

PARTNERS OF WHA is committed to advocating for the health of our communities and advancing the success of local health care volunteer organizations, through the coordination and provision of volunteer education, development resources, and leadership opportunities for health care volunteers and their organizations.

A Message from the Partners of WHA President

Thank You for Your Support



Sharon Scott

I want to thank each of you for your kind thoughts, prayers, cards and emails—they've all meant so much. This has been a process and a journey, accompanied by fatigue, frustration, fear of the unknown, concern for all of my obligations and of

course learning to accept that others must be in control. I am getting better! Now I simply need to take the time needed to recover appropriately.

I am so terribly disappointed I was unable to be a part of Spring Tour. My doctors advised that I not travel in April due to the medical treatments I was undergoing. Please know there are NO worries that I will be unable to complete my term of office. Thank you for your patience and for being respectful of my need to heal.

I am so pleased to hear of the very positive support of Partners that you all conveyed to Julie during her visits to your district meetings. Your acceptance of the changes we are making at the state level mean so much. These changes are so necessary to keep Partners strong.

Let's all continue to have positive thoughts for one another.

Sharon Scott

262-334-6296 (H); 262-707-3159 (C)

Email: Dick-sharon-scott@prodigy.net

*Each morning is a new day
with new opportunities –
make the most of it!*

A Message from the President-elect

Make Partners Your Passion

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting with Partners members across the state as part of Spring Tour 2024. I've listened to your concerns with declining membership, capable people not stepping up as Partners leaders, and our need to continue to educate our hospital/health system leaders about the value of Partners.



Julie Steiner

Partners is experiencing a decline in membership. Our local organizations have lost members and we have lost entire local organizations as members. It's going to take all of us, not just leadership, to grow our numbers. I recall 35-plus years ago when I was "asked" to join my local hospital auxiliary. I don't believe I would have gone to an auxiliary meeting on my own. I was a working mom and was not out looking for something else to do. A member simply invited me to a meeting. I was able to see firsthand what the auxiliary was all about. I was made to feel welcome and genuinely needed, and subsequently joined the Vernon Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, now Friends of VMH. My point is, a simple "ask" is often all it takes for us to gain new members.

When it comes to leadership, I certainly don't feel Partners has a lack of leaders. What we are experiencing is a shortage of members willing to step up and be leaders. There are many of you who can provide direction and vision, motivate and inspire others, communicate, and collaborate. These qualities are characteristic of leaders and many of you have exhibited these qualities. Don't be afraid to offer your skills at the local, district and state level. WE NEED YOU!

Educating health care leaders about the value of Partners is an ongoing effort. Sharon and I along with our district officers are making plans to attend regional CEO meetings this fall to talk about Partners and what we can provide to help with hospital volunteers. We are hopeful a

(Continued on page 2)

Bylaws Change Proposed

The By-Laws Committee continues to review the adaptability of language in our current by-laws to better meet the needs of our organization. A proposal will be brought to the general membership meeting in October with language changes that will add a Member-at-Large membership status as recommended by the Strategic Planning and By-Laws committees.

The Partners board proposes to revise:

4.1 Eligible MEMBERS to read:

- a. Membership in Partners of WHA shall be open to all organized groups of healthcare volunteers.
- b. Members-at-large are individual volunteers, not a member of an organized group of healthcare volunteers in the State of Wisconsin who wish to be a part of Wisconsin Partners.

4.2 Approval of MEMBERS and Members-at-large. To become a member or member-at-large, an applicant that satisfies the requirements in Section 4.1 must:

- (a) submit an application for membership to the President or Secretary in writing and on forms provided by Partners;
- (b) be approved by a majority vote of the Executive Committee, which approval may be withheld in the Executive Committee's reasonable discretion; and
- (c) pay the prescribed annual dues

4.5 Voting Delegates

- a. Each MEMBER shall be entitled to two (2) voting delegates (each a "Member Voting Delegate").
- b. Each member-at-large shall be entitled to one (1) vote.

10.5 Each Member Voting Delegate, Member-at-large, and Special Voter shall be entitled to one (1) vote on matters in which Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-large and Special Voters are entitled to vote. Current Partners Voting Directors and all past Presidents of Partners are collectively, the "Special Voters."

10.6 Quorum. Upon proper notice of the Annual Meeting or a special meeting, a majority of the Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-large, and Special Voters entitled to vote at the meeting, represented in person, shall constitute a quorum. If a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of the majority of the Member Voting Delegates, Member-at-Large, and Special Voters represented at the meeting and entitled to vote on the subject matter shall be the act of the MEMBERS unless the vote of a greater number is expressly required by law, these Bylaws, or the Articles of Incorporation.

If you have questions about these proposed changes, please contact any member of the Bylaws Committee: Julie Steiner, Sharon Scott, Iva Mulhern, John Tully, Donna Nelson, Terri Donlin, Ginny Bosse, Peg Larson, or Robert Schuck.

A Message from the President-Elect...cont'd. from page 1

better understanding of Partners will lead to better communication and perhaps fewer restrictions placed on some local organizations.

I truly appreciated the positive feedback I received regarding the increase in membership dues and convention registration fees. Some of you suggested raising dues even more to get us back on track faster! Your understanding and support of efforts to keep our state organization financially stable are so appreciated.

Proposed changes to our state by-laws to add a member-at-large category will be voted on during our annual membership meeting at state convention. This change would allow individuals who no longer have a local hospital organization to continue to belong to Partners.

Merging the Northwestern, West Central, and North Central Districts into a new Northern District was met with unanimous consent. The new Northern District would be comprised of eight locals: Ladysmith, Park Falls, Cumberland, Stanley, Wausau, Merrill, Medford and Marshfield. We hope to have the merger completed and new district in operation by fall convention.

Thank you all again for your hospitality, support and candid discussions during Spring Tour.

Julie Steiner, Partners President-elect
Email: steinerfam@mwt.net

A Message from the Immediate Past President

Nominees Sought for Partners Leadership



Peg Larson

The Nominating Committee of Partners of WHA is seeking candidates to represent all members of the organization in the offices of President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Nominations for these three offices will be accepted until June 1, 2024.

Qualifications/Prerequisites: Candidates must be a member of Partners of WHA, have served on the Partners of WHA State Board for at least one year, be able to attend two Board of Directors meetings per year and attend the Partners annual convention.

Process to apply: Nominations need to be submitted by June 1, 2024, to Peg Larson, chair of the Nominating Committee. Election and installation of new officers will be held on October 2 at the Partners annual convention. Nominations must include the nomination form (found on the Forms page in the Resource Center tab of the Partners of WHA website, www.partnersofwha.org.) Consult the Partners website or a member of the nominating committee (Peg Larson, Julie Steiner, Ramona Hornischer, Bev Lazar, or Mary Rose Willi) with questions or for additional information.

Completed forms: Send a completed nomination form and photo to: Peg Larson, Partners of WHA Immediate Past President, 110 Stoney Beach Road, Oshkosh, WI 54902 or pegvoluntr@hotmail.com.

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy.

I woke and saw that life was service,

So, I acted and behold, service was joy!"

- from Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel Laureate in Literature – 1913)

Thank you for your dedication to the health of your community!

Peg Larson, Immediate Past President

Email: pegvoluntr@hotmail.com

Convention 2024 Update

Plans are underway for "Volunteers-Diamonds in the Rough." Our Partners convention will be held October 1-3, 2024 at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point. I know we enjoyed our time together at this location last year. This year we are working on more fun and educational workshops and networking.

We are trying something new this year with our vendors. A Vendor Fair will take place for only one day, Wednesday, October 2 from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. We are going to open the Vendor Fair to the public with the Stevens Point Visitors Bureau helping to get the word out around town. The vendors will set up Wednesday morning and not have to worry about their merchandise being left unattended or the cost of a hotel stay. We have confirmation from Jewelry by Judy, Mary Kay Cosmetics and The Nutman. The holidays aren't that far off—think hostess gifts and goodies.

Raffle items have been added. We will have three theme wine baskets, each having three bottles of wine and fun, unique items to represent the theme. These will go along with our other raffle items including \$200 from WHA; a one-night stay at the Holiday Inn, Stevens Point; district baskets; and a patriotic basket, including a star-spangled afghan and firecracker wreath.

Sheree Schaefer
Convention Chair



Partners of WHA = Grassroots Advocacy



Leigh Ann Larson

Advocacy Day 2024 was a great success! Thank you for your attendance and participation. The Partners of WHA are an important and critical group to the grassroots advocacy that WHA supports. There is nothing more powerful than seeing your group, along with the hundreds of other attendees, march to the Capitol to meet with state legislative representatives on issues pertinent to Wisconsin hospitals.

Mark your calendars for next year's Advocacy Day, which will be held on **Wednesday, April 9 2025**.

Be on the lookout for the 2024 WAVE Application, which will be released soon. With the goals of simplicity and efficiency in mind, some positive changes have been made to the program and to the application. We are excited for you to see it.

Thank you for the work that you have done and for the work, I know, you will continue to do to serve our state hospitals and the communities that they serve.

Leigh Ann S. Larson

WHA Vice President of Education and Marketing; Executive Director of the WHA Foundation; Partners of WHA Liaison

Email: llarson@wha.org

Spring Tour District Photos



Lakes District



North Central District



Northwestern and West Central Districts



Southeastern District



Southern District



Western District

WHA Advocacy Day Brings in Over 700 Participants

More than 700 health care leaders, providers, hospital staff, trustees and volunteers traveled from across Wisconsin on March 20 to the state's capitol to participate in WHA's annual Advocacy Day. American Hospital Association President and CEO Rick Pollack traveled to Madison from Washington, DC for the event's keynote portion, a discussion moderated by WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. Participants also heard remarks by Gov. Tony Evers and a bipartisan legislative panel with Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), Minority Leader Rep. Greta Neubauer (D-Racine), Majority Leader Sen. Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) and Minority Leader Sen. Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton).



Edgerton Hospital volunteers at WHA's 2024 Advocacy Day

“Having strong hospitals across our state that provide quality health care is essential to the vitality of our communities,” said WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding. “Wisconsin Hospital Association's Advocacy Day sends a powerful message to lawmakers and communities alike to support local hospitals the way Wisconsin hospitals support them. Wisconsin hospitals provide a life-saving safety net, and with rising costs and a looming workforce shortage, much needs to be done to ensure our hospitals and health systems can continue to provide much-needed services to people in every corner of the state.”

Wisconsin hospitals and health systems, of which 92% are non-profit, continue to provide quality services while filling social and public health gaps across the state. Wisconsin's hospitals have done an exceptional job navigating ongoing extreme challenges to support their communities. Strain on resources and health care workforce shortages pose unprecedented challenges that threaten access to care and the health of Wisconsinites.

View Advocacy Day event summaries and photos at www.wha.org/Advocacy-Day.

During the afternoon, Wisconsin hospitals showcased their quality improvement initiatives at the Capitol Rotunda. The Health Care Quality Showcase offered legislators, hospital staff and leadership, and the public the opportunity to engage with the dedicated staff behind enhanced patient care at Wisconsin hospitals. Attendees also met with their lawmakers in the state capitol to discuss solutions to health care funding and workforce shortages Wisconsin hospitals have faced for the past several years.



Partners members heading to the state capitol to meet with their legislators on Advocacy Day 2024.

Changes to WAVE Guidelines and Application Underway

Positive changes to the 2024 WAVE (Wisconsin Award for Volunteer Excellence) guidelines and application are underway. Once the application is available sometime in May, awards may be applied for in each of the following categories: 1) Community Service 2) Fundraising 3) In-Service, 4) Community Outreach and/or Collaboration, and 5) Public Policy and Advocacy. Pat Freeders is once again chair of this committee. The awards will be presented at the Partners of WHA Annual Convention in Stevens Point in October 2024.

Update On Strategic Planning Committee Goals

The Strategic Planning Committee members met in person (and virtually) for the Partners board meetings in February 2024 to continue working on our goals set in 2023.

From the results of the online member survey done in the fall of 2023, as well as comments from the 2023 Spring District meetings and October 2023 Partners convention, some changes will be implemented at the Partners convention in October 2024 in Stevens Point.

The committee also developed “member-at-large” bylaws allowing individual memberships in Partners in circumstances when belonging to a hospital volunteer group with membership in Partners is not possible. This recommendation was approved by the Partners board. This bylaws change will be printed in the next two Reaching Out publications. The general membership should be voting on this proposed bylaw at the October 2024 convention.

We continue to work on written guidelines/procedures for combining districts due to decreased volunteer group members in the district.

*Terri Donlin and Sherry Jelic
Co-chairs of Partners of WHA Strategic Planning Committee*



Partners leadership was part of the WHA Wisconsin delegation meeting with legislators on Capitol Hill April 16.

Public Policy Education Report

Site-neutral payments reduce costs for patients and taxpayers

Of the many topics covered last year one that likely commands the most current review is that of site neutral payments. This subject was referred to in our *Reaching Out* publication in [August 2023](#). It has a history as far back as 2015. In that year, the Bipartisan Act was created to include site neutral payments. That Act allowed Medicare to reduce payments made to hospitals to a rate for similar services performed in a different setting such as in a physician office or ambulatory surgery center. Clearly, that fee schedule does not take into account the additional services provided in a hospital setting.

In a [December 2023 issue of *The Valued Voice*](#), another continuing attempt to underpay hospitals was revealed. The U.S. House introduced and passed HR 5378, “The Lower Cost More Transparency Act.” It passed by a vote of 320-71. In response, WHA wrote to the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation in opposition to HR 5378. Further, WHA seeks to remove Section 203 that stipulates Medicare pay drug administrative services in outpatient departments at a lower rate based on the Physician Fee Schedule. This would create a shortfall of over \$114 million in lower payments over the ensuing 10 years. In our state, Medicare currently reimburses 73% of costs for Medicare patients, lower than the 84% national average. That shortfall has grown from 1.7 billion in 2016 to 2.5 billion, a 42% increase.

Wisconsin hospitals continue to achieve high marks, having achieved the 4th highest share of 5 Star Hospitals recognized by the Kaiser Family Foundation. It should be stated that hospitals are not opposed to transitioning Medicare payments to a system that more accurately captures the higher costs for these differentiated and specialized services. It is simply not logical to consider that the same rate should be paid, considering the safety net services required by hospitals to continue their commitment to high-quality service. HR 5378, The Lower Cost More Transparency Act, offers no logic and should be defeated.

Other challenges for hospitals to navigate continue following the impact of COVID, supply-chain shortages, higher inflation, a diminishing health care workforce, and the impact of nursing homes closing. Hospitals continue to experience higher prices from drug manufacturers that deny 340B discounts to community pharmacies that contract with hospitals for their services.

All that said, when asked by WHA to respond to a Heat Alert concerning this subject, please take time to pass on your comments and feedback to assist in defeating legislation that truly does not recognize the economics related to quality care.



Bill McCullough

*Bill McCullough, PPE Chair
Email: webirish2gmail.com*

Community Health Education Report

Youth suicide prevention



Cindy Hermel

Suicide is a leading cause of death among U.S. children, teens, and young adults ages 10-24. Unfortunately, those rates are rising. While no single cause has been identified, suicide is often preceded by depression that is undiagnosed and untreated. Most youth show some warning signs or behavior changes in advance. Parents and physicians can work together to identify if a child or teen is struggling with depression, anxiety or substance abuse, all of which increase the risk of suicide.

Janet Lee, MD, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, indicates, “Suicide is complex, but also predictable.” She emphasizes, “when a person talks about killing themselves or feeling helpless or trapped, it should always be taken seriously.” Asking your child or teen directly about their mental health or if they are contemplating suicide is the best way to know what they are thinking. Studies show it is safe to ask about suicide risk and that asking the question will not put the idea of suicide into their head. Watch for major changes in your child’s sleep patterns, appetite, and social activities. Self-isolation, especially for kids who normally enjoy hanging out with friends or participating in activities, can signal serious difficulties.

“The goal is to create a safe space where your child can trust you to listen and express concern without judgment or blame,” Dr. Lee advises. If a child expresses or exhibits behavior that causes concern about their mental health and stability, it is imperative to show empathy and encourage continued dialog.

Common causes of stress that increase the risk of suicide include major life-changing events, including the loss of a loved one to death, divorce, deployment, or incarceration. Bullying, discrimination, racism or stigma surrounding mental health issues can also increase risks. Children who have witnessed or are suffering violence or domestic abuse, engage in self-harming behavior or experienced a suicide in their school or friend group are also at higher risk of suicide.

Research has shown getting immediate access to mental health care when needed is critical for effective intervention and treatment. In addition, fostering close connections to family and friends and facilitating this regular interaction is extremely effective in creating a safe space and a sense of belonging for the child, teen or young adult. An excellent resource for families to support and encourage their child’s sound mental health habits is HealthyChildren.org. There is a menu of articles with suggestions for dealing with many topics such as, but not limited to: *Coping with Stress and Violence at Home*, *Finding Mental Health Care for Your Child*, *Helping Children Handle Stress*, *Just Breathe: The Importance of Meditation Breaks for Kids*. Factual information is provided along with ideas on how to engage with your child in discussing the issues.

Suicide is often an impulsive act and in a moment of crisis can escalate quickly. **If your child is considering suicide, call or text 988 or chat on 988lifeline.org immediately.** The Lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress, as well as prevention and crisis resources.

Cindy Hermel, Community Health Education Chair
715-848-3322(H); 715-573-0720(C)
Email: clhermel@hotmail.com



Partners President-elect Julie Steiner, State CHE Chair Cindy Hermel, and State PPE Chair Bill McCullough attended the American Hospital Association Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. April 14-16. They joined fellow Wisconsin hospital and health system leaders on Capitol Hill to share information and personal stories with Wisconsin’s members of Congress about how our hospitals fit into the bigger picture of important federal health care policies.

Around the State

Gundersen Partners was recognized with the 2023 Outstanding Community Organization Award by the Gundersen Medical Foundation. The Foundation selected Gundersen Partners for this award because of the organization's tradition of supporting projects like the healing garden during the campus renewal campaign, the Angel Eye cameras, the Pawsitively for Patients program, lung cancer research and more, stating, "your good work has an immeasurable impact on the organization, the patients we serve, and our community."

Aspirus Wausau Volunteers helped with a mock trauma drill in April. Marge Brzezinski, wearing the purple jacket, is pictured assisting with the drill.



Aspirus Wausau mock drill



Gundersen Partners, (L to R): Jessica De Ruyter, Kari Ranallo, Jill Blackbourn, Sheila Erickson, Jim Bugge, Linda Arentz, Eileen Wiltinger, Jane Rada, Judy Olson, Lisa Biondo, Peggy Miller

Ripon Community Hospital Auxiliary hosted its first ever Easter Bunny Bake Sale in March. Easter-themed baked goods were sold in the hospital lobby. The auxiliary also filled more than 200 Valentine treat bags for distribution to staff and physicians. Accompanying the treats was a note of appreciation and encouragement.



Mary Licht

Apply for the Mary Licht Memorial Scholarship

Mary Licht, state president of Partners in 2017, lost a courageous battle with breast cancer in September 2017. Mary's dedication, enthusiasm and love of Partners shone brightly through her service as president of her local organization (Partners of Portage Hospital), Convention chair, Partners webmaster, and Southern District chair. Mary's family wished to continue Mary's legacy by establishing The Mary Licht Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship awards a first-time convention attendee their registration fee of \$175. Two (2) scholarships are available in 2024. The application may be found on the Partners website on the Forms page in the Resource Center. Please consider and encourage a member of your organization to apply. **The application deadline is August 1, 2024.**

Let us remember Mary by continuing her legacy through our enthusiasm, passion, and experiences as members of Partners.

Reaching Out Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
August 2024	Friday, July 12, 2024
November 2024	Friday, Oct. 11, 2024
February 2025	Friday, Jan. 10, 2025
May 2025	Friday, April 11, 2025

Partners *Reaching Out* is published four times a year by Partners of Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc. Visit the Partners website at www.partnersofwha.org. Direct questions or comments to:

Julie Steiner, Newsletter Editor
Email: steinerfam@mwt.net