CHH and Hartford HealthCare receive state approval to affiliate

The state Office of Health Care Access has approved the affiliation of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital (CHH) and Hartford HealthCare (HHC), allowing the two organizations to move forward with finalizing their partnership.

Now that the Certificate of Need application has been approved, the two organizations must begin a 120-day strategic planning process to outline the priorities and plans for the affiliation. The two organizations will also outline the organizational goals that will form the basis for the transition and future operations.

When finalized, CHH would become a member of Hartford HealthCare, which includes Hartford Hospital, Backus Hospital, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, Natchaug Hospital, Windham Hospital and a wide spectrum of additional urgent care, outpatient care, a primary care network, health centers, rehabilitation, senior services, LIFE STAR, homecare, surgery centers, the state’s largest Behavioral Health Network and other health services.

“With the next step of our affiliation in place, a timely and thoughtful transformation of our health services will begin so that access to care is secure for the people of northwest Connecticut and the future of that care is a strategic blending of CHH’s historic sense of place and purpose with the financial, clinical, and operational acumen that come with being part of a larger health system,” said Dan McIntyre, president and executive director at CHH.

“We are delighted to have reached this important milestone and look forward to this affiliation with Charlotte Hungerford,” said Elliot Joseph, HHC’s chief executive officer. “Bringing our vision of being the most trusted for personalized coordinated care to the people of northwest Connecticut, as well as the organization’s robust and well-coordinated programming and allowing for further infrastructure investments.

With a backdrop of an evolving healthcare delivery system, reimbursement challenges and new patient demographics, CHH engaged in a thoughtful self-assessment and evaluation process to address strategic options. The conclusion was that there are compelling reasons for CHH to seek a strategic affiliation with a larger system.

Through a rigorous and competitive evaluation process driven by members of the community and medical staff, Hartford HealthCare was selected as the preferred system to partner with because it demonstrated the greatest collaboration for an affiliation, a mutual commitment to grow services and the clearest shared vision. Hartford HealthCare officials cited CHH’s tradition of providing high-quality care to the people of northwestern Connecticut, as well as the organization’s robust partnerships with local agencies and groups, in their reasons for the affiliation.

Visit www.charlottehungerford.org or hartfordhealthcare.org for affiliation news and updates.

CHH safety coach program makes a difference

Safety coaching at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital is all about keeping patients, families, employees and visitors safe. Safety coaches are staff members from all areas of the organization who help teach and support the reliable use of expected safety behaviors and are required to complete special training for the role.

Their goal is to reduce unintentional errors, promote safe practices, encourage open communication about safety at all levels, and identify and share safety improvement opportunities. The program encourages all staff to report safety concerns by giving them appropriate tools to do so.

“Having safety coaches within the healthcare environment at our hospital creates an opportunity for us to improve how we deliver healthcare in areas that we might not recognize need improvement,” said CHH Lead Sonographer and Safety Coach Karen Bird, MHA, RDMS, RVT.

“Instead of emphasizing the negative aspects of potential mistakes we may encounter, we emphasize to employees to recognize and acknowledge any possible errors, thereby allowing us to concentrate on fine tuning our processes and care.”

Continued on page 2
Multi-Specialty Group welcomes new physicians

Dr. Alph Emmanuel \ CHH Surgical Associates

Alph Emmanuel, MD, is accepting patients at CHH Surgical Associates, joining fellow physicians William McGeehin, MD, and Timothy Gostkowski, MD, at their office at 538 Litchfield Street, Suite 201, Torrington.

Dr. Emmanuel is a graduate of St. John’s Medical College and Hospital in Bangalore, India, and completed his general surgery residency at UCONN Health Center in Farmington and the Hospital of Saint Raphael in New Haven, CT. He was a research fellow at Saint Francis Hospital, Hartford, CT, and his writings have been published in the Journal of American College of Surgeons.

“Both Dr. Gostkowski and myself are so pleased to welcome Dr. Emmanuel to our team of medical professionals at Surgical Associates,” said William McGeehin, MD. “We look forward to working with him in serving our patients in northwest Connecticut.”

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital’s Surgical Associates is part of its Multi-Specialty Group, which specializes in general surgery, performance of many of the surgical procedures provided at larger hospitals. The team provides expert treatment for patients who have conditions ranging from hernia, appendicitis and gall bladder problems to challenging, life-threatening diseases of the colon, intestine, stomach, glands, breast and skin. Where appropriate, surgeons use the most advanced techniques for minimally-invasive surgery and perform endoscopy when it is necessary to examine internal organs in depth for diagnostic purposes.

For information and appointments, please call (860) 489-7017.

Dr. William Gray \ CHH Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital’s Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine provides specialized treatment for chronic or non-healing wounds, which are defined as sores or wounds that have not significantly improved from conventional treatments. The advanced treatments available at the center include hyperbaric oxygen therapy, negative pressure wound therapy, bio-engineered skin substitutes, biological and biosynthetic dressings and growth factor therapies. The center features two hyperbaric oxygen chambers. The center is designed to complement other care in conjunction with the services offered by a patient’s primary care physicians.

For information and scheduling, please call (860) 489-0418.

Safety coach program makes a difference

Continued from page 1

Safety coaches attend monthly meetings, continuously coach colleagues, encourage others to coach for safety and help to spur safety improvement initiatives in their areas. They also help develop safety initiatives in collaboration with colleagues based on the information they gather by completing the safety habit observations.

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital’s (CHH) comprehensive, multi-year Emergency Department (ED) renovation and expansion project reached another milestone in October, bringing online a new technically advanced nurses station and four new state-of-the-art treatment rooms. Designed to modernize and enhance infrastructure and patient care services, the project has made significant progress in 2017 and will be two-thirds finished by the end of the year.

This past July, CHH opened its new Emergency Department entrance located in the same location and parking area as the former ED entrance but closer to Litchfield Street. Patients and visitors are now welcomed by two large, highly visible red “EMERGENCY” signs at the new entrance and should park in the same area they are accustomed to in the past. This phase featured a new check-in area for staff members to greet patients and conduct a quick, private evaluation, a larger, more comfortable waiting room, state-of-the-art treatment and triage rooms, and new security, staff, and spiritual care areas.

“We are excited about demonstrating our commitment to the future, said Bill Bednarz, Administrative Director of Facilities and Support Services. “This space is ‘purpose built,’ with the patient in mind in every aspect of the design. We are proud to make it available, on schedule.”

The $12 million Emergency Department upgrade project was initiated last year to improve patient privacy and comfort, provide less patient waiting time, improve patient flow and efficiencies and better accommodate larger volumes and technical advances in patient care. When completed, CHH will have 34 Emergency Department treatment rooms and two triage areas; an expanded nurse station, additional equipment and supply storage space; and rooms for nutrition, bariatric, EMS and financial counseling services.

CHH Emergency Department project moves forward

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital (CHH)
Thank you for your service

Jeanne Orie

Longtime volunteer Jeanne Orie recently retired from her post at the CHH Information Desk at the hospital’s main entrance, where she has been greeting patients and visitors since 1982. Each year, Jeanne would stay behind to answer the phones and greet visitors so all her fellow volunteers could attend the annual volunteer appreciation luncheon. Our sincere thanks from everyone at CHH to Jeanne and all of our volunteers whose dedication to our hospital and its patients is legendary.

William Polito, MD

Longtime friend and colleague William Polito, MD, retired this past summer after having served on the staff of Charlotte Hungerford Hospital for 32 years. Coming on board in 1985, he was the third generation of surgeons to work at the hospital. His father John “Jack” Polito, MD, served from 1958 to 1991, and grandfather, Frank Polito, MD, served from 1924 to 1962. Together, the Polito family has given a total of 103 years of service to CHH. Enjoy retirement Bill!!

Helen Bruno Simmons

Helen Bruno Simmons was born in 1918 and was a lifelong Winsted resident who volunteered for an amazing 72 years at the Litchfield County Hospital, Winsted Memorial Hospital, Winsted Health Center and Hungerford Emergency and Medical Care, respectively. She passed away in 2016, but her memory lives on in the hearts and minds of our staff and patients who dedicated a special memorial photo plaque in her honor in the Winsted Health Center’s waiting room. Her smile is still with us.

Congratulations on your achievement

Debra Fisher, MA, RN, CCRN

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital has appointed Debra Fisher, MA, RN, CCRN, recently received a 2017 Nightingale Award for Excellence in Nursing given by the Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut. Debra has been teaching and inspiring employees at CHH in a wide range of clinical areas for the past 10 years as part of the hospital’s Center for Professional Development.

Anne Vilhotti, MSN, RN

CHH nurse and educator Anne Vilhotti, MSN, RN, was recently inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau National Nurses Society at a recent special dinner attended by peers and colleagues. She has worked in many areas and capacities at CHH since beginning in 1989, including medical oncology, nursing supervision, information technology and nursing education. She is currently the Director of Innovation.

Mariam Hakim-Zargar, MD

CHH extends its sincere congratulations to Mariam Hakim-Zargar, MD, who recently has become the first female to serve as President of the Connecticut Orthopaedic Society since the organization’s inception in the early 1980s. Dr. Hakim is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon at her practice, the New England Orthopedic Center in Torrington, and serves on the hospital’s Credentialing Committee.

Welcome new board members

Maria Coutant Skinner

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital has appointed Maria Coutant Skinner to the CHH Board of Governors. She is a licensed clinical social worker and executive director of the McCall Center for Behavioral Health. She earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology from Springfield College and a master’s degree in social work at UCONN. Originally from Torrington, Maria is deeply committed to Litchfield County and serves on the hospital’s Credentialing Committee.

Douglas K. O’Connell, Esq.

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital has appointed Douglas K. O’Connell, Esq., to the CHH Board of Governors. Doug is a partner at the Winsted law firm of Howd, Lavioti & Finch, LLP. He is a graduate of the University of Connecticut and received his law degree from Western New England College School of Law and a master of law degree in taxation from New York University School of Law. Doug is also actively involved in many local and civic charitable organizations. He has served and currently serves on many local boards, including the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, United Way of Northwest Connecticut, The Chamber of Commerce of Northwest Connecticut, the Torrington Board of Education and the Rotary Club of the Torrington and Winsted areas, where he was named Paul Harris Fellow in 2007.

Visit www.charlottehungerford.org for hospital news, events and information

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital CH Hospital Charlotte Hungerford Hospital
‘Living Photos’ bring tranquility to CHH patient areas

Caregivers at CHH and Colebrook artist Debra Lill have collaborated to create five new and very unique “Living Photos” art displays that are on permanent view at several hospital outpatient locations.

Referring to them as “Virtual Views,” the art is a collection of photos in motion that display nature-based imagery in video loops. The photos depict traditional nature photography with the addition of subtle movement. At first glance, “Virtual Views” appear to be traditional framed photography, but people are often surprised and delighted after a few seconds when they realize that what they thought was a photograph is an image in motion.

Debra Lill, the local artist and creator of “Virtual Views,” worked with CHH caregivers to develop customized themes and imagery for settings specific to each location. She chose CHH to be her community partner for the project, which was made possible by the hospital and a Regional Initiative grant of $4,000, supported in part by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

“I am so pleased to have the opportunity to display the work for all to enjoy,” Lill said. “I hope these special Virtual Views bring the latest in cutting edge art and technology to people who may not have any other chance to see this type of work. Our hope is that it will help patients and families relax with beautiful and calming images and will visually bring the outside in for people.”

The displays received financial support in part by Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and through a Regional Initiative Grant provided by:

HELPING THE RESIDENTS OF NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT

CHH, task force offer free resources to combat opiate abuse

CHH and members of the community collaborative Litchfield County Opiate Task Force are working to reduce the harm caused by the opiate epidemic in the region. If you or someone you know is suffering from an opioid substance use disorder, CHH and the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force have developed a FREE confidential, individualized consultation and screening service that offers information and resources on treatments to assist with recovery.

This service is provided by a Charlotte Hungerford Hospital certified case manager who has office hours Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., through the hospital’s Emergency Department or by calling (860) 496-6381. During after-hours or weekends, those in need can call a toll-free 24 hour hotline at 1 (888) 447-3339 for assistance from the Mobile Health Team of the Western CT Mental Health Network.

Opiate abuse has become a major public health issue in recent years. Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the United States are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, Americans are now advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medications—flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash—pose potential safety and health hazards.

New ALS support group formed in NWCT

A newly formed support group open to both people living with ALS and their caregivers, family and friends is now available to residents of the northwest corner. ALS stands for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, and is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. The group meets at the VNS of CT office, 62 Commercial Blvd., Torrington, CT, on the second Tuesday of each month from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

The Connecticut Chapter was founded in 1988 by a group of volunteers to serve the needs of those living with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and their caregivers. The ALS Association is the only national not-for-profit health organization dedicated solely to the fight against ALS and covers research, patient and community services, public education and advocacy. Its mission is to help people living with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and to leave no stone unturned in the search for a cure.

For more information, call Michelle Kudy, ALS Association CT Chapter Regional Care Manager, at (203) 308-7996 or e-mail mkipdy@alsact.org.