



Northeast Georgia Health System, Inc. and Affiliates

Executive Summary

FY21 Community Benefit Report

Improving the health of our community in all we do

NGMC Gainesville and Braselton

Northeast Georgia Medical Center (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 the lead agency of Safe Kids Northeast Georgia to partnering with other organizations such as Good News Clinics and the Department of Public Health to reach at-risk populations in need of health care.

In FY21, NGMC Gainesville and Braselton provided \$15.9 million in community benefit programs and outreach: Health education was provided through free community lectures, health screenings, and various support groups. NGMC also offered educational seminars for health professionals in the community, region, and state and students pursuing health careers. In addition, NGMC supported 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 five following health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization's strategic direction: **Behavioral and Mental Health; Access to Care; Diabetes; Cardiovascular Disease; and Septicemia.**

For more information about progress on these and other health priorities of 2020-2022, go to: <https://www.nghs.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Implementation-Plan-Report-2021.pdf>.

COVID-19 Pandemic: As with all health systems, NGHS' operations were impacted by COVID-19, and the system continued to address the shifting needs of the community throughout FY21.

Forefront of COVID-19 Information: Throughout the pandemic, NGHS remains at the forefront of COVID-19 information distribution. Daily statistics are made available to the public through the hospital's own website, keeping the community informed on confirmed positive patients in our care, percentage of positive patients not fully vaccinated, and average age of positive patients. This information is available at [nghs.com/covid-data](https://www.nghs.com/covid-data). Additionally, NGHS regularly publishes tips on ways to avoid COVID-19 and information on vaccine distribution.

Georgia Tech COVID-19 Testing Partnership: NGHS partnered with Georgia Tech to support regular COVID-19 testing for state legislators and Capitol staff during the legislative session. NGHS interpreted results and confirmed diagnosis of a saliva-based COVID-19 surveillance test conducted by Georgia Tech’s researchers.

Metro Atlanta Hospital COVID Campaign: NGHS participated in two joint social media campaigns with other metro Atlanta hospitals to drive a unified message around COVID-19 vaccine acceptance in the community. The following hospitals and healthcare providers were involved: NGHS, Emory, CHOA, Grady, Piedmont, St. Francis Emory, HCA, Wellstar, One Medical, and Kaiser Permanente.

Lake Lanier Convention & Visitors Bureau Recognizes NGHS for COVID-19 Efforts: NGHS received the Lake Lanier Convention & Visitors Bureau Chairman’s Award for commitment and efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community Conversations and Education on COVID-19: In June 2021, representatives from NGHS, District 2 Public Health, St. John the Baptist Church, and Newtown Florist Club met for a discussion on COVID-19 in the African American community. This panel shared case data on COVID-19 by race/ethnicity, answered questions about COVID-19, and discussed myths about the virus and vaccination. In September 2021, the partners hosted a virtual panel in which panelists discussed their personal experiences with the vaccine, as well as other topics related to COVID-19. (font size needs consistency throughout)

COVID-19 Outreach in Partnership with Community Leaders: Knowing the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has on Hispanic and Latino populations, NGHS partnered with the Northeast Georgia Latino Chamber of Commerce and Midtown Villages in August 2021 at the event “Fiesta de Verano” to distribute COVID-19 vaccines. (Holly, where did this info come from? Need to verify, pls)

Also include brief summary of other COVID leadership info provided: Regional Vaccination Committee, COVID 10 Leadership Coalition that developed HALL In Camapign.....

The following contains additional highlights of community benefit activities provided by NGMC in FY21, often partnering with other organizations and individuals in the community:

United Way’s One Hall Mental and Behavioral Health Subcommittee: Under United Way’s One Hall framework, NGHS worked with other community partners to improve mental and behavioral health in the community. This effort reduced the stigma of seeking help by raising awareness about the issue, available resources, and education. NGHS helped support activities, materials, and the engagement of Forum Communications to advance this collaborative work. The NGHS Foundation created a five-video series that engaged community leaders, donors, and organizations to create awareness of mental health needs and the importance of supporting mental and behavioral health programs.

AVIA Digital Solutions: AVIA, a digital solution technology company, worked with NGHS to learn from other communities across the country who have been successful in utilizing shared data to address socioeconomic determinants of health that may prevent patients and community members from getting – and staying – healthy. According to AVIA, more than two-thirds of patients have at least one social, housing, goods, or transportation challenge. Avoidable emergency room utilization is usually a symptom of an unmet social need, which underscores why health systems across the country actively pursue

similar projects to impact social determinants of health. In FY21, NGMC and community stakeholders further refined the functional requirements of the shared data platform and heard presentations from three potential vendors.

In addition, Mental Health First Aid training was provided to targeted audiences. Mental Health First Aid is an eight-hour training course designed to give members of the public skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. United Way of Hall County and Wisdom Project 2030, in partnership with a grant from Cresswind Community Fund, are offering this free training to qualified members of the Hall County community. More information about this programming can be found at: <https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/reachout>.

Reach Out Campaign: NGHS is a leading partner in the Reach Out Campaign to destigmatize the need for mental health services. As part of this group's work, a campaign to destigmatize the need for mental health services is ongoing. It features testimonials from community members on United Way's Facebook page. Among featured community members are NGMC board chair Phillipa Lewis Moss and Chief Strategy Executive Tracy Vardeman.

Medical Clinics and Flu Vaccines: NGMC worked with Open Arms Clinic (OAC) and provided 100 flu vaccines in 2021. OAC is a not-for-profit and non-governmental medical clinic dedicated to serving Stephens County residents and providing primary health care with compassion and respect. Located directly across from Toccoa Clinic, funding for OAC is provided by private, individual, and public donations. Support for OAC came at an estimated \$1,650 for NGMC in FY21.

Partnering to Reach the Uninsured: NGMC worked with other healthcare providers to care for area residents, particularly the indigent population. Partners included, 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 provided financial support to Good News Clinics (GNC), providing approximately 33 percent of their operating budget. GNC is Georgia's largest free clinic, founded in 1992, is a Christian ministry that provides medical and dental care to the indigent and uninsured population at no charge. Forty-six physicians, nine mid-level providers, 43 dentists, and one dental hygienist volunteer to treat patients at GNC. In addition, 340 specialist physicians volunteer to treat patients through their Health Access Initiative.

NGMC and GNC are also focused on improving patient outcomes and are actively aligning mutual goals. NGMC has also been instrumental in helping to provide a Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) Clinic at GNC, succeeding in preventing readmissions of GNC patients with CHF. Additional health screenings, such as prostate screenings, are provided to vulnerable populations at GNC. Other services provided include a seizure clinic, diabetes education and management, and a registered dietitian on staff who helps patients with lifestyle modifications required for managing heart failure, diabetes, and weight loss. This support came at a cost of \$583,065 for 2,718 people for NGMC Gainesville and Braselton in FY21.

To provide integration between GNC, NGHS, and other providers in the community, NGMC continued its partnership by implement Epic electronic medical record system to improve care coordination and outcomes for this vulnerable patient population.

NGMC recently authored a case study examining this partnership. This case study can be found at: <https://www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources>.

P.I.T.C.H. Program: As a program of NGHS, P.I.T.C.H. is committed to ensuring the community has access to the care it needs. Community paramedics help patients by meeting them at their home to: provide and connect them to primary care services; seek out available community resources; complete post-hospital follow-up care; discover education and health programs; and discuss overall health and mental happiness. In FY21, there were 150+ referrals to services, 50+ patients have been newly established with a primary care physician, 65 emergency room visits were avoided by P.I.T.C.H. interventions, and four infusion therapy patients received daily transportation that resulted in 90 days of reduction in inpatient stays.

NGPG Primary Care Clinic at the Hall County Health Department: NGMC funded and staffed a primary care clinic at the Hall County Health Department to improve access to primary healthcare services for low-income people in the community. In FY21, NGMC contributed \$1,032,552 to provide this clinic.

Prenatal Care Program at the Health Department: NGMC, The Longstreet Clinic, and Hall County Health Department partnered 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 FY21, NGMC provided support of an estimated \$319,817.

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 funds, government programs, or other charitable services. This helped to ensure medication compliance and maximize conditions for recovery and recuperation. The Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation provides funding for this program that served 305 people at an estimated cost of \$21,706 in FY21.

Charitable and Indigent Patient Support: NGMC provided support for the Good Samaritan Health Center of Gwinnett, a non-profit organization committed to caring for the uninsured and underinsured working poor in the community. This clinic provides health and dental services while providing a culturally diverse and spiritual environment for those they serve. This support came at the cost of \$4,500 for NGMC in FY21. Additionally, NGMC provides office space to Good Shepherd Clinic in Dawsonville and an annual corporate sponsorship to Community Helping Place in Dahlonega at a cost of \$15,000.

Fifth Annual Northeast Georgia Region 2 Trauma Symposium: The fifth-annual Northeast Georgia Region 2 Trauma Advisory Committee's Trauma Symposium was held in October, produced live from the Ramsey Conference Center at Lanier Technical College. Local and national speakers presented from the podium, while all attendees viewed the symposium safely from their homes or workplaces. Almost 600 attendees from more than 30 states and several countries registered for the event, and many groups hosted watch parties in socially-distanced formats. NGMC's blood bank supervisor, Lissa Shirley, was awarded The Nathan Deal Governor's Award for Trauma Excellence. The award honors an individual who has made a lasting clinical and/or system impact on trauma care in Northeast Georgia through education, legislation, leadership, or philanthropy.

Charity Care: NGMC's charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within the service area, beginning with the free, medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income is

zero to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Further, patients from the service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent may qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

Financial Navigators: NGMC financial assistance counselors helped patients become insured through Medicaid, PeachCare, or other programs. This team focuses on advocating 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. In FY21, the Financial Navigator team served nearly 62,377 people seeking assistance at an estimated cost of \$968,796.

Partnership for a Drug-Free Hall (DFH): Hall County's response to the opioid epidemic was 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. Today, NGHS remains a strong partner and provides corporate sponsorship to help support the educational efforts of the group.

ED-CARES: 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 remains the only hospital system 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. NICU Managers and Peer Recovery Coaches were instrumental in policy change in Georgia and the entire U.S. that will keep mother and baby together while mother is receiving treatment for recovery.

The Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation Raises Funds to Benefit the Community: The NGHS Foundation is the fundraising arm of NGMC and raised funds to improve the community's health. 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.

Through the employee giving club WATCH (We Are Targeting Community Health), members have donated more than \$11 million in support of capital improvements, community initiatives, equipment, and enhanced patient care since the program's inception in 1999. WATCH has grown to include more than 3,600 employee donors. In FY21, an estimated value of \$5,515 was given by employees in time serving on the WATCH committee.

NGHS Foundation funds the project Respecting Choices - Advanced Care Planning Education. Respecting Choices 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 an open discussion about end-of-life care in Northeast Georgia so that families are relieved of unnecessary stress while avoiding using expensive resources that patients don't value or benefit from. This project benefited 1,005 people

at a cost of \$59,631 for NGMC in FY21.

NGMC Volunteers: In FY21, 401 NGMC volunteers contributed 28,000 volunteer hours, equivalent to 17 full-time employees and a value of over \$799 million to the organization (inclusive of Gainesville, Braselton, and Barrow). By area, NGMC Braselton contributed 7,000 hours by 134 volunteers, equivalent to four full-time employees and a value of \$201,250 to the organization. NGMC Gainesville contributed 20,300 hours by 272 volunteers, equivalent to 12 full-time employees and a value of \$583,625 in 2021. 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. Forty-two teens participated in the Teen Volunteer Program in 2021. Sixteen teens served in Braselton and 26 in Gainesville, representing 15 high schools in the area.

Community and Provider 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 preventing 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 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 continue its work of injury prevention for families in the Hall County community in 2021. The Northeast Georgia Health System Auxiliary donates proceeds from Marketplace, its an annual holiday fundraising event, to Safe Kids Northeast Georgia.

NGMC provided more than 25 programs and events that reached an estimated 16,000 children and their family members, teachers, and caregivers. Through these programs, over 1,500 safety items were distributed to families needing them. The estimated cost of this support is \$26,750 in FY21.

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. Camps were canceled due to COVID-19, but in FY21, 2,408 individuals were served through support, outreach, and education. This came at a cost of \$24,960 to NGMC Gainesville and Braselton in 2021.

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 over 537 health professionals in the region at a cost of \$16,884 in FY21. In addition, community education on injury prevention and trauma, such as with falls and the Stop the Bleed Campaign, was provided to nearly 1,459 professionals and individuals at a cost of \$4,797 in 2021.

Health Sciences Library and Resource Center: The Health Sciences Library and Resource Center at NGMC serves the health information needs of the Northeast Georgia community, expanding to over 18 counties. This institution gives consumers, patients, and their family members access to credible resources related to medical symptoms, conditions, and treatments. The Resource Center encourages

visitors to make healthy choices and become active, informed partners in their health care decisions. It has benefited 8,509 people at a cost of \$124,233 in FY21. During FY21, the library hosted virtual book clubs to educate the community on health literacy, plus a virtual DEI book club.

Community Education on Nutrition: In FY21, NGMC participated in various regional health fairs, educating the community about healthy nutrition. This education reached 1,139 people at a cost of \$7,099.

Communicare: Each year, the public relations and marketing department at NGMC produces an annual health education magazine called *Communicare*, reaching over 150,000 readers. Due to partial marketing value, only 50 percent of the cost related to *Communicare* is counted as a community benefit, amounting to \$56,659 in FY21.

NGHS Hospital-Community Partnerships Featured at National American Hospital Association

Conference: Christy Moore, Director of Community Health Improvement, and Samuel Maysonet, NGMC Board member, Quality Committee Chairman, and Hispanic Outreach Committee member, represented NGHS at the American Hospital Association's (AHA) joint virtual conference of the Association of Community Health Improvement and Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, titled "Accelerating Health Equity." They spoke on a panel about the value of community/hospital partnerships during COVID.

UNG Nursing and Physical Therapy Partnership: Twenty-five nursing and physical therapy students gained hands-on clinical experience through a designated education unit (DEU) partnership with NGHS. These students were part of a pilot program that paired them with NGHS clinical educators and provided rotations at NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Lumpkin, as well as NGPG's Urgent Care and Primary Care facilities.

Sepsis eAlert Team: The NGHS Sepsis eAlert Team was developed to impact a patient's care plan in real-time by using artificial intelligence to identify a patient's risk of developing sepsis. In the beginning, sepsis is hard to recognize but easy to treat. However, toward the end, sepsis is easy to recognize but hard to treat. Sepsis navigators crosscheck and collaborate with primary care teams to ensure sepsis is identified early and treated appropriately. This past fiscal year, 266 lives have been touched through this program.

Diabetes Support Groups, Education, and Screenings: NGMC provided diabetes outreach for prevention, education, screenings, and support groups. Even though COVID-19 halted many sessions, the Diabetes Education team served 245 people in the community.

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 are done through various 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).

Foothills AHEC: 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 provided \$188,740 in support of this program in FY21.

Allied Health Student Education: NGMC provides clinical rotations for allied health students. Educational affiliation agreements are maintained with each school/program, and NGMC ensures completion of all orientation and student health requirements before rotations. Most of these students work directly with NGMC staff. In 2021, 359 students were provided education at a cost of \$351,603.

Graduate Medical Education (GME): Northeast Georgia Medical Center's Graduate Medical Education (GME) program is designed to train residents and fellows to be leaders in the medical field and the community. All NGMC residents receive hands-on training in one of five specialties: emergency medicine, family medicine, general surgery, internal medicine and psychiatry. NGMC expects its GME program to grow to 200+ residents by 2024, which would make the program one of the largest in the state. The GME program is on target with 102 positions filled by 2021. This came at a cost of \$1,007,090 for NGMC in FY21.

Emergency Medicine Residency Program Approval: The Emergency Medicine Residency program has achieved initial accreditation from the ACGME—the fourth residency program for Northeast Georgia Medical Center. Interviews will take place from October 2021 through January 2022, and candidates participated in Match Day in March 2022. Residents started working in July 2022.

Pathway to Medical School Graduation: Eight undergraduate pre-medical students who attended Georgia educational institutions completed NGMC's Pathway to Med School program. The four-week residential program provided clinical shadowing for participants who wanted to stay in-state for medical school and eventually practice primary care in Georgia. More than 50 students have completed the program since it started in 2015, with a 97% medical school acceptance rate.

New Graduate Medical Education Fellowships: The Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) created two new accredited fellowships in 2021: the Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship program and the Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship program.

The Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship program is a three-year program that interviewed approximately 60-70 fellowship candidates from September to November 2021 to fill six fellowship slots that made up the inaugural class. After participating in The Match in December 2021, NGMC will begin the first training class on July 1, 2022. The extensive accreditation process was led by Dr. Ugochukwu Egolum, program director; Dr. Santhi Adigopula, associate program director; Dr. James Kruer, program director, Internal Medicine residency program; Angela Lewis, program coordinator; Dr. John Delzell, VP of medical education for NGHS and DIO for NGMC; and Donna Brown, director of Graduate Medical Education at NGMC.

The Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship program is a one-year program that anticipates the inaugural class of two fellows to begin training in 2023. The intensive accreditation process was led by Dr. Meredith Pickett, program director; Dr. Zameer Gill, associate program director; Nadia Tinoco, program coordinator; Dr. John Delzell, vice president of Medical Education for NGHS and DIO for NGMC; and Donna Brown, director of Graduate Medical Education (GME) at NGMC.

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. In FY21, 42 students participated representing 15 area high schools.

Support of Efforts to Improve Community Health

March of Dimes' March for Babies: NGMC sponsors The March of Dimes Walk in Hall County and Bassin' For Babies, a local fishing tournament to benefit the March of Dimes. Proceeds benefit the fight to prevent birth defects and related low birth weight and infant mortality problems. NGMC employee donations totaled \$6,500. This entry does not include employee giving and only reflects expenses associated with NGMC sponsorships at a cost of \$4,500 for NGMC in FY21.

American Heart Association Sponsorships- Hall County: NGMC supported The American Heart Association's Heart Walk and Go Red For Women Luncheon in Gainesville, benefiting research and local community education. NGMC employee donations totaled \$12,500 for the virtual walk. This entry does not include employee giving and only reflects expenses associated with the NGMC sponsorship at a cost of \$27,000 in FY21.

American Cancer Society Relay For Life: NGMC was the Presenting Sponsor for The American Cancer Society's Relay for Life Hall County event. The walk benefits cancer research and community education. NGMC employee donations totaled \$13,000. This entry reflects the regional sponsorship cost of \$41,400 in FY21 and does not include employee donations. NGMC also sponsored Relay for Life in the following counties: Hall, Dawson, Habersham, Jackson, Lumpkin, Gwinnett, Union, and Walton Counties.

Encouraging Medical Volunteering: NGMC provided information at physician orientations 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. NGMC physicians actively participate in community outreach through various physician leadership councils, educational seminars, screenings, cancer prevention initiatives, and volunteer work in regional indigent clinics.

Patient Support and Community Health

Spiritual Care: The Puckett Center for Spiritual Care reopened after being refurbished to meet the program's needs. The renovated space offers a more calming and hospitable environment for the volunteer chaplains and other guests.

Glory, Hope, and Life Sponsorship: NGMC provided support to Glory, Hope and Life to help improve the lives of individuals in the community who have been touched by cancer. This organization works locally to support and assist cancer patients, their families, and caregivers. The Executive Director of Oncology at NGMC was President-Elect in 2021. This support came at an estimated cost of \$13,500 for NGMC in FY21.

Keaton Franklin Coker Foundation Thumbs Up Mission: NGMC helped support this organization whose mission is to fortify families where a parent or child is fighting cancer. NGMC's support for the foundation came at a cost of \$2,250 in FY21.

Bariatric Surgery Support Group: NGMC offered a Bariatric Surgery Support Group for the community, providing support for patients with Bariatric surgery who are pre-op and post-op. The group provides emotional support and resources to promote healthy exercise and eating habits. During FY21, support groups were virtual, reaching 1,100 followers on social media, plus NGMC hosted virtual cooking classes, serving more than 1,139 people. This community support came at a cost of \$2,400 for NGMC in FY21.

Cancer Patient Navigator: NGMC's patient navigation program provides cancer patients with guidance throughout their cancer journey and acts as a "living resource directory" for patients. Services include: connecting with community resources, providing emotional support, helping patients understand their diagnosis, communicating with healthcare staff and providers, addressing logistical issues such as transportation needs, and helping patients understand medical terms and treatment options. The discussion was focused on the future of cancer care and how we can work together to secure new investments in research, protect patient access to care, and ensure affordability. These efforts supported 13,109 people at a total estimated cost of \$523,281 in FY21.

Youth Development

Junior Achievement: Junior Achievement is an organization that educates youth about free enterprise while encouraging them to stay in school. NGMC provided sponsorship to Junior Achievement, including support to the Mike and Lynn Cottrell Discovery Center, where students can learn key business concepts taught in the classroom and apply them in a highly immersive, authentic, and interactive setting. J.A. programming, embedded into the core classroom curriculum and an authentic simulation experience at the J.A. Discovery Center, supports school districts in updating the learning experience. This creates an experience that is more relevant to students, increasing their overall engagement in school, and leads to increased academic performance in middle school and beyond. NGMC sponsorship of J.A. came at the cost of \$4,500 in FY21.

Boy Scouts of America: NGMC supports Boy Scouts of America, helping fund programs that teach children the values of citizenship, character development, and personal fitness. Support for Boy Scouts of America came at the cost of \$4,500 to NGMC in FY21.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Lanier: NGMC donated to Boys and Girls Club of Lanier, supporting youth development programs for children and teens in education, arts, recreation, sports, and leadership. Furthering this support, an NGMC staff member serves on the Board of Directors. NGMC donations came at the cost of \$63,000 in FY21.

Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia Support: NGMC supported The Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia, an organization serving over 5,000 girls ages 5-17 in 25 counties annually in Northeast Georgia. Girl Scouts is a volunteer-based organization offering programs for girls where they learn skills in leadership. This support came at the cost of \$1,080 to NGMC in FY21.

Edmondson-Telford Center for Children: NGMC provided donations to the Annual Phil Niekro Golf Classic, benefiting the Edmondson-Telford Center for Children, a child advocacy center providing a safe, child-friendly place for forensic interviews of child abuse victims. Furthering this support, an NGMC staff member sits on the Board of Directors. This donation and staff time provided to the organization came at a cost of \$6,503 to NGMC in FY21.

Interactive Neighborhood for Kids, Inc. (INK): NGHS donated children's hospital gowns, medical books, and face masks to the hospital room in the interactive children's museum. INK is a museum designed to encourage children of all ages to develop their full potential through exciting hands-on learning experiences. INK strives, through exhibits, to create a unique environment in which children of all ages, abilities, and experiences can feel free to imagine, create, and explore beyond their dreams. NGMC developed a hospital exhibit at INK to provide a hands-on "hospital" experience for children and to promote the idea of careers in health services. This support for INK came at a cost of approximately \$6,000 in FY21.

Hospital Research and Staff Education

Clinical Research: In FY21, NGMC had approximately 40 clinical trial research studies available to patients in the community and enrolled approximately 300 patients in these trials. Cancer studies cover the spectrum of breast, lung, colon, prostate, bladder, and thyroid cancers, and studies in cardiology include innovative therapies and devices for treating cardiovascular disease. This research directly impacts and improves the standard of care patients receive, benefiting over 300 people at the cost of \$632,579 for NGMC in FY21.

Diversity in Medicine Series: The CME Diversity in Medicine series was developed to advance the diversity and inclusion efforts of NGHS. The CME Department coordinated with the Graduate Medical Education Department, offering a seven-part interactive "Diversity in Medicine" series. These virtual conversations centered on providing strategic approaches to promote and champion diversity, equity, and inclusion. The webinar series incorporated evidence-based strategies focusing on ways for the organization to improve diversity and inclusion practices. The series aimed to train all learners to treat diverse patient populations effectively and deliver more equitable care to communities by addressing structural racism and interpersonal biases that contribute to inequities in health care for patients. The topics for the series included healthcare disparities, race, and medicine, conscious and unconscious racial biases, structural racism in healthcare, gender harassment, anti-racism, and next steps forward. This series included the participation of 1,668 people at a cost of \$9,165 to NGMC in FY21.

Nursing Student Education: NGMC coordinates rotations for nursing students, including faculty and student orientation, educational affiliation agreement maintenance, and completion of all health and legal requirements before the first rotation. During FY21, there were more than 1,200 nursing students on rotation at NGMC.

Pastoral Outreach Programs: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is an experience-based educational learning model for those who want to explore their gifts of pastoral care in an institutional setting. The program involved readings, classroom instruction, written assignments, group interaction, individual and group supervision, and serving as a chaplain at the hospital. NGMC's Clinical Pastoral Education Program is accredited through The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. The program came at a cost of \$79,343 in FY21, benefiting nearly 90 people.

Injury and Disease Prevention

Gateway Domestic Violence Center: NGMC joined the fight against domestic violence by donating to the Gateway Domestic Violence Center. Through crisis intervention, comprehensive support, and community collaboration, Gateway Domestic Violence Center helps create an environment for clients that offers safe, healthy, self-sufficient growth and violence prevention. This assistance to GDVC came at a cost of \$6,097 to NGMC in FY21.

Food Systems

Georgia Mountain Food Bank Sponsorship: NGMC was a proud sponsor of the Empty Bowl event aiding in support of the Georgia Mountain Food Bank. This organization provides a vital link between sources of food supplies and hardworking community-based partner agencies that help get the food into the hands of families and individuals who need it. This sponsorship came at a cost of \$1,350 in FY21.

Donations/Community Support

John Jarrard Foundation Support: NGMC donated to the John Jarrard Foundation, an organization supporting The Boys and Girls Club of Hall County, Good News Clinics, Good News at Noon Shelter, and The Georgia Mountain Food Bank. This donation came at a cost of \$18,000 to NGMC in 2021.

Office Space Provided to American Red Cross: NGMC provided office space to the American Red Cross in 2021 at a value of \$12,959.

Riverside Military Academy: NGMC helped fund the RMA Foundation Endowed Scholarship, providing cadets with demonstrated financial need tuition assistance. This funding came at a cost of \$2,250 to NGMC in FY21.

Sports Medicine Athletic Care: The Sports Medicine Athletic Training Department provided medical care to 12 local high schools, three local universities, and many other local sports venues, programs, and departments. The trainers provide this care during practices and games throughout the year. They provide injury assessment, rehabilitation, taping/bracing, exercise prescription, environmental awareness (heat and lightning), concussion management, CPR training, nutritional speeches, and emergency coverage at community events. Since there is a partial marketing value, staff time is only counted at 30 percent.

Hispanic Alliance Georgia: NGMC provided a sponsorship to the Hispanic Alliance of \$2,700 in FY21.

Women's Support

Junior League of Gainesville and Hall County: NGMC supported the Junior League of Gainesville and Hall County. Serving an exclusively educational and charitable purpose, the organization of women commits to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. This support came at a cost of \$2,700 to NGMC in FY21.

WomenSource Sponsorship: NGMC sponsored WomenSource, a non-profit organization designed to help women succeed professionally and personally with education on health and finances. An NGMC staff member sits on the Board of Directors. This sponsorship to the organization came at a cost of \$13,633 to NGMC in FY21.

Organization Overview

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In 2021, NGMC maintained its accreditation as a Center of Excellence in both Robotic Surgery and Hernia Surgery by the Surgical Review Corporation (SRC). NGMC received three additional Center of Excellence designations, the first in Georgia for Colorectal Surgery, Minimally Invasive Surgery, and Minimally Invasive Gynecology.

NGHS serves more than one million people in 19 counties across Northeast Georgia. It is led by volunteer boards made up of community leaders. 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 providing care for indigent patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

Northeast Georgia Physicians Group (NGPG) brings together more than 650 talented physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, midwives, and other clinical staff at more than 95 locations across North Georgia. NGPG is the state’s sixth-largest physician group, offering expertise in more than 40 specialties.

Special Notes

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

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Northeast Georgia Health System, Inc. & Affiliates

Executive Summary

FY21 Community Benefit Report

Improving the health of our community in all we do

NGMC Barrow

NGMC Barrow provides emergency care, surgery, orthopedics, heart care, imaging /radiology, laboratory services, pulmonary rehabilitation, wound healing, stroke care, and more. 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 and support.

In FY21, NGMC Barrow provided \$298,778 in community benefit programs/outreach. Barrow supported the community in a variety of ways, from sponsoring study rooms and mobile hotspots for the Winder Public Library to actively participating as a Partner in Education with Barrow County School System. In addition, Barrow 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 more information about progress on these and other health priorities of 2020-2022, go to: <https://www.nghs.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Implementation-Plan-Report-2021.pdf>.

FY21 NGMC Barrow Community Benefit Activities

NGMC Barrow supported the community in various ways, from sponsoring study rooms and mobile hotspots for the Winder Public Library to actively participating as a Partner in Education with Barrow County School System. In addition, the hospital supported other local non-profit organizations that serve the community.

NGMC Community Health Improvement Activities: With input from the community, Northeast Georgia Health System 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 identified five health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization's strategic direction: Behavioral and Mental Health, Access to Care, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, and Septicemia.

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

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: NGMC Barrow has financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured through Medicaid, PeachCare, or other programs. This team focuses on advocating for uninsured and under-insured patients, aiding them in finding viable means to access care. They find the best solutions by helping patients apply for Medicaid or disability, accessing healthcare exchanges, or processing charity applications when appropriate. This support came at a total estimated cost of \$51,224 for NGMC Barrow in FY21.

Partnering in the Community

Partner in Education with Barrow County School System: NGMC Barrow supported student motivation, achievement, community service, and involvement. In addition to providing these opportunities for students, NGMC Barrow donated medical supplies to stock 18 nurse clinics providing care for over 14,000 students and 2,000 staff.

Allied Health Student Education: NGMC provided clinical rotations for allied health students. Educational affiliation agreements are maintained with each school/program. NGMC's education services department ensures completion of all orientation and student health requirements before rotations. Most of these students work directly with NGMC staff as there are no instructors on campus, except for select groups whom instructors accompany. This came at a cost of \$450 for NGMC Barrow for FY21.

Barrow County Schools: NGMC partnered with Barrow County Schools to implement "Tar Wars" for fourth and fifth-grade students. "Tar Wars" is a tobacco-free education program 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. In FY21, NGMC adapted the program into a virtual package so students could participate online at home or in class during the COVID-19. A virtual lesson plan was developed and implemented in FY21 for 2,100 fifth-grade students. This program support came at a cost of \$450 in NGMC Barrow in FY21.

NGMC Barrow Volunteers: In FY21, eight NGMC Barrow volunteers contributed 500 volunteer hours, a value of \$14,375 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.

NGHS Teen Volunteer Program: In FY21, 16 teenagers participated in the NGHS Teen Volunteer Program. The program provides hands-on exposure to many different healthcare careers.

ED-CARES Program: NGMC's emergency departments partnered 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 sought to curtail that trend by better connecting people at high-risk with community supports and services.

Partner with YMCA of Georgia's Piedmont: NGHS supported the Brad Akins branch in Winder and affiliated sites with medically-based programming for the community, such as support groups and education on health-related topics.

Barrow County EMS Ambulance Service: NGMC Barrow and the Barrow County Board of Commissioners collaborated to staff two EMS ambulances operated by NGMC. Since implementation, the response time has been reduced by half.

Community Education and Outreach: Sepsis education was shared with the community at the Barrow County Health Fair to increase awareness to help reduce sepsis mortality and help develop an understanding of signs/symptoms and when to seek care.

Support of Community Efforts to Improve Health: NGMC Barrow provided a donation to Piedmont Regional Library System to support the Mobile Hotspot Lending Program to enable residents of Barrow County with internet access, bridging the digital divide for access to health information, schoolwork, employment, and connectivity to other social needs.

Child Advocacy, Protection, and Wellness: NGMC Barrow provided financial support for Piedmont CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). CASAs 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. This support came at a cost of \$1,600 for NGMC Barrow in FY21.

Safe Kids Northeast Georgia: NGMC served as the lead agency for Safe Kids Northeast Georgia, reducing unintentional injuries and death in children 19 and under. In FY21, Safe Kids provided three programs and events with outreach to 1,000 children and their family members, teachers, and caregivers. These programs distributed over 350 safety items to families who needed them. Safe Kids was funded by The NGHS Foundation's Healthy Journey Campaign. This support came at a cost of \$13,169 for NGMC Barrow in FY21.

The Tree House, Inc. Support: NGMC donated 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. NGMC Barrow's

Emergency Department Manager served on the foundation's Board of Directors. This support came at a cost of \$1,706 for the NGMC Barrow in FY21.

Boys & Girls Club of Winder Support: NGMC Barrow donated 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. This support came at a cost of \$2,700 for the NGMC Barrow in FY21. NGMC Barrow's president also served on the board.

Cancer Patient Navigator: NGMC's patient navigation program provided cancer patients with guidance throughout their cancer journey and acted as a "living resource directory" for patients. Services included: connecting with community resources, providing emotional support, helping patients understand their diagnosis, communicating with healthcare staff and providers, addressing logistical issues such as transportation needs, and helping patients understand medical terms and treatment options. These efforts came at a total estimated cost of \$218,242 for 1,816 people in NGMC Barrow in FY21.

Organization Overview

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The Health System offers a full range of healthcare services, including oncology, orthopedics, cardiac surgery, critical care, surgical trauma, neonatology, and women's care. The Health System serves more than one million people in 19 counties across Northeast Georgia. It is led by volunteer boards made up of community leaders. 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 Physicians Group (NGPG) brings together more than 500 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.

Northeast Georgia Medical Center's Charity Care Policy supports providing care for indigent patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

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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 by providing financial and staff support to local nonprofit agencies and developing partnerships with established indigent clinics that serve the under-served population.

In FY21, NGMC Lumpkin provided \$187,883 in community benefit programs/outreach. Health education, Covid-19 vaccines, and flu vaccines were provided through partnerships and outreach. In addition, NGMC provided financial support to other local nonprofit organizations that serve the community, including the Good Shepherd Clinic of Dawson County, Community Helping Place in Dahlonega, Young Life of Dawson County, and ConnectAbility.

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 five 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 more information about progress on these and other health priorities of 2020-2022, go to: <https://www.nghs.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Implementation-Plan-Report-2021.pdf>.

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

Additionally, in FY21, NGMC Lumpkin volunteers contributed 500 volunteer hours, equivalent to a value of approximately \$14,375 in staff time.

Kay Hall, Director for NGMC Lumpkin Clinical Areas is on the **Board of Directors for Community Helping Place (CHP)** and is also a serving member of the **Dahlonega Rotary Club**. She frequently volunteers at community events such as Inspire for Women, Lumpkin Matters, and CHP events. While serving as **Chief of Medical Staff at NGMC Lumpkin** in 2021, **Dr. Donna Whitfield** also volunteers with CHP.

Tammy Soles, Director of Clinical Care at NGHS, serves on the board of **Lumpkin County High School's College and Career Academy.**

Hospice Bereavement Support and Outreach: Hospice of NGMC provided bereavement support and education for those grieving a loss or caring for a loved one. While the bereavement camps and other live activities were canceled due to COVID-19, virtual support groups were offered.

Youth Education: NGMC supplied Lumpkin County Schools with education materials for youth to support safe and responsible choices. This was a partnership with law enforcement and first responder agencies to provide quality outreach and education materials to communities and schools.

NGMC Community Health Improvement Activities: With input from the community, Northeast Georgia Health System 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 five following health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the strategic direction: Behavioral and Mental Health, Access to Care, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, and Septicemia.

Charity Care: Like NGMC Gainesville, Braselton, and Barrow, Lumpkin's charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within our service area, beginning with free medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income was zero to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent qualified for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.(include at cost amount for FY 21)

Partnering to Reach the Uninsured: NGMC worked cooperatively with other healthcare providers to care for area residents, particularly the indigent population. NGMC provided financial and staff support along with Covid-19 vaccines to Community Helping Place, an indigent health clinic in Lumpkin County that provides medical and dental services for the area's most vulnerable populations. These efforts totaled an estimated cost of \$15,650 for NGMC Lumpkin in FY21.

Support of charitable care: NGMC supported Good Shepherd Clinic through provision of office space, program support and vaccines. In FY21, NGMC provided office space free of charge to the clinic at a value of \$131,911. NGMC also provided flu vaccines to clinic staff and patients, incurring a cost of \$3,300. Finally, NGMC provided a donation of \$15,000 to the clinic.

Northeast Georgia Interfaith Ministries Support: NGMC Lumpkin provided financial support to this organization which 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. These efforts come at a total estimated cost of \$2,250 for NGMC Lumpkin in FY21.

No One Alone: In FY21, NGMC provided a donation of \$1,000 for No One Alone, benefiting local victims of domestic violence.

Family and Child Outreach: NGMC supported Lumpkin County Family Connection, a partnership of organizations working with families to research the needs of children and families of the community while pulling together to address them. Facilitating at the community level, Family Connection is present

in every county in Georgia. It is the largest statewide network of communities in the nation, committed to improving results for children and families. Communities In Schools, present in 50 Georgia communities and over 2,000 communities in the U.S., is the nation's largest dropout prevention initiative. These efforts come at a total estimated cost of \$4,500 for NGMC Lumpkin in FY21.

Lumpkin Literacy Support: NGMC supported the Lumpkin County Literacy Coalition in funding and volunteer support to literacy efforts in the community, offering programs at all stages of life. Its mission is to increase adult and childhood literacy in Lumpkin County.

UNG Nursing and Physical Therapy Partnership: 25 nursing and physical therapy students gained hands-on clinical experience through a designated education unit (DEU) partnership with NGHS. These students were part of a pilot program that paired them with NGHS clinical educators and provided rotations at NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Lumpkin, as well as NGPG's Urgent Care and Primary Care facilities.

Cancer Patient Navigators: NGMC's patient navigation program provided cancer patients with guidance throughout their cancer journey and acted as a "living resource directory" for patients. Services included: connecting with community resources, providing emotional support, helping patients understand their diagnosis, communicating with healthcare staff and providers, addressing logistical issues such as transportation needs, and helping patients understand medical terms and treatment options. These efforts totaled an estimated cost of \$18,027 for NGMC Lumpkin in FY21, with 320 participants.

NGMC Lumpkin Future Hospital: Bouncing back from Covid-19 delays, NGMC Lumpkin broke ground in FY21 for a future hospital in Dahlonega. Plans for the 66,000 square-foot building include for a cafe and dining area, 16 private inpatient rooms, three operating rooms, one procedural suite, ten state-of-the-art emergency treatment rooms, four dedicated observation rooms, a fast-track area, and a separate entrance exit. NGMC Lumpkin qualified for Georgia's rural hospital tax credit program, Georgia HEART. Through the program, individuals and businesses that paid Georgia income taxes could receive a 100 percent state income tax credit designating those dollars to NGMC Lumpkin.

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