Dear friends,

Listening is an important component in delivering effective healthcare. At Geisinger, we listen not only when our patients talk with us about their individual health histories and symptoms, but also when our community shares information regarding areas in need of improvement so we all can become healthier and happier. To that end, we work cooperatively with other organizations to conduct community health needs assessments. Based on the feedback provided — whether it is the need for increased access to medical services or educational programming — we take action to make things better.

This is not simply the right thing to do. It is also who we are and what we are all about. And as we begin our second century of service at Geisinger, we remain committed to our patient care, education, research and community service mission.

We are pleased to share our latest Community Health Needs Assessment brochure, and hope you will take the time to review it. You can also visit geisinger.org/chna to learn more about Geisinger’s ongoing efforts to enhance the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

Thank you for your interest.

Compassionate caring. That’s our commitment to you when you come to Holy Spirit—A Geisinger Affiliate for care. Our physicians’ and practitioners’ dedication to serving the community and providing care to all in need has never been stronger.

Holy Spirit’s mission is closely tied to the health of the community, which is why we seek to understand and respond to identified community health needs. Our role is to be a good corporate citizen and work with the community to tackle the most critical health and social problems. We are invested in community partnerships and collaborative efforts.

Holy Spirit’s community support also includes the provision of free, uncompensated care to patients who cannot afford to pay, allied health, community health, education and outreach programs.

As you read more about our response to the community health needs assessment, we welcome your ideas regarding how we can better serve you, your family, your friends and your neighbors.

Be in good health,

Joseph A. Torchia, MD
Chief Medical Officer

Kyle C. Snyder
Chief Administrative Officer

Getting community residents closer to care

Access improves through strategic collaboration and location of services

For some people, having essential healthcare services within a reasonable distance of their home or job is a problem. For others, it’s the challenge of reaching those services, whether through private or public means of transportation. The issue of access can rarely be addressed with a single solution. But a diversified approach can make a difference.

Growth in the Holy Spirit primary care network over the past year has addressed needs in specific geographic areas with the addition of physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners at family medicine practices in Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry and Northern York counties. As a result, more residents can be served and more timely appointments are possible. Two conveniently located urgent care centers now offer another option when residents need quick medical treatment.

To help meet an underserved need for pediatrics specialty care, the Geisinger Janet Weis Children’s Hospital Pediatric Specialties practice opened to provide gastroenterology, orthopaedic surgery, endocrinology, hematology/oncology and general surgery services. An inpatient unit staffed by pediatric hospitalists and specialty nurses also opened at Holy Spirit Hospital to provide basic inpatient pediatric care. Holy Spirit is also planning the addition of more general pediatric practices throughout its service area.

Joining forces

Bringing more healthcare practitioners to more locations is one way to improve access. Holy Spirit also reaches out to residents in more rural areas of the region, through ongoing collaborations with community-based groups. Cheryl Solá, RN, community health education and wellness coordinator for Holy Spirit, explains how local health-focused events help meet the goals of one such group, the Northern Dauphin Health Initiative. The group, whose vision is to improve access to affordable healthcare, finds they can reach many residents by coordinating events and programs that involve a variety of providers and services — often in locations where residents already gather.

“When you look at the lack of providers and transportation in the rural areas, you have to ask what can be done to improve that, but also what can be done differently,” Ms. Solá says. “We are actively involved in offering health education and wellness events, helping to plan and participate in them.”

Events such as Girls’ Night Out, she says, combine fun activities with health screenings and lectures, and draw hundreds of women. A health event focused on men is scheduled at the local gun club, a venue where many participants feel comfortable. Health screenings at senior expos reach even more residents. In addition, Holy Spirit is exploring the possibility of adding additional primary care resources for the region.
Another community-based group collaborating to improve local access to affordable healthcare is the Perry County Health Coalition. Joni Fegan, MHSA, director of planning, represents Holy Spirit on the coalition, which was formed under the leadership of Perry County commissioners following an earlier community health needs assessment.

As one of the region’s more rural counties, Perry County has always faced challenges with access to services and providers. Resources for medical, dental and mental health services within the county are below state averages on a provider-to-population basis. In 2014, the coalition worked with a research team from Dickinson College and Shippensburg University to gather population-specific data about healthcare needs and barriers to care. The researchers surveyed county residents and tapped community stakeholders and local healthcare providers for their perspectives. They presented their findings and recommendations to the coalition in early 2015. Coalition members worked together to determine the best course of action and hired a project manager.

“Our medical group leadership will be meeting with the project manager to see what more Holy Spirit can do to provide access to services,” Ms. Fegan says. “We also are working to recruit new providers to the area and supporting efforts of the coalition to improve access.”

Over the past year, Holy Spirit has also added providers to family medicine centers in Duncannon and Marysville and has begun to offer cardiology and cardiovascular diagnostic services in Duncannon and cardiology in Newport. Holy Spirit’s Duncannon Center has been a resource for the community for many years, offering lab, physical therapy, imaging and pulmonary function testing services.

**Tackling tough health issues**

**Initiatives address urgent and growing need for behavioral health services**

**At the hospital**

More than 50 years ago, Holy Spirit began to offer crisis intervention services through the Emergency Department. And for five decades, it has continued to be an expert community resource for those struggling with behavioral health issues.

Today, the need is greater and the problems more complex. Holy Spirit remains devoted to playing a vital role in tackling the problem head-on. A new Behavioral Health Unit set to open in the hospital’s expanding Emergency Department will be an important avenue for area residents to seek help.

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“The new unit is an evolution of our services,” explains Steve Buciffero, senior director for Behavioral Health Services. “It will provide an environment that is secure and safe, designed and furnished for this specific purpose, with dedicated and trained staff.”

Mr. Buciffero believes that patients, as well as their family members, will take comfort in the safe haven of the dedicated unit. It will be clearly marked and accessible for patients to go directly for care, away from the busy environment of the Emergency Department.

**In the schools**

Beyond the crisis situation that brings a patient to the Emergency Department, there is another setting within our communities where it’s possible to reach young people and have an impact — their schools. Holy Spirit’s long-running Teenline program makes trained behavioral health specialists available for student assistance services, working with administrators, counselors and teachers. That role has expanded, Mr. Buciffero says, with Teenline staff available to meet one-on-one with a student at school. The goal is more immediate service and improved outcomes.

“This allows the student to confidentially discuss a problem he or she is dealing with at home or in school,” Mr. Buciffero says. “The student may ask for help for themselves, or a friend might say they seemed troubled. Our staff can help assess the situation and find services, if needed. By bringing services into the schools, we are improving access and response, and striving for better outcomes,” he adds.

Services are being offered in all 13 school districts in Cumberland, Perry and Northern York counties.

**On the streets**

Opioid overdoses have reached a crisis level in many communities in our region and have touched the lives of countless families. Aiming first responders with naloxone nasal spray, which can reverse the effects of an overdose, can help to save lives, giving those struggling with addiction another chance.

Duane Nieves, EMT-P, director of Field Operations and chief of Holy Spirit EMS and president of the Cumberland County EMS Council, represents EMS agencies on a regional Opiate Overdose Prevention Workgroup. The cooperative effort among EMS agencies, probation and parole staff, district attorneys and the coroner’s office is working on a new goal: to put naloxone in the hands of local police officers, who often are first on the scene in an emergency.

“They may be on patrol in the area already and reach the scene before we do,” Mr. Nieves says. “It may be by just a minute or two, but that can make a difference.”

Use of naloxone for overdose reversal is not new, Mr. Nieves explains; EMS crews have carried it for at least three decades. Having it now in the hands of more frontline responders, as well as in schools and available even to consumers, makes it an accessible tool in the fight against an overdose epidemic and public health crisis.

“When it’s used on the scene, the individual still needs to be seen in the Emergency Department and have a complete evaluation by the emergency physician,” Mr. Nieves says. “Naloxone can take care of the immediate crisis — it can save the person’s life — but their bigger problem of addiction still has to be addressed.”

The EMS-led partnership continues to spread the word about the program and conducts training for local police departments. To date, officers from eight municipal police departments in Cumberland County and the Cumberland County Sheriff and deputies have been trained and carry the naloxone kits.

**Encouraging healthier ways to live**

**Programs bring health and wellness information to residents and employees**

Holy Spirit is as dedicated to helping people stay well as it is to caring for them when they are not. That means always looking for new ways to reach more residents out in the community, whether it’s healthy-living lectures hosted by support groups, health screenings at local libraries, a walking loop at a local mall or a nutrition class at a local grocery store.

“We are open to any community health fair and senior expos to do health screenings,” says Cheryl Solá, RN, community health education and wellness coordinator. “We regularly work with Urology of Central PA to offer prostate screenings. We are especially focused on diabetes, obesity and cancer, as those are major health concerns in our area.”

Special events over the past year include diabetes education programs, healthy-living lectures at several churches and township-sponsored events, health information sessions at four area libraries and a “Day of Pampering,” which focused on the needs of caregivers. At all community events, Ms. Solá explains, the goal is to connect with individuals on a personal level.

“We see people who have so many questions,” she says. “It’s important to take the time to have conversations with them and, if appropriate, direct them to resources to get the help they need.”

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they need. Sometimes just getting information into their hands is all it takes."

The Spirit of Women program delivers focused health education and resources in an entertaining setting with two signature events: Day of Dance and Girls’ Night Out. Broadening its reach over the past year, the program added quarterly health lectures on digestive health, pelvic conditions, breast density and a woman’s guide to men’s health. Megan Atticks, Spirit of Women coordinator, describes new initiatives for 2016.

“A calendar of monthly events covers even more health topics, including vascular disease, cholesterol and heart disease, neurological problems and back pain,” she says. "Many offer the opportunity for active participation, such as a fitness or cooking class combined with the health lecture. Also, we’re excited to present a new support group focused on cancer wellness developed by the Holy Spirit Breast Care Center. The quarterly meetings are open to anyone — men included — who has been touched by cancer.”

Overcoming language barriers for better health

The World Health Organization identifies literacy as a top priority, stressing the importance of having the skills to understand and use information that helps to maintain good health for oneself and one’s family. In central Pennsylvania, Holy Spirit’s Medical Outreach Service fills a vital need for bilingual health education for those with limited English proficiency.

Jody Silliker, a pastor and registered nurse, is director of the service, which is based at Christ Lutheran Church in Harrisburg. Medical Outreach staff and volunteers, in conjunction with Christ Lutheran Church Health Ministries, provide medical care for the poor and homeless. The needs of all are met with compassion, Ms. Silliker says. “We serve the poorest of the poor,” she explains. “In our area there is a pocket of severely low-income folks. Some are from the immediate area around us and some are referred to us from local hospital ERs. Others we serve are newly arrived immigrants, some with severe language barriers or low levels of education.”

Bilingual services at Medical Outreach include English as a Second Language classes and a bilingual lending library of books for children in English plus Spanish, French or Arabic. Multilingual health educators perform one-on-one counseling. Initiatives include a focus on making sure those who need prenatal care receive it and an “Abuelita” program, which pairs a new young mother with a bilingual nurse who is available for home visits and consultation until the baby is 6 weeks old. A big piece of the program is education about breastfeeding.

“These young women can feel very isolated,” Ms. Silliker explains. “They carry these old wives’ tales about breastfeeding, so we try to raise awareness of how it can help the baby thrive.”

Ms. Silliker notes that all Medical Outreach staff nurses are bilingual. One has earned certification in transcultural nursing and another is certified in lactation counseling.

“It’s important to get to know the people we serve, to have relationships,” Ms. Silliker says. “The staff are true cultural brokers, able to hear what is said as well as what is unsaid. That’s what we offer. Advocacy and sensitivity for the vulnerable is what makes us true to our Catholic identity.”

Engaging employees in good health habits

Holy Spirit employees go beyond caring for others — they also care about their own good health.

Geisinger Wellness, including the MyHealth Rewards program, was implemented following the affiliation with Geisinger, and gives employees tools and resources to make healthy lifestyle choices and be rewarded for smart health practices.

The Wellness department develops and maintains the overall culture of health and well-being in partnership with employees, with features such as a tobacco-free campus, walking paths and healthy menu choices. The myHealth Rewards program is a results-based wellness program that recognizes participating employees who achieve personal health goals in many ways and, for those who choose health benefits through the system, reduces their share of health insurance premium costs. Spouses are able to participate and earn rewards as well.

“MyHealth Rewards is designed to provide an opportunity for all employees to meet and maintain personal health and well-being goals with support and resources specifically developed for them,” explains Diane Harlow, director of Geisinger Wellness. “There is shared accountability between employer and employee in a proven, nationally recognized program. Like the whole Geisinger family, Holy Spirit staff have embraced and fully support the program.”

It’s such an old idea it almost seems brand new.