergraduate degree and has held various roles, most recently working at Northeastern Family Institute (NFI) for 10 years supporting youth and their families. The NMC

Nursing Apprenticeship came to her attention shortly after her son started his college experience. Watching his educational journey prompted her to restart her own, so she applied for an NMC job right away. As a 15-year resident of St. Albans, she is thrilled about the program "to work at the hospital, within my local community, alongside community members."

The six apprentices at NMC come from different departments in the hospital and were qualified and selected to start the program this fall to further their careers. Nurse apprentices commit to working upon RN licensure, supporting the strong culture of NMC dedicated employees. The apprentices receive financial and wrap-around support for mentoring, academics, financial literacy, and socio-economic needs as they embark on this path. They are encouraged to reach out for support to balance their classes with a job at the hospital, and home life. One of the ways NMC is directly supporting the apprentice cohort is through paid release time for course and study time each week.

This nursing apprenticeship program is a testament to the power and sustainability of collaboration to address critical workforce challenges. It is expected to have a profound and lasting impact on the shifting healthcare landscape of Vermont, serving as a model for other critical jobs besides nursing. The collaborative partnership between Northwestern Medical Center, Vermont Talent Pipeline, VTSU, CCV, and VSAC underscores the commitment of these organizations to address the growing demand for healthcare workers and ensure that aspiring nurses have access to quality education and meaningful career pathways.

## NEW GROUPS PROVIDE FEEDBACK FOR COLLABORATION AND QUALITY

This year, NMC's Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), met monthly, providing community collaboration and input on key hospital initiatives. The group was first established in August of 2022, and the six member panel includes:

- Albin Voegele of St. Albans
- Karrie Sweet of East Fairfield
- Robyn Klein of Highgate Center
- Winnie Wilkinson of St. Albans
- Martha DesLauriers of St. Albans
- Elizabeth Johnson of St. Albans

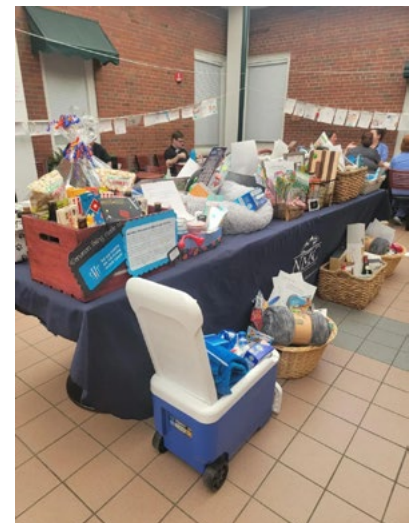
Some topics the group focused on included NMC's Learning Board methodology, "Gemba walk" process, projects to implement "two-bin" stocking systems, and the hospital's Diversity Equity and Inclusion journey.

Another group began meeting in this past fiscal year – the Patient Experience Task Force (PETF). Made up of NMC physicians and providers, the PETF meets monthly to discuss how patients experience care, share tactics to improve that experience, and then reflect on ongoing progress.

The group has focused on topics like communication with patients, learning tools for standardization, and techniques to ensure patients and families understand what is happening, the course of treatment, medications and more. The group is committed to learning from studies and data, trying newly learned techniques, and then sharing what is working with colleagues.

## *Gift Basket Raffle Fundraiser*

During year's Hospital Week, we offered an opportunity for NMC'ers to give back to their community. Departments were invited to purchase items to build a gift basket with, and baskets were auctioned off to the NMC'er with the highest bid. The funds raised from the raffle were donated to a local nonprofit organization of the basket-donating department's choosing. Funds raised went to organizations such as: Laurie's House / Voice Against Violence, Spectrum Youth & Family Services - Drop-In Center, Jim Bashaw Fund, the Turning Point, and Franklin County Humane Society. We are proud of our staff's eagerness to give back to our community.





## INVESTING FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

As a not-for-profit organization and as one of the largest employers in the region, NMC carries a responsibility (formal and informal) to help address critical issues which impact community health that go beyond the direct care NMC provides. We do so through our ‘community benefit investments’ (a term of the Internal Revenue Service – IRS) to help our community achieve a healthier future.

NMC’s vision calls on us to “partner to improve the wellness of our community.” Investing in wellness and prevention to prevent illness and chronic disease and reduce the demand for costly medical treatments is a vital part of bending the cost curve in healthcare long term and improving the quality of life. We are a significant funder for the Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Coalition efforts, which has been instrumental in reducing the rates of tobacco use in our community. The return on these investments is long-term and it is real. 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.”

On top of these focal efforts relating to community benefit, NMC provides close to \$100,000 a year in funding to key community partners working on priorities within the community health needs assessment, on social determinants such as housing, and on related efforts to improve the quality of life.

### *Spectrum Sleep Out*

Our Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Billings participated in Spectrum’s Sleep Out event again this year, helping raise funds to support youth who experience homelessness. Thank you for all that you do, Jonathan. And and even bigger thank you to Spectrum for their amazing work in our community.

These agencies are able to have a positive impact in areas outside NMC’s direct expertise, but 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:

- American Red Cross
- American Heart Association
- Martha’s Kitchen
- Tim’s House
- Franklin County Home Health
- Hard’Ack
- The Afterglow Foundation
- Spectrum Youth & Family Services
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- The Franklin County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Franklin County Humane Society
- The Howard Center
- Special Olympics
- Make A Wish
- Northwest Family Foods of CVOEO
- The Turning Point
- Fairfield Community Center
- Voices Against Violence
- The St. Albans Rotary Club
- and others

No single individual or agency can tackle the challenges of our community alone and NMC is proud to collaborate with these great partners as we work collectively towards a healthier future for all.

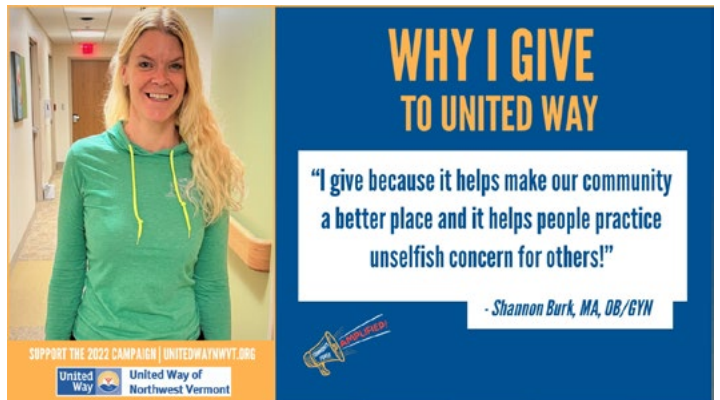
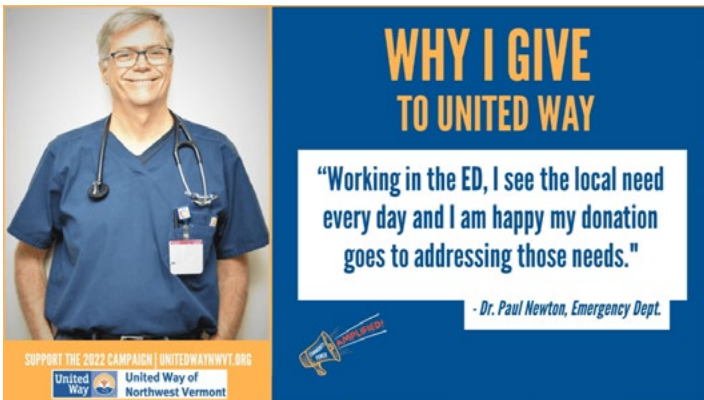




## UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

Thanks to our staff's generosity, we raised over \$35,000 in donations during the 2022 United Way Campaign.

Funds raised through pledges, donations, and participation in fundraisers of this annual campaign help support programs in our community that benefit all of us. The United Way of Northwest Vermont is a vital partner for local nonprofits to help support their impact on health, education, and income in our community. Their work spans many key issues affecting our vision of a healthy community, including: addiction, homelessness, hunger, abuse, childcare, aging, and employment.



## GO RED FOR HEART HEALTH



## *An Evening of Excellence*

NMC'ers enjoyed a lovely night at the NMC Evening Out held in the auditorium of St. Albans City Hall. The dinner and desserts were delicious, and the music and dancing felt like a great return to more normal social activities



## *NMC Chili Cookoff*





# 5 Star Caring



**Amanda Miner**  
Medical Assistant II, Urgent Care



Congrats to:  
**Andrew Sawtell**  
Physical Therapist, Rehab Services



Congratulations to:  
**Chelsea Mulheron, RN**  
Breast Care Nurse Navigator



**Crystal Solomon**  
Medical Assistant, NOH



**Garrett Wolski and  
Frank Adams**  
Enosburgh EMS



Congratulations to:  
**Elizabeth Johnson**  
Certified Coding Specialist



Congratulations to:  
**Jen Armstrong, RN**  
Surgical Services



Congratulations to:  
**Kathy Kneebone**  
Health Unit Coordinator, PCU



# 5 Star Caring Continued



## 2023 Run For Jim





## 2023 Employee Awards Banquet

Each year we recognize staff who have reached years of service milestones. These honorees were recognized at our Employee Recognition Banquet held at the Abbey Pub and Restaurant and received a commemorative certificate and a gift as a token of appreciation.

Congratulations to all of our Years of Service honorees and thank you for your dedication to NMC and our community!





## Fall Fun for NMC'ers

NMC held a fall fun event at Vermont Orchard in Franklin. NMC'ers and their families were invited to pick apples and have family photos taken by Behold Photography. It was a great day for our employees and their loved ones.



### *Community Partners Classic Raises Nearly \$30,000*

This year's Community Partners Classic golf tournament raised \$29,197.79 for Northwestern Counseling & Support Services and Northwestern Medical Center. In its 15th year, the collaborative tournament was a great success with 29 teams enjoying a round of golf at the Champlain Country Club and 32 sponsors supporting the tourney.

"Many thanks to our supporting sponsors, AN Deringer, Peoples Trust Company and NFP as well as the many other sponsors who are such faithful supporters of the missions of our two healthcare organizations," said tournament chair Joe Halko of NCSS. "The fact that people come out in support year after year shows the strength of our community."

Funds raised from the event are split between the two organizations and help support the physical and mental health of the Franklin and Grand Isle communities. Next year's tournament will be on Friday, June 21.