Community Hospital Needs Community Solution

You’ve likely heard about the issues around the future of Doctors Medical Center (DMC) in San Pablo. Given the challenging patient payer mix, this community hospital has had financial challenges for many years. The West Contra Costa Healthcare District, Supervisor John Gioia and Contra Costa County staff have worked hard to make this critical hospital financially sustainable and have been able to reduce its losses from $36 million in 2006 to approximately $18 million today.

A mail-in ballot election is currently occurring in the healthcare district (which includes Kensington, Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito, Pinole, Hercules, Rodeo, El Sobrante, and Crockett). If Measure C passes on May 6, it would levy a parcel tax which will raise sufficient funds for the hospital to remain open. DMC depends on government and insurance reimbursements and property tax revenues to support it. Measure C would raise about $20 million a year for the hospital, which would close the operating budget deficit and should make the hospital financially sustainable. This would allow the facility to pursue partnerships or affiliations with another healthcare institution to continue meeting the health needs of the community. If Measure C fails, DMC will close as early as July.

Critical Piece of Emergency Services Countywide

With its emergency room and intensive care unit, DMC is a critical piece of the countywide emergency medical services system. Our county doesn’t have a surplus of hospital beds and we regularly approach the maximum intensive care capacity at hospitals during even moderate flu seasons. DMC’s busy ER sees about 40,000 visits annually and serves, along with Kaiser Richmond, the 250,000 people who live in West County. If DMC closes, ambulances will have to transport patients to emergency departments several miles further away and it will take longer to get people the life-saving care they need.

In addition, DMC is more than an emergency room. The hospital is also the lone provider of advanced cardiac care for heart attack victims in Western Contra Costa and serves as a stroke center, making it a major player in responding to emergencies.
all the emergency medical needs of West County. Minutes matter, and timely interventions in heart attack, stroke and numerous other types of serious illnesses will be delayed if DMC closes.

Closure Would be Devastating

It isn’t a question of whether or not DMC is critical to the health of West County residents. A report commissioned by our Emergency Medical Services Division showed that DMC’s closure would be catastrophic. It would mean the loss of one of only two hospitals in the West County region and the closure of the area’s largest emergency room. This would place an enormous strain on already overwhelmed emergency services in the county and could result in longer waiting times in other hospital emergency rooms in the area, with waits up to 12 hours long. Contingency planning is underway, but the results of DMC’s closure would be devastating.

Financial Stability Needed

Without financial stability, DMC is unlikely to find a long-term healthcare partner. No potential partner has the capability to immediately fill an $18 million annual gap. It will be necessary to secure the funding to stabilize DMC while a new partnership is sought to create a new, more efficient model of care.

As a safety net hospital, DMC cares for patients who are mostly covered by Medicare and Medi-Cal, which does not reimburse the hospital for the full cost of providing medical services. The cost of care continues to increase and the rate of government reimbursements continues to decline. A long-term solution is needed to develop the appropriate model of care to meet the health needs of West County residents in the years to come. DMC is a critical asset for protecting the health of West Contra Costa residents and needs to be preserved.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D.
New George and Cynthia Miller Wellness Center Opens This Month

The George and Cynthia Miller Wellness Center, a new outpatient facility that integrates physical and behavioral health, will open to patients on May 6. The Wellness Center is located at 25 Allen Street on the campus of our Regional Medical Center in Martinez, near the Emergency Department. The center will offer primary care, short-notice/same-day appointments as well as outpatient behavioral health services, which includes mental health. The mental health portion of the facility will include a community-based assessment center for children and youth that will encourage the participation of family members in the assessment process. The clinic also will offer pediatrics, family medicine, adult primary care medicine, group medical visits and seamless access for referrals from the Emergency Department. The facility was named after the retiring Congressman and his wife to honor their decades of service and dedication to improving the health of the community. Please join your fellow coworkers from 3 p.m.—5:30 p.m. on May 12 to commemorate the opening of the Wellness Center and to honor the Millers, who will join us to celebrate the occasion.

EMS Wins Award from the American Heart Association

Our Emergency Medical Services Division recently received the American Heart Association’s Mission: Lifeline EMS Bronze Award for its commitment and success in implementing specific quality improvement measures for the treatment of patients who suffer a severe heart attack known as a STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction). Emergency Medical Services are vital to the success of Mission: Lifeline, which seeks to save lives by closing the gaps that keep STEMI patients from timely access to appropriate treatments. EMS agencies provide education in STEMI identification and follow protocols derived from American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology guidelines. The correct tools and training allow EMS providers to rapidly identify the STEMI, promptly notify the medical center and trigger an early response from the awaiting hospital personnel. Our Emergency Medical Services Division received the Mission: Lifeline Bronze award by demonstrating at least 75 percent compliance for each required achievement measure and treating at least four STEMI patients for the year.

For more information about the Wellness Center and its opening celebration, contact Kate Fowlie kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6636.

For more information, contact Maria Fairbanks, Prehospital Care Coordinator, at maria.fairbanks@hsd.cccounty.us.
Pet Project Brings Smiles to Patients and Staff

If you've been on the fourth floor of our Regional Medical Center recently, you may have bumped into new four-legged members of our team providing therapeutic services to patients. In March, the hospital began piloting a “therapy pets” program in which volunteers from Tony LaRusso's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) bring dogs to visit patients in the Medical-Surgical Unit. The therapy pets program was initially conceived and developed by the Art of Health and Healing, a group of medical staff that promotes activities and programs designed to foster creativity and improve patient satisfaction. Nursing, Infection Control, Risk Management and Volunteer Services helped refine and implement the pilot program, and the project team is considering expanding the program. Feedback from patients and staff has been overwhelmingly positive so far. One patient told Volunteer Coordinator Rhonda Smith, “This is the best therapy ever. I haven’t felt this well all day.” Research shows that animal-assisted therapy produces significant mental, emotional and physical health benefits. Other hospitals including John Muir Medical Center and Kaiser Walnut Creek also use therapy pets to improve the well-being of patients and staff.

For more information about the therapy pets program, contact Volunteer Coordinator Rhonda Smith at rhonda.smith@hsd.cccounty.us

Fruit and Veggie Fest to Help Shoppers Make Nutritious Decisions

Public Health's Community Wellness & Prevention Program is participating in a state campaign to fight obesity and promote healthy eating by staging a Fruit and Veggie Fest at a Concord supermarket on May 2. The FoodMaxx on Monument Boulevard will host cooking demonstrations, offer activities for kids and provide nutrition education. The free event, one of many scheduled across California in May, was organized by the Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion Project through a partnership with the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch of the California Department of Public Health and several local groups, including the Monument Crisis Center, the Michael Chavez Center, First 5 Contra Costa and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties. Everyone is welcome from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at FoodMaxx, 1751 Monument Blvd. in Concord.

For more information about the campaign, visit www.cachampionsforchange.cdp.ca.gov.
Students, Health Advocates Discuss Alcopops with Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors formally recognized April 2014 as Alcohol Awareness Month after hearing from youth leaders and health advocates working with our Alcohol & Other Drugs Services program about local efforts to curb the marketing of sugary alcoholic drinks to children. Toting colorful cans of “alcopop,” students from Riverview Middle School in Bay Point, De Anza High School in Richmond and Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord joined members of the Alcohol & Other Drugs Advisory Board and the alcohol policy working groups of both east and west county to discuss the prevalence and accessibility of these potent products where Contra Costa kids shop. AODS, Public Health’s Tobacco Prevention Project and the Nutrition, Food Security and Physical Activity program recently joined a new, statewide effort called Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, which aims to improve the health of Californians through changes in the retail environment to educate people about how in-store product marketing influences consumption of unhealthy products such as alcohol, tobacco and junk food. A recent survey connected to the campaign found that nearly 85% of stores in Contra Costa that sell alcohol sold alcopops.

For more information, contact Fatima Matal Sol of AODS at 925-335-3307.

Respiratory Rally in San Pablo for Lung Disease Patients and Caregivers

Contra Costa Health Services has partnered with the American Lung Association of California to host a day of education and support for people with lung disease on May 2 in San Pablo. The free Respiratory Rally includes talks from Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner, physicians, and clinical experts including respiratory therapists from Contra Costa Regional Medical Center & Health Centers. There will be a panel of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients offering advice about pulmonary rehabilitation, demonstrations of respiratory devices, and a healthy lunch. The goal is to connect people with COPD — which includes asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis — and those who care for them to local resources to help manage their conditions and improve the quality of their lives. The event, held at Maple Hall in San Pablo, will also serve as the inaugural meeting of a new Better Breathers Club for the region. The club functions as a support group and a venue for sharing news and advice for people with COPD. There is space available for anyone who wishes to attend. Registration begins at 9 a.m. on Friday, May 2 at 13831 San Pablo Ave., Building 4, in San Pablo.

For more information, contact Janyth Bolden at 925-370-5107 or janyth.bolden@hsd.cccounty.us
Get Help With Your Mobile Devices from IT
Always wanted to know how to get remote access to your work files or learn how to get county email on your mobile phone? Representatives from IT’s Service Desk will help you do those things and more at an upcoming technical assistance event. IT reps will help CCHS staff with Mac or PC laptops, Android devices, iPhones and iPads, and Blackberries. To ensure faster services, please have User Access Forms, which are available on iSITE, approved before you visit. The event will take place from 11 a.m—1:30 p.m. on May 15 at 597 Center Ave., Suite 120 in Martinez.

For more information, contact the IT Services Desk at 925-957-7272.

New HazMat Assistant Director Named
After serving six years as a specialist in Hazardous Materials Programs, Matt Kaufmann has joined the leadership team as a new assistant director. Matt’s primary assignments include supervision of the Underground Storage Tank Program and the Aboveground Petroleum Storage Act Program, as well as oversight of database management and electronic reporting. He and assistant director Steve Morioka report to Hazardous Materials Director Randy Sawyer. Matt joined the agency about six years ago as a hazardous materials specialist, performing numerous facility inspections with expertise in underground storage tanks, and he also served about five years on the Incident Response Team. Matt played a key role in transitioning Contra Costa County’s Hazardous Materials Programs to a web-based reporting system for the 2014 reporting year.

Healthy Outlook: Treating Bee and Wasp Stings
In the vast majority of cases, bee or wasp stings are not a cause for concern—they usually just cause some pain, swelling, redness and itching at the site of the sting. But if someone is allergic to bees, a sting can be a life-threatening situation, Dr. Thomas McCoy wrote in a recent Healthy Outlook column. Usually, stings are best treated with ice and anti-inflammatory medications to control the pain and swelling. Sometimes, however, ice and Motrin won’t do it, wrote Dr. McCoy, chief of the Emergency Department at our Regional Medical Center. In rare instances, people who are severely allergic to bee stings can go into anaphylactic shock, a severe reaction requiring an immediate call to 911 or a nearby emergency room. Dr. McCoy emphasized that only a very small percentage of the population is allergic to bee stings and a sting is rarely fatal.

To read Dr. McCoy’s column, visit cchealth.org/column
Marc Matute
Information Systems Technician II
Information Technology

For doing his magic and fixing a chronic problem with my computer, for following up to ensure that the problem was completely resolved and for excellent service with a smile and sense of humor.

◆ Nominated by Sandra Scroggins

Fatima Matal Sol
Substance Abuse Program Manager
Vicky Balladares
Will Harper
Communications Specialists
Kate Fowlie
Communications Officer
Julian Stacy
Student Worker
Denice Dennis
Tobacco Prevention Project Coordinator
Jaime Jenett
Senior Health Education Specialist
Jennifer Lifshay
Health Services Planner/Evaluator Level B
Martin Lynch
Senior Disease Intervention Technician

For their collaborative work analyzing data collected from 300 stores in Contra Costa that sell tobacco and for hosting a press conference that highlighted policy issues that arose from the analysis—primarily marketing of tobacco, alcohol and junk food to youth.

◆ Nominated by Tracey Rattray

Rabbert Bala, RN
Archiebal Ginez, RN
Neysa Ramos, RN
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For always having the time and willingness to help others during busy times while maintaining their own patient work-load.

◆ Nominated by Eddie Geoff

Maria Regina Panaligan, RN
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For improving work flow, setting standards, and training staff during her temporary charge nurse assignment.

◆ Nominated by Eddie Geoff

Holly Longmuir
Nursing Program Manager
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For being a great manager listening to, helping and understanding of staff’s needs, for overseeing many floors and departments, and managing to stay current with her work even during busy times.

◆ Nominated by Eddie Geoff

Do you know someone Going the Extra Mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (cchealth.org on the About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at http://cchs/ Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.
You are a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Chris Blubaugh, RN
Charge Nurse

Amy Buoncristiani, MD
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For working tirelessly with front line nursing staff and other employees to improve workflow and decrease patient length of stay in the Emergency Department.

♦ Nominated by Debra Hawkes

Mariana Liu
Administrative Services Assistant II
California Children’s Services

For providing outstanding planning and project management for the California Children’s Services office move, resulting in a smooth transition and an excellent new administrative suite.

♦ Nominated by Barbara Sheehy

Carrie Del Bonta
Chandra Gottschall
Clerical Supervisors
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For driving to West County Health Center to deliver schedules on short notice while ccLink was down and WCHC was not receiving any electronic data.

♦ Nominated by Luwanda Hill

Dag Richards
Systems Software Analyst II
Information Technology

For working calmly and professionally to get servers up and running at our recovery sites and for transitioning from one problem to the next with very little sleep.

♦ Nominated by Diana Butterfield

MAY MILESTONES

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Malikia R. Carpenter, Mark A. Clark, Sheenna M. Glover, Scott M. Kearney, Teresa R. Lascano, Detra K. Morgan, Ginafay A. Peters, Fe P. Reyes, Natalie M. Rios, Eric L. Stessel, Maria D. Vargas (10 years); Liza D. Arrivas, Vicky Balladares, Eula M. Banks, Jennifer Bosch, Anthea Y. Farr, Kathleen A. Gilman, Linnie E. Hanis, Jeri L. Noble, Brenda D. Salgado, Carmen R. Valdivia (15 years); Casandra Kolto, Anthony L. Sadler, Ingrid Sanchez, Christina Thompson (20 years); Baulo Ansel, Beverly J. Faust, Carmencita V. Hernandez, Mary J. Kiefer, and Sheila Stelly (25 years).