



Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Inc.™

Executive Summary

NGMC FY15 Community Benefit Report

“Improving the health of our community in all we do.”

Mission Statement

Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. NGMC demonstrates this through many partnerships ranging from serving as lead agency of the Safe Kids Coalition of Gainesville-Hall County, to partnering with other organizations such as Good News Clinics and the Public Health Department to reach at-risk populations in need of health care.

In FY15, over \$6 million was provided in community benefit programs/outreach. Community education was provided through free community lectures, various support groups and the semi-annual health magazine, *Communicare*. NGMC also offered several community education seminars in 2015 on topics ranging from health and nutrition to women’s health education and more.

What Drives NGMC’s Community Health Improvement Activities?

NGMC, with input from the community, completed a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2013. The study culminated in the identification of 10 priority health needs and included a secondary data scan and a community health profile for Hall County. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community’s most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low-incomes who are uninsured. Six focus groups were held and nearly 25 one-on-one interviews were conducted with stakeholders.

Go to www.nghs.com to see a spreadsheet of initiatives and activities Northeast Georgia Medical Center is involved with which address those needs. Many activities overlap multiple priorities, and NGMC’s involvement ranges from providing the activity itself to contributing in some way. The spreadsheet is not an exhaustive list, but highlights many of the organization’s efforts to address identified community health needs. The full CHNA is also available on the website.

The following contains highlights of community benefit activities provided by NGMC in FY15, often partnering with other organizations and individuals in the community:

Partnering to Reach the Uninsured:

NGMC works cooperatively with other area healthcare providers to care for all area residents, particularly the indigent population. Partners include, but are not limited to, NGMC, the Northeast Georgia Physicians Group (NGPG) Primary Care Clinic at Hall County Health Department, the Northeast Georgia Diagnostic Clinic, The Longstreet Clinic, Good News Clinics (indigent clinic), Medlink (federally qualified health center), as well as physicians.

Good News Clinics (GNC): NGMC provides funding to GNC that helps provide medications, medical supplies and other support for Good News Clinics – the largest free clinic in Georgia. Founded in 1992, Good News Clinics is a Christian ministry that provides medical and dental care to the indigent and uninsured population at no charge. Forty-three physicians, mid-level providers and 39 dentists volunteer to treat patients at Good News Clinics. In addition, over 300 specialist physicians volunteer to treat patients in their offices through referrals from Good News Clinics, NGPG Primary Care Clinic at the Hall County Health Department and physicians in Hall County. **In FY15, nearly \$500,000 was donated to help Good News Clinics provide care to indigent patients** who were at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines and did not qualify for other programs.

Clinical professionals from NGMC **staff a Congestive Heart Failure Clinic (CHF) at Good News Clinics (GNC), as well as a cardiology clinic. This project has been extremely successful with only 10 readmissions of GNC CHF patients in nine years; zero readmissions in FY15.** Additional health screenings are provided to vulnerable populations at GNC such as prostate screenings.

NGPG Primary Care Clinic at the Hall County Health Department: NGMC funds and staffs a primary care clinic at the Hall County Health Department to improve access to primary healthcare services for low-income people in our community. **In FY15, NGMC contributed over \$1,000,000 to provide this clinic.**

Prenatal Care Program at the Health Department: NGMC partners with The Longstreet Clinic to improve birth outcomes by increasing early prenatal care for low-income, uninsured and under-insured pregnant women via the Health Department’s primary care center. Yearly cost to NGMC is approximately **\$200,000.**

Indigent Patient Fund: At NGMC, financial assistance is provided for indigent patients to obtain urgently needed discharge medications and transportation. Individuals eligible for these funds are patients whose needs cannot be met through primary insurance, their own personal funds, government programs or other charitable services. This helps to ensure medication compliance and maximize conditions for recovery and recuperation. The Medical Center Foundation provides funding for this.

Charity Care:

NGMC’s charity care policy removes barriers for low-income populations beginning with free care for patients up to 150% of the poverty level. Further, self-pay patients up to 300% of the poverty level qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital’s Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40% discount.

**Total Charity Care Cost for FY15: \$35.2 million
\$19.8 million for Hall County; \$15.4 million for regional residents**

NGMC Volunteers:

In FY15, **621 NGMC volunteers** contributed 55,000 **volunteer hours**, equivalent to 32 **full time employees** and a **value of \$1.2 million to the organization.** While these figures are not included in the quantitative portion of the community benefit report, they show the depth of support the community gives NGMC. 120 teens participated in the Teen Volunteer Program in 2015. The teens came from eight counties and represented 23 different schools within the area.

Encouraging Medical Volunteering: NGMC provides information at physician orientation to encourage physicians to **step up to volunteer** opportunities through **local free clinics** (Good News Clinics in Gainesville and Helping Hand Clinic in Cleveland) as well as Health Access. NGMC **also encourages physicians** to give of their time volunteering at these locations. **The Cancer Center at NGMC has developed a membership model for physicians** that contains conditions of participation which includes active participation in a speaker program, screening activity, cancer prevention activity or outreach. The purpose of this membership model is to improve patient care quality, access and programmatic excellence.

Financial Navigators:

NGMC has **financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured**, be it through **Medicaid, PeachCare** or other programs. NGMC has turned financial counselors into "Financial Navigators." This team focuses on being advocates for uninsured and under-insured patients, aiding them in finding viable means to access care. They find the best solutions for helping patients apply for Medicaid or disability, accessing the new healthcare exchanges or processing charity applications when appropriate. The team has also completed training to become certified in this area as **"Certified Healthcare Reform Specialists."**

Patient Navigators:

NGMC also has a **cancer patient navigation program**. This program provides cancer patients with guidance throughout their cancer journey, and they are seen as a "living resource directory" for patients.

Partnering in the Community:

Vision 2030: NGMC is actively involved in Vision 2030 (www.Vision2030.org). This community-wide program is sponsored by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and participation is open to everyone in the community. **An NGMC employee currently serves on the board of Vision 2030.** VISION 2030 focuses on the creation of a culture of community wellness, the support and maintenance of lifelong learning, the building of an economy around emerging life sciences, the encouragement of innovative growth/infrastructure development, and the promotion of cultural integration.

NGMC is also an active partner on other chamber committees such as the **Healthcare Committee** and the **Health Initiative Consortium**. NGMC is also a partner in **HALLmark**, which is a community investment plan that addresses economic development, education, government and community development through partnership.

Members of NGMC's bariatric service line also serve on **Hall County School System's Wellness Council**.

An NGMC representative serves on **Hall County Family Connection (HCFC)**. HCFC adopted **Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Obesity Prevention** as its two focus areas for the next three years. Hall County Family Connection is a collaborative which serves as the local decision-making body, bringing community partners together to develop, implement and evaluate plans that address the serious challenges facing the children and families in our county. Its vision is that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential for good health, be secure from abuse and neglect and become a literate, productive, economically self-sufficient member of our community. The mission of HCFC is to identify and monitor areas of community concern and to mobilize the community and its resources in a common effort to develop solutions.

The Medical Center Foundation (MCF) Raises Funds to Benefit the Community:

The MCF is the fundraising arm of NGMC and raises funds to improve the health of the community. The Foundation's operating expenses are supported by NGMC so that donated funds can be used to support NGMC projects and community health improvement initiatives. Following are items of interest to note:

- **Since 1997, over \$3.2 million has been raised for community health improvement projects through The Medical Center Open**
- **The 2015 Medical Center Open Golf Tournament raised \$281,881 for the Medical Association of Georgia Foundation's 'Think About It' Campaign, and 100 percent of proceeds will benefit the campaign's Project DAN (Deaths Avoided by Naloxone), which is designed to reduce widespread drug abuse and specifically reduce deaths from opioid overdose.**
- **W.A.T.C.H. members have donated more than \$5 million to support the Healthy Journey Campaign since the program's inception in 2000.**

Investing in Our Youth:

Safe Kids Coalition Works to Keep Kids Safe: The Gainesville-Hall County Safe Kids Coalition, led by NGMC, is part of the National Safe Kids Campaign, the first and only national organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury, which is the nation's number one killer of children ages 14 and under. This program provides affordable safety equipment such as car seats, bike helmets, and life jackets to area children in need. Working with a coalition made up of law enforcement, area schools, community volunteers and others, Safe Kids provides educational materials and programs that teach children and their parents how to avoid accidents and injuries. Safe Kids continued the work of injury prevention for families in the Hall County community in 2015 thanks to the support of MCF and the *Healthy Journey Campaign*.

In FY15, members of the Gainesville-Hall County Safe Kids Coalition provided over 300 **programs** and events that reached an estimated 52,0000 **children and their family members, teachers and caregivers**. Through these programs, over 5,400 safety devices were distributed to families who were in need of them.

Safe Kids of Gainesville Hall County, led by NGMC, partners with other community agencies on "Drug Take Back Days" (Operation Pill Drop), with various collection points in the county. This gives community members a safe way to dispose of unwanted, unused drugs.

Diabetes Education:

In FY15, NGMC continued its partnership with Good News Clinics and the Primary Care Clinic at the Health Department on the Pilot Diabetes Monitoring Project whereby indigent patients with diabetes received testing strips and a meter for at least a year. Patients signed a compact with the clinic that outlined responsibilities such as keeping appointments and attending educational classes as recommended by their physician. From March 2014 to December 2015, 373 patients had enrolled. Of those who had returned for at least one A1C reading, 68.04% showed a decreased A1C reading.

The Diabetes Education Program at Northeast Georgia Medical Center is **recognized by the American Diabetes Association** for quality self-management education. A comprehensive range of educational

programs is offered to people with diabetes and their families by certified diabetes educators, registered nurses and registered dietitians.

Education for Seniors:

Getting Older and Better Workshop: Over **300 people** participated in the **Getting Older and Better Workshop** in May in Gainesville and the Spout Springs Library in Flowery Branch. This event was sponsored by The Medical Center Auxiliary, provided by NGMC and featured the topic, “Arthritis Do’s and Don’ts.” Featured speakers were Dr. Mark Hazel, Dr. Tennent Slack, Dr. Joseph Powers, Dr. Gregory Jackson and Physical Therapist Jimmy Sease.

Flu and Pneumonia Program at the Guest House: NGMC provides flu and pneumonia vaccinations at no charge to clients at the Guest House, an adult day health service provided in the community. These are often the frail and elderly who have a difficult time getting to their physician.

NGMC has provided a significant donation for a non-profit, volunteer run transportation program serving Hall County senior adults, called **iTNLanier**, which is being spearheaded by the Wisdom Project. The service provides personal, cost effective transport services to the elderly. iTNLanier is a pre-affiliate of iTNAmerica, a national organization with 27 chapters providing thousands of rides daily to senior citizens. iTNLanier has 24 local community leaders as board and advisory council members and does not receive state or federal funding. Lack of transportation resources was one of the barriers to health care access identified in our most recent community health needs assessment.

Support of Community Efforts to Improve Health:

NGMC employees are very active in the community, volunteering at Good News Clinics, in their churches on mission trips and for community agencies such as the Humane Society and Habitat for Humanity. When it comes to supporting MCF's employee giving club, W.A.T.C.H. (We Are Targeting Community Healthcare), over 3,300 employees donated more than \$500,000 in FY15.

Relay for Life, American Heart Walk, March for Babies: NGMC employees also turned out in full force for community events such as the American Heart Walk, March of Dimes’ WalkAmerica and American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, averaging participation of 150 employees per event.

Blood Drives: **NGMC employees donated over 457 units of blood in FY15.**

Employees Lead the Way: United Way Pacesetter & More

NGHS employees **contributed over \$113,000** to United Way as a Pacesetter Company. Two NGMC employees serve on the United Way Board.

Training and Education for Healthcare Professionals:

NGMC continues to serve as a “**pipeline**” to **help get more qualified people interested in healthcare positions and help provide training and education to students.** This training and education is done through a variety of avenues from job shadowing to the nurse extern program and pharmacy residency program as well as significant support to Foothills Area Health Education Centers.

NGMC Provides Health Information & Support:

The Fraser Resource Center and Health Sciences Library at NGMC serves the health information needs of the community. The library is located on the Medical Center campus in Gainesville. Consumers, patients and their family members have access to credible resources relating to medical symptoms,

conditions and treatments both at the library and also via links on NGMC's website (www.nghs.com/library). The Resource Center encourages visitors to make healthy choices and become active, informed partners in their health care.

In keeping with guidelines for community benefit reporting, NGMC did not include quantitative data on the following programs/projects, but they do meet health needs in the community identified via the 2013 (the most recent) Community Health Needs Assessment and warrant inclusion in this summary:

Patient-Centered Medical Neighborhood: Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) has been selected as one of 15 communities in the nation to establish a **patient-centered medical neighborhood (PCMN)** as part of a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) Innovation Challenge Grant. The patient-centered medical neighborhood (PCMN) builds on the concept of a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) by connecting acute-care hospitals, specialty and sub-specialty practices and other community health resources with primary care providers in order to drive higher quality, provide more affordable care and ensure a positive patient experience. The first step in this three-year project is to build strong medical home practices. Partnering with Northeast Georgia Physicians Group (NGPG) and other community practices, this project is designed to provide **more individualized care to patients**. A medical home is a concept of care – not a building, a house or a hospital. **The goal of the medical home model is to better coordinate care through primary care practices with hospitals, medical specialties and other community health services to support a more fully-integrated approach to care.** Being cared for in a Patient Centered Medical Home means NGPG's healthcare providers will work with patients to help understand their total healthcare needs and connect them with community and other resources to help meet their individualized needs. A partnership is developed between the patient, the personal primary care physician and other members of the healthcare team, and there is a **key focus on encouraging patients to participate in their care.**

Disease care managers: Disease management is a set of interventions designed to improve the health of individuals with chronic diseases. Disease management programs are designed to improve the health of persons with specific chronic conditions and to reduce health care service use and costs associated with avoidable complications, such as emergency room visits and hospitalizations. People with chronic conditions generally use more health care services, including physician visits, hospital care, and prescription drugs.

NGMC employs four disease care managers to focus on the core measures identified by CMS, which are pneumonia and sepsis, heart failure, stroke and acute myocardial infarction. CMS began focusing on these disorders to improve care and reduce costs, therefore these professionals manage care to improve adherence to evidence based prevention and treatment guidelines, working with providers and/ or with patients to improve care. Disease managers provide community education and some disease managers provide health education at Good News Clinics (the indigent clinic). Other community education provided by disease managers includes church/civic/senior groups, health fairs and special programs.

SANE program: NGMC provides a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) program which provides nurses special training in rape crisis, trial time with a District Attorney and training with law enforcement and a pediatrician's office. NGMC employs nurses who have specialized training to complete the Sexual Assault Nurse Exam and provide specialized care for patients who are victims of sexual assault. This program is not a requirement of hospitals and is also not provided at all hospitals throughout the state.

Lifeline: NGMC has a Lifeline emergency response service which allows people to continue living independently in their homes with the security of knowing they can quickly access help if they need it. By pressing a lightweight, waterproof alert button worn around the neck or wrist, subscribers can signal Lifeline monitors who determine what kind of help is needed and call for it immediately. In FY15, NGMC had **253 subscribers**.

Organization Overview:

Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) is a not-for-profit community health system dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of the people of Northeast Georgia. Through the services of a medical staff of more than 600 physicians, the residents of northeast Georgia enjoy access to the state's finest and most comprehensive medical services.

The Health System offers a full range of healthcare services through Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) with two hospital campuses, one in Braselton and one in Gainesville. NGMC is rated Georgia's #1 Hospital, and among the top 10 in the nation, by CareChex. CareChex also recognizes NGMC as best in state for heart care, women's care and stroke care. NGMC also provides long term care through two centers in Gainesville and mental health and substance abuse treatment through a freestanding inpatient center.

The Health System's services extend throughout the Northeast Georgia region through urgent care centers, outpatient rehabilitation centers offering physical, speech and occupational therapy, a satellite cancer treatment center and several multi-specialty medical office buildings. Through Northeast Georgia Physicians Group, residents in Northeast Georgia have close access to primary care as well as a host of medical specialties through more than 250 providers at more than 80 locations.

Led by volunteer boards made up of community leaders, the Health System serves almost 1 million people in 19 counties across Northeast Georgia. As a not-for-profit health system, all revenue generated above operating expenses is returned to the community through improved services and innovative programs. Northeast Georgia Medical Center's Charity Care Policy supports the provision of care for indigent patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

Special Notes:

NGMC uses the precepts outlined in "A Guide for Planning and Reporting Community Benefit," provided by the Catholic Health Association of The United States and VHA, Inc. The guide's purpose is to help not-for-profit mission-driven healthcare organizations develop, enhance and report on their community benefit programs.

Community Benefit Definition:

Program or activity must address a demonstrated community need, and seek to address at least one of the following community benefit objectives:

- improve access
- enhance population health
- advance generalizable knowledge
- relieve government burden to improve health

The program or activity must:

- primarily benefit the community rather than the organization
- result in measurable expense to the organization

If the program or activity is provided primarily for marketing purposes, standard practice, expected of all hospitals (such as activities required for accreditation, licensure, or to participate in Medicare) or is primarily for employees (not including interns, residents and fellows) and/or affiliated physicians, it is not community benefit.

For more information, contact Christy Moore, Manager, Community Health Improvement, at (770) 219-8097 or go to www.nghs.com.