



# Northeast Georgia Health System, Inc. & Affiliates

## Executive Summary

### FY19 Community Benefit Report

*Improving the health of our community in all we do*

## NGMC Gainesville & Braselton

NGMC Gainesville and Braselton value cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. This is demonstrated through many partnerships ranging from serving as lead agency of Safe Kids Northeast Georgia, 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 FY19, NGMC Gainesville and Braselton provided over \$10.9 million in community benefit programs/outreach.** Health education was provided through free community lectures, health screenings, and various support groups. NGMC also offered many education seminars for health professionals in the community, region and state, as well as for students pursuing careers in health. In addition, NGMC provided support to other local non-profit organizations that serve the community.

### **What Drives NGMC's Community Health Improvement Activities?**

Northeast Georgia Health System, with input from the community, completed a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2019. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low-incomes who are uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews. The study culminated in the identification of the 5 following health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the strategic direction of the organization: Behavioral and Mental Health; Access to Care; Diabetes; Cardiovascular Disease; and Septicemia.

For details on how NGMC is addressing the significant needs identified in its most recently conducted CHNA, go to: <https://www.nghs.com/fullpanel/uploads/files/implementation-plan-2020-updated.pdf>.

**Northeast Georgia Health System is a partner in United Way's One Hall Mental and Behavioral Health Subcommittee.** Under **United Way's One Hall** framework, the committee is working better to coordinate mental health services in northeast Georgia through new forms of connectivity and greater collaboration. NGHS, United Way of Hall County, and other non-profits in Hall County are working together on a **coordinated community network** to create a shared data platform to become more efficient when serving those who have **social needs that impact overall wellbeing**. This platform will be used to make referrals to resources and provide a universal method to track outcomes, resulting in better, more coordinated care. In addition to this shared platform and navigation system, Mental Health First Aid training will be provided to targeted audiences. NGHS is a leading partner in the **Reach Out Campaign** to destigmatize the need for mental health services.

**NGMC's emergency departments continue to partner with the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse to implement the ED-CARES (Certified Addiction Recovery Specialists) program** which connects people who have been admitted to emergency rooms for an opioid-related overdose with trained peer recovery coaches who play an important role in helping people avoid another overdose and encouraging them to seek treatment. NGMC is the only hospital system in Georgia to provide this support, which is provided in Emergency Departments at Gainesville, Braselton and Barrow. Peer Recovery Coaches served in the capacity of 4,241 total encounters in the ED, where 3,463 patients were impacted by this intervention, including 4,943 successful follow-ups after the ED visit and 823 peers still engaged with a recovery coach. The program is seeking bi-lingual volunteers and will conduct listening sessions and facilitated trainings with adults and youth. In addition to this, the program will provide training and technical assistance to 18 recovery community organizations across the state to implement peer programs in their local emergency departments based on this program.

**NGMC is the first in the nation to offer the CARES program in its Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs)** to help families of babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) find a path to recovery. NGMC also has dedicated NICU staff educating the families on how to care for their infant with NAS. Since the start of the program in 2018, Peer Recovery Coaches served in the capacity of 187 encounters and 1,207 follow-ups. Furthermore, NGMC NICU nurses sought specialized training to care for babies born addicted and their families; and not only implemented protocols that reduced the length of stay needed for these babies, but also empower and strengthen the mothers and fathers to care for their babies. The NICU team was awarded with the **2019 Team Daisy Award for their work with babies born with NAS**; which was so impactful, they presented their work at the **Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society Convention in Washington DC** that connects thousands of nurses across 100 countries.

For more information about progress on these and other health priorities of 2017-2019, go to <https://www.nghs.com/2019-chna-implementation-progress-report>.

**The following contains additional highlights of community benefit activities provided by NGMC in FY19, 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 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 Longstreet Clinic, Medlink (federally qualified health center), area physicians and indigent clinics such as Good News Clinics in Gainesville and Good Shepherd Clinic of Dawson County.

**Good News Clinics (GNC):** NGMC provides funding to GNC (the largest free clinic in Georgia) that helps provide medications, medical supplies and other support. Founded in 1992, GNC is a Christian ministry that provides medical and dental care to the indigent and uninsured population at no charge. Thirty-five physicians, 7 mid-level providers, 43 dentists and one dental hygienist volunteer to treat patients at GNC. In addition, 120 specialist physicians volunteer to treat patients in their offices through Health Access Initiative. **In FY19, over \$500,000 was donated to help GNC provide care to indigent patients** who were at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines and did not qualify for other programs. To provide integration between GNC, NGHS, and other providers in the community, NGMC also supported the implementation of a high-level electronic medical record system to improve coordination of care and outcomes for this vulnerable patient population.

**Eva Johnson**, NGMC Nurse Practitioner and Heart Failure Disease Manager, helped establish and now runs the Heart Failure Clinic at GNC. Eva has worked with Good News Clinic to successfully apply for grants that awarded funding for medications, blood pressure cuffs and scales for patients in the Heart Failure Clinic. This project has continued to be successful, holding the **30-day hospital readmissions to less than 3% in 2019**.

**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 FY19, NGMC contributed over \$1.1 million to provide this clinic.**

**Prenatal Care Program at the Health Department:** NGMC, The Longstreet Clinic, and Hall County Health Department partner 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 clinic. In FY19, NGMC provided support of over **\$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 Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation provides funding for this program that **served over 1,000 people** in FY19.

**Charity Care:** NGMC's charity care policy removes barriers for low-income populations within our service area beginning with free, medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income is 0 to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Further, patients from our service area, whose FPL is from 151 to 300%, may qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40% discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

**Total estimated Charity Care Cost for NGMC Gainesville and Braselton in FY19: \$28.7 million for Hall County with another \$26.3 million for regional residents outside of Hall County.**

**Financial Navigators:** NGMC has **financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured**, be it through **Medicaid, PeachCare** or other programs. 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 healthcare exchanges or processing charity applications when appropriate. The Financial Navigator team **served more than 42,000 people** seeking assistance.

**Patient Navigators:** NGMC has a **cancer patient navigation program** to provide cancer patients with guidance throughout their cancer journey, and they are seen as a "living resource directory" for patients.

NGMC's Cancer Services is the only program in Georgia – and one of only 24 programs in the nation – to receive the **2018 Outstanding Achievement Award by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Commission on Cancer**. In 2019, NGMC was one of only three hospitals in Georgia and 24 hospital systems in the Southeast to receive the **American Cancer Society's HPV Cancer Free Partnership Award**, which recognizes the hospital's efforts in preventing human papillomavirus, or HPV, related cancers.

Through funding from this partnership, we have been able to reach areas of our community most at risk and help reduce barriers for women in need of cervical cancer screenings.

### **Partnering in the Community**

**NGMC Volunteers:** In FY19, 776 NGMC volunteers contributed **74,428 volunteer hours**, equivalent to 44 full time employees and a **value of over \$1.9 million to the organization** (inclusive of Gainesville, Braselton and Barrow). 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. 123 teens participated in the Teen Volunteer Program in 2019. The teens represented 36 different schools within the area.

**Partnership for a Drug Free Hall (DFH):** Hall County's response to the opioid epidemic is the collaborative Partnership for a Drug Free Hall (DFH). Modeled after a partnership formed in Gwinnett County led by Senator Renee Unterman, who, along with Deb Bailey, Executive Director of Governmental Affairs at NGHS, Dallas Gay, former NGHS Board Member, and Judy Brownell, Director of Prevention at Center Point, pulled together a diverse group of agencies in Hall County to form DFH, a collaborative dedicated to providing the people of Hall County with information, resources and actions to address drug abuse, **reaching over 2,000 people in the community** through forums and community events since 2017. Additional resources, such as, forum recordings, Parent Support Group information and more can be found at <http://drugfreehall.org>.

**Read Learn Succeed:** In an effort to improve school readiness and literacy for our community's children, NGMC partnered with the **United Way of Hall County's Read Learn Succeed** initiative to produce a children's book. **Printed in English and Spanish, "Welcome to the World,"** provides education about the importance of reading to children every day, for at least 15 minutes, starting at birth. The book also includes keepsake pages for baby's first footprints and handprints. Funded by The Medical Center Auxiliary, over 4,800 copies were distributed for all babies born at NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Braselton. To accompany the distribution of this book, three NGMC nurses from the Post-Partum Mother/Baby unit attended the **Talk With Me Baby** Train the Trainer for Nurses program which is a public action campaign to **coach parents and caregivers on vocabulary development with their babies;** vocabulary by age 3 is the strongest predictor of a child's future success with literacy and education.

**NGMC is actively involved in Vision 2030** ([www.Vision2030.org](http://www.Vision2030.org)), a community-wide program sponsored by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. **Melissa Tymchuk, Chief of Staff at NGHS, serves on the board of Vision 2030** which 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, Health Initiative Consortium, and HALLmark**, which is a community investment plan that addresses economic development, education, government and community development through partnership.

### **The Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation Raises Funds to Benefit the Community**

The NGHS Foundation 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, approximately \$4.4 million has been raised for community health improvement projects through the NGHS Foundation Open (formerly known as The Medical Center Open).**
- **The 2019 Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation Open Golf Tournament raised a record-breaking \$340,000** to fund the construction of a Student Success Center (The Hub) located at Gainesville High School and open to the Hall County community, where students will be provided with resources for academic and workforce development, mental and behavioral health services, and a variety of free support services that can help students reach their full potential through health and development opportunities. In addition to these resources, The Hub includes a food pantry and clothing closet to help meet basic needs for students. Over 100 community volunteers, 80 sponsors and 200 players made the tournament a success.
- Through the **employee giving club known as WATCH (We Are Targeting Community Health)**, members have donated more than **\$10.2 million** in support of capital improvements, community initiatives, equipment and enhanced patient care since the program's inception in 1999.

### **Community Education**

**Safe Kids Coalition Works to Keep Kids Safe:** Safe Kids Northeast Georgia, led by NGMC, is part of Safe Kids Worldwide, the first and only national organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury, the nation's number one killer of children ages 19 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 2019 thanks to the support of the NGHS Foundation and The Medical Center Auxiliary proceeds from Marketplace (an annual fundraising event of The Medical Center Auxiliary, which benefits healthcare services of NGMC).

In FY19, members of the Gainesville-Hall County Safe Kids Coalition provided over 131 programs and events that **reached an estimated 25,000 children and their family members, teachers and caregivers.** Through these programs, **over 3,500 safety items were distributed** to families in need of them.

**T2 Diabetes Program:** This program offers ongoing education and support groups using an evidence-based lifestyle program to help participants (with elevated risk for developing diabetes) understand and choose methods to decrease risk of getting diabetes. **NGMC Diabetes Education runs the Prevent T2 program and partnered with YMCA Gainesville** to offer it within the facility. **Classes are also available in Spanish and on Saturdays** to increase access to this support. **NGMC Diabetes Education achieved Full Recognition Status through CDC for Prevent T2 Programs**, meaning this program has demonstrated effectiveness by achieving all of the performance criteria detailed in the CDC's Diabetes Prevention Recognition Program Standards.

**Respecting Choices Advanced Care Planning:** Gunderson Respecting Choices® advance care planning is an evidence-based model of advanced care planning that honors an individual's goals and values for current and future health care. This program is designed to create a culture of open discussion about end of life care in Northeast Georgia so that families are relieved of unnecessary stress. This project is funded by the Medical Center Foundation's Healthy Journey Campaign, which funds the training and

materials needed to educate the community on implementing this model. As a **collaborative effort between the Wisdom Project 2030 and NGHS, Plan in a Can** emerged. In an emergency, EMT/EMS will locate a person's Plan in a Can and take it with them to the hospital. The can should contain a copy of the individual's Advance Care Directive, health information, identification and other important items. Education has been shared with the community about how to make one and where to store it.

**Hospice Bereavement Camps, Support Groups and Outreach:** Hospice of NGMC provided multiple bereavement support groups and education for those grieving a loss or caring for a loved one with an illness (such as dementia), and two camps for children dealing with the loss of someone close to them. In FY19, **over 6,000 individuals were served** through these programs. Additionally, **Hospice of NGMC was designated as a level 5 partner of We Honor Veterans (WHV) - the highest level of its kind** for its above-and-beyond commitment to providing veteran-specific care. As one of only two hospices in the state of Georgia to reach this designation, Hospice of NGMC was selected due its commitment to understanding the differentiated needs of veterans and how to meet those needs.

**NGMC Provides Vital Community Professional Education at Home and Throughout the State**  
**Northeast Georgia STEMI Summit:** Hosted each year by NGMC, the Northeast Georgia STEMI Summit brings together paramedics, EMS staff and doctors from across the state. They meet to discuss the state of the Northeast Georgia Regional STEMI System – a collaborative effort providing critical care and rapid response in 18 counties across the region to people suffering a severe heart attack known as STEMI (S-T Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction). Keynote speakers at the conference include the nation's leading cardiologists and experts in the study of regional approaches to heart attack care. **The 2019 conference educated more than 1,500 medical professionals and first responders.**

**Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) Symposium:** As part of the State of Georgia's trauma system, the Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) develops and maintains the region's trauma system plan and monitors system compliance and improvement activities. NGMC partners with other EMS agencies, participating hospitals, local governments and the public as a part of this committee and the annual RTAC Symposium, which provided **education to 600 health professionals in the region in FY19.**

**Infection Prevention Symposium:** The Northeast Georgia Regional Infection Prevention Symposium is a free conference offered to any healthcare provider throughout the state by NGMC's Infection Prevention & Control Department. This conference is focused on increasing knowledge on infection prevention. Many of the small rural facilities throughout Georgia have limited to no access to infection prevention and control education.

### **Workforce Development**

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 (AHEC)** (<https://www.foothillsahec.org>).

**Foothills AHEC** is a community-driven, non-profit corporation, supported by federal and local sources. The mission is to increase the supply and distribution of healthcare providers, especially in medically underserved areas. Through joint efforts, communities experience improved supply, distribution and retention of quality healthcare professionals. Foothills AHEC serves 31 counties in the Northeast

Georgia area. NGMC provides support for AHEC employee benefits packages, phone, utilities and cleaning service expenses.

**Graduate Medical Education (GME):** Northeast Georgia Medical Center's GME program is designed to train residents to be leaders in the medical field as well as in the community. Medical students receive hands-on training in one of six medical specialties: internal medicine, family medicine, general surgery, OB/GYN, psychiatry and emergency medicine (currently accredited in internal medicine, family medicine, and general surgery). NGMC expects this program to grow to 170 residents by 2024, which would make this program one of the largest in the state. In July of 2019, NGMC welcomed its first 26 GME residents. Also in FY19, the Family Medicine Residency Program received Initial Accreditation from the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), marking our third GME program to receive Initial Accreditation, following Internal Medicine and General Surgery Residency Programs.

**Youth Apprenticeship and Mentorship Program:** In the Youth Apprenticeship Program, high school students work in the hospital for one class period in their day and rotate through multiple departments. This year, 100 students participated. Additionally, with the Hall County Schools Honors Mentorship Program, juniors and seniors are matched with a healthcare professional in their area of interest as part of a real-life career experience in an honors level elective. In FY19, 19 students participated in this program.

**Project SEARCH:** NGMC provides employment and education opportunities for individuals with mild to moderate disabilities. The program is dedicated to workforce development that benefits the individual, community and workplace. Employers are challenged to increase employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and to advocate on behalf of their employment to other organizations in their communities. The High School Transition Program is a one-year educational program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school. It is targeted for students whose main goal is competitive employment. In FY19, 16 students participated. The students work 20 hours per week in each assigned department. Mentors are assigned in each department and attend a monthly meeting to discuss progress/needs of students.

#### **Support of Efforts to Improve Community Health**

**Every day, employees of Northeast Georgia Medical Center go about the business of caring for the health of the people of our community. They are nurses at the bedside, therapists helping people learn to walk again, cooks preparing meals, administrators planning for the future, or office personnel pushing through the details. Caring for our community is part of their everyday routine. And when asked to give back to support healthcare through the Foundation campaigns, they do – generously and passionately.**

**Community Support to combat Infant Mortality, Cancer, Heart Disease:** 750 NGMC employees walked for American Heart Walk, March for Babies and Relay for Life in FY19. As part of The Medical Center Foundation's Healthy Journey Campaign, WATCH members contributed a significant donation toward the walks in addition to sponsorships provided by NGMC.

**Blood Drives:** In FY19, NGMC hosted 24 drives, resulting in 572 donors and over 471 pints of blood.

**United Way Pacesetter & More:** NGMC has partnered with United Way to engage employees and leaders in the community. NGMC employees **contributed \$93,000** to United Way as a Pacesetter Company.

**Habitat for Humanity:** NGMC employees contributed 130 hours during NGHS Build Days for Habitat for Humanity in Hall County.

**WATCH employees** extended their impact towards funding NGHS' Employee Emergency Fund and launching **Change Grants** which allows employees to submit improvement ideas for funding consideration in efforts to enhance patient experience, improve employee morale and **impact patient-family satisfaction**.

**Encouraging Medical Volunteering:** NGMC provides information at physician orientation to encourage physicians to **step up to volunteer at local free clinics**, as well as Health Access. **NGPG also encourages physicians to give of their time volunteering** at these locations. **Through various physician leadership councils**, NGMC physicians actively participate in community outreach, including educational seminars, screenings, cancer prevention, and **volunteer in regional indigent clinics**.

### **Leading the Way**

Many NGMC leaders support community, civic, or professional organizations on their Board of Directors or as a participating member. In addition to this, NGPG Advanced Practice Providers support events in the community and provide GME instruction to Medical, Physician Assistant, and Nurse Practitioner students. **Here are a few highlights:**

**Carol Burrell**, NGHS President and CEO, has been named to **Georgia Trend magazine's list of the 100 Most Influential Georgians** for the **sixth year in a row** for her contribution to making life better for Georgians.

**Dr. Sam Johnson**, recently retired Chief Medical Officer at NGHS, serves as **Chairman of One Hall United Against Poverty**. United Way unites people, organizations and resources within the community to build a stronger, healthier and safer Hall County. The purpose of the One Hall initiative is to break the cycle of poverty in Hall County by gaining the perspectives of those directly experiencing poverty and working side by side with community agencies to develop strategies to address the needs.

**Dr. Antonio Rios**, Chief Physician Executive for NGPG, serves on the Good News Clinics Board of Directors. He is also the **Chairman of The Georgia Board for Physician Workforce** where he is committed to furthering the board's mission to identify the physician workforce needs of Georgia communities and to meet those needs through the support and development of medical education programs. **Dr. John Delzell**, VP of Medical Education and designated institutional official for Graduate Medical Education, also serves on the Georgia Board for Physicians Workforce.

**Jason Grady**, **NR-Paramedic** and Regional Coordinator of the STEMI (S-T Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction) System, was awarded the **Hospital Heroes Award from the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA)** for his leadership in providing life-saving care to patients in nearly half the time of the industry standard average. Hospital Heroes Award recipients are people who have tirelessly given time, talent and expertise to improve their organizations and the world around them.

**Jeff Thompson**, recently retired Director of Pastoral Care at NGMC, was also awarded the **Hospital Heroes Award from the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA)**. In addition to comforting families in the emergency room and championing NGMC's Ethics Program, Thompson worked to introduce NGMC's Respecting Choices program, which promotes advance directives and honors the wishes of patients



when they make decisions about advanced care planning. With his direction, NGMC became the first hospital in Georgia to offer this program. He also mentors and provides trainings for current and future chaplains in NGMC's clinical pastoral education program.

**The Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's Healthy Hall Awards of Excellence are presented to those in healthcare making a significant impact on quality of life.** NGMC proudly recognized 3 employees of the 2019 Healthy Hall Awards: **Julie Abernathy, RN** - Outstanding Healthcare Professional (Manager, Orthopedic Program); **John Ferguson** - Visionary Leader (Retired CEO, Northeast Georgia Health System); and **Frank Lake III, MD** - Physician Specialist of the Year (Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center and NGPG Radiation Oncology).

## NGMC Barrow

NGMC Barrow, LLC (Barrow) values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. The organization demonstrates this through community partnerships ranging from free health screenings at local health fairs to providing a meeting space for other non-profit organizations, such as the Rotary Club of Winder.

**In FY19, NGMC Barrow provided over \$183,000 in community benefit programs/outreach.** Barrow offered many community education seminars on topics ranging from healthy cooking demos to heart health and more. In addition, Barrow provided support to other local non-profit organizations that serve the community.

### **What Drives NGMC Barrow's Community Health Improvement Activities?**

A major priority in FY19 from the 2016 CHNA was Cancer; still a priority in Barrow County, efforts for reducing the initiation of tobacco use among middle school youth and efforts to improve the stage of diagnosis of lung cancer continued.

**NGMC Barrow partnered with Barrow County Schools to implement "Tar Wars" to 2,300 fourth and fifth grade students; and trained 8 school nurses in the Tar Wars lesson plan.** "Tar Wars" is a tobacco-free education program for fourth and fifth grade students developed by the American Academy of Family Physicians to teach kids about the dangers of tobacco use, the cost associated with using tobacco products, and the advertising techniques used by the tobacco industry to market their products to youth. The greatest knowledge gain for 4th and 5th grade combined was for the True or False question "Advertisers tell the truth about tobacco use" where 70% of students answered correctly in the post test compared to 35% in the pretest. The second greatest gain was for, "Vapes are safer than regular cigarettes" improving from 54% pretest to 81% answering correctly in the posttest. This was the second year of having this education for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, but overall for grades fourth through fifth, 86% of students indicated that they did learn something new from Tar Wars.

Oncology Services provided community education in Barrow County at local health fairs, as well as, through **lung cancer support groups**; and with a grant from the Georgia Healthy Family Alliance, promoted awareness and access to **low dose CT scans for lung cancer screening for indigent patients in Barrow County.** This program aimed to increase access and assist those without insurance coverage to receive proactive screening. During 2019, the NGMC Low Dose Cat Scan (LDCT) lung cancer screening program experienced increased growth from previous years. From January 2019 to October 2019, over 715 LDCT lung cancer screenings were performed at three sites, with **150 screened in Barrow.**

**The following contains highlights of community benefit activities provided by NGMC Barrow in FY19:**

**Charity Care:** Like NGMC Gainesville, Braselton and Lumpkin, Barrow's charity care policy removes barriers for low-income populations within our service area beginning with free, medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income is 0 to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300% may qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40% discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

**Total estimated Charity Care Cost for Barrow in FY19: \$2.9 million for Barrow County with another \$818,000 provided to regional residents outside Barrow County.**

**Encouraging Medical Volunteering:** Through various physician leadership councils, NGMC physicians actively participate in community outreach, including educational seminars, screenings, and cancer prevention opportunities.

**Financial Navigators:** Barrow has **financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured**, be it through **Medicaid, PeachCare** or other programs. 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 helping patients apply for Medicaid or disability, accessing healthcare exchanges or processing charity applications when appropriate.

#### **Partnering in the Community**

**NGMC Barrow Volunteers:** In FY19, **21 NGMC volunteers** contributed **1,626 volunteer hours**, equivalent to **1 full time employee** and a **value of \$41,000 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 Barrow.

**NGMC's emergency departments continue to partner with the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse to implement the ED-CARES (Certified Addiction Recovery Specialists) program** which connects people who have been admitted to emergency rooms for an opioid-related overdose with trained peer recovery coaches who play an important role in helping people avoid another overdose and encouraging them to seek treatment. The program was created in response to the increasing number of overdose fatalities and seeks to curtail that trend by better connecting people at high-risk with community supports and services. NGMC is the only hospital system in Georgia to provide this support, which is provided in Emergency Departments at Gainesville, Braselton and Barrow.

#### **Support of Community Efforts to Improve Health**

As a **Partner in Education with the Barrow School System**, NGMC Barrow provided a **donation of medical supplies to stock 18 nurse clinics** providing for the care of **over 14,000 students and 2,000 staff**. NGMC Barrow also funded **scholarships for two high school graduates** pursuing a career in the medical field.

NGMC sponsored the **You Matter Summit** (formerly known as the Youth Behavioral Health Summit) hosted by Barrow County School System. **In addition to sponsorship, NGMC provided staff to assist in the planning of the summit.** The goal for this summit is to reduce incidents of suicide and build a

trauma-informed community. Education was provided to nearly 280 behavioral health professionals in the community who care for youth in Barrow County and surrounding areas.

In FY19, 14 students from Apalachee High School and Winder-Barrow High School participated in the **Youth Apprenticeship Program** whereby high school students gain work experience in the hospital for one class period in their day. The program provides hands-on exposure to many different healthcare careers.

The NGMC Diabetes Education Program has **partnered with the YMCA in Gainesville and Winder** to offer a Type 2 diabetes prevention program. Diabetes Education of NGMC offers the **Prevent T2 Diabetes Program**, a proven program to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. This course is taught by a certified facilitator and is designed to offer the group support and encouragement needed to prevent diabetes. This program uses an evidence-based lifestyle program to help participants with elevated risk for developing diabetes understand and choose methods to decrease risk of getting diabetes. **NGMC Diabetes Education runs the Prevent T2 Program and achieved Full Recognition status through the CDC.** Full recognition means that a program has demonstrated effectiveness by achieving all the performance criteria detailed in the CDC's Diabetes Prevention Recognition Program Standards.

**NGMC Barrow supports child advocacy, protection and wellness:** NGMC Barrow provided financial support for **Piedmont CASA** (Court Appointed Special Advocates). CASA's are appointed by the juvenile court judge to advocate for the best interest of the child and are solely responsible for ensuring the child's needs are met and the child's best interest is heard.

**The Tree House, Inc. Support:** A donation was provided to The Tree House, Inc. whose mission is to strengthen communities by reducing the occurrence and impact of child abuse through counseling, educating, supporting and nurturing children and families in Barrow, Banks and Jackson counties.

**Boys & Girls Club of Winder Support:** NGMC Barrow provided a donation to the Boys & Girls Club of Winder which provides programs that empower youth to excel in school, become good citizens and lead healthy, productive lives.

**The Cancer Foundation Support:** A donation was provided to support The Cancer Foundation whose mission is to help alleviate the financial burden of cancer patients living in northeast Georgia who are experiencing an immediate financial crisis and are currently receiving treatment or are six-months post-treatment.

**Wimberly's Roots Support:** Financial support was provided to Wimberly Roots, a non-profit organization working to enhance food security in Winder.

### **Leading the Way in Barrow**

Every day, employees of Northeast Georgia Medical Center go about the business of caring for the health of the people of our community. Caring for our community is part of their everyday routine, but also, they give back by leading or supporting community, civic, or professional organizations on their Board of Directors or as a participating member.

**Chad Hatfield, President of NGMC Barrow,** serves on the Board of Directors for the **Boys & Girls Club of Winder.** This organization provides programs that empower youth to excel in school, become good citizens and lead healthy, productive lives.

**Sunita Singh, Public Relations Manager of NGMC Barrow** serves on the Board of Directors for the Rotary Club of Winder. Having served as President in 2018, this club benefits various community programs and nonprofit agencies in Barrow County.

**Heather Standard, Chief Nursing Officer of NGMC Barrow**, serves on the Board of Directors for Wimberly's Roots, a non-profit organization working to enhance food security in Winder.

**Dewayne Joy, Emergency Department Manager of NGMC Barrow** serves on the Board of Directors for **The Tree House, Inc.**, whose mission is to strengthen communities by reducing the occurrence and impact of child abuse through counseling, educating, supporting and nurturing children and families in Barrow, Banks and Jackson counties.

## **NGMC Lumpkin**

NGMC Lumpkin, LLC (Lumpkin) values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. The organization demonstrates this through providing financial and staff support to local nonprofit agencies and developing partnerships with established indigent clinics dedicated to serving the under-served population.

**In FY19, NGMC Lumpkin provided \$17,653 in community benefit programs/outreach.** In July 2018, NGHS acquired NGMC Lumpkin (formerly Chestatee Regional Hospital). Health education was provided through free community health fairs and outreach. In addition, NGMC provided financial support to other local nonprofit organizations that serve the community.

### **What Drives NGMC Lumpkin's Community Health Improvement Activities?**

Northeast Georgia Health System, with input from the community, completed a CHNA in 2019. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low-incomes who are uninsured. As Access to Care in Lumpkin County was a priority identified in the 2016 CHNA, it will continue to be a priority as identified in the 2019 CHNA.

### **Partnering to Reach the Uninsured**

NGMC works cooperatively with other area healthcare providers to care for area residents, particularly the indigent population. NGMC provides financial and staff support for **Community Helping Place**, an indigent health clinic in Lumpkin County that provides medical and dental services for the area's most vulnerable populations. In conjunction with this partnership, NGMC staff participate in the **Lumpkin Matters Initiative** which is focused on reaching the uninsured and connecting them with affordable quality healthcare, educational, and social services. NGMC provided education and **free flu shots** to the community at these events and an NGMC advisory board member serves on the committee.

Through various physician leadership councils, **NGMC physicians actively participate in community outreach**, including educational seminars, screenings, and volunteering their time and expertise with indigent clinics throughout the region.

**Dr. Donna Whitfield, Chief of Medical Staff at NGMC Lumpkin** volunteers her time at **Community Helping Place** and will be honored in 2020 by the Sunrise Dahlongega Rotary Club for her contributions to the community in Lumpkin County. **Kay Hall, Nurse Manager in the Emergency Department** is on the

**Board of Directors** for Community Helping Place and is also a serving member of the Sunrise Dahlonega Rotary Club.

**The following contains highlights of community benefit activities provided by NGMC Lumpkin in FY19:**

**Charity Care:** Like NGMC Gainesville, Braselton and Barrow, Lumpkin's charity care policy removes barriers for low-income populations within our service area beginning with free, medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income is 0 to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300% may qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40% discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

**Total estimated Charity Care Cost for NGMC Lumpkin in FY19: \$81,338 for Lumpkin County with another \$67,515 provided to regional residents outside Lumpkin County.**

**Hospice Bereavement Support and Outreach:** Hospice of NGMC provided bereavement support and education for those grieving a loss or caring for a loved one, including at **Lumpkin County High School** and **Lumpkin County Elementary School**.

**Jeremiah's Place Support:** NGMC Lumpkin provided financial support to **Jeremiah's Place**, an organization that works in cooperation with churches and county partnerships to **serve the homeless** in North Georgia, providing transitional housing, counseling services, and basic life-skills training.

**Lumpkin Literacy Support:** A donation was provided to Lumpkin County Literacy Coalition who provides funding and volunteer support to **literacy efforts in the community** where they offer programs at all stages of life. Their mission is to increase adult and childhood literacy in Lumpkin County.

**No One Alone Support:** NGMC provided financial support for No One Alone, benefiting victims of domestic violence.

**ConnectAbility Support:** NGMC provided a donation to ConnectAbility for the **purchase of wheelchairs** and to support their fundraising efforts. ConnectAbility has programs to support children and adults with disabilities and their families, offering direct services and community-based programs to strengthen social networks, reduce social isolation and increase natural supports within the community at no cost to them.

**University of North Georgia (UNG) Support:** NGMC provided financial support to UNG for **Wellness Expos** held on the Dahlonega campus for students, staff and faculty, as well as support for a **Mock Disaster Day** for community volunteers.

### **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. Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) has campuses in Gainesville, Braselton, Winder and Dahlonega – with a total of more than 700 beds and more than 1,100 medical staff members representing more than 50 specialties.

The Health System offers a full range of healthcare services including oncology, orthopedics, cardiac surgery, critical care, surgical trauma, neonatology and women's care. Northeast Georgia Medical

Center's Cancer Services was the only program in Georgia – and one of only 24 programs in the nation – to receive the 2018 Outstanding Achievement Award by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Commission on Cancer (CoC). NGMC has also been recognized in recent years as Georgia's #1 Hospital for overall hospital care, overall surgical care, heart care, orthopedic surgery, women's care and more.

Led by volunteer boards made up of community leaders, the Health System serves more than 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.

Northeast Georgia Physicians Group (NGPG) brings together more than 400 talented physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, midwives and other clinical staff at more than 65 locations across North Georgia. NGPG is the state's sixth-largest physician group, offering expertise in more than 25 specialties.

### **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. for this report. 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.

*Charity Care Cost is an estimated cost and does not include bad debt.*

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