



Lowell General Hospital Total Community Benefit: \$28,144,001

- Funding uncompensated and net charity care: Lowell General Hospital is committed to providing care to members of our community regardless of their ability to pay.
- Community benefit and service programs: Lowell General Hospital provides community benefit and service programs that address the unique needs of distinct groups in our region; these programs include health and wellness outreach and education, sponsorships and funding of key initiatives locally.

Community Benefit Mission

Lowell General Hospital is committed to improving the overall health status of our community and, specifically, the health problems of the underserved populations of Greater Lowell. This mission is achieved by identifying existing and future health needs in the community, and addressing those needs through new or existing health initiatives, including education, prevention, and screening programs, both independently and in collaboration with other community resources.

MENTAL HEALTH

Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. – 9.8 million, or 4% – experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life.

RESPONSE

- Partnered with local high schools in Chelmsford, Lowell and Tewksbury to assess risky behaviors and develop action plans to address them.
- Coordinated programs on depression, anxiety, self-harm and adolescent suicide prevention to the community, including anti-bullying workshops provided in schools and during after-school programs to nearly 300 youth and adults combined.
- Facilitated Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings in partnership with Lowell Public Schools to educate adults on how to help adolescents (age 12-18) experiencing mental health or addiction challenges.

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Project Fit kickoff at Chelmsford's McCarthy Middle School

Community Benefit Mission (cont.)

SUBSTANCE USE

Substance abuse and addiction issues are identified as top health issues facing Greater Lowell. Middlesex County has led the state in unintentional opioid-related overdose deaths since 2004. The issue of substance abuse is also a concern due to associated violence and high needle use.

RESPONSE

- Provided education on opioid screenings in collaboration with the Westford Health Department for physicians, dentists and nurse practitioners from the Greater Lowell area.
- Partnered with the towns of Chelmsford and Billerica during substance abuse awareness weeks.
- Provided funding to the City of Lowell Health Department to integrate curriculum for grades 5-8 in the Lowell Public Schools that covers life skills, including bullying and substance abuse.
- Provided funding to help sustain community substance use support groups at Lowell House, Inc.
- Participated in several community task forces focused on substance abuse issues within Greater Lowell, including the District Attorney's Greater Lowell Opioid Task Force, the City of Lowell's Opioid Task Force and the Greater Lowell Health Alliance's Substance Use & Prevention Task Force.
- Hosted a 'Hidden in Plain Sight' program, a display that gives people a way to explore a mock teenager's bedroom to see and identify drug paraphernalia and hiding places along with other signs that may indicate alcohol or other drug use by a teen.

CHRONIC DISEASE

Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity and arthritis are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems. In 2010, 63 percent of Lowell residents were identified as overweight and these numbers have continued to rise.

RESPONSE

- Hosted Mill City Grow's mobile farmer's markets at hospital campuses from June through November to offer fresh vegetables to the community.
- Partnered with Fresh Start Food Gardens in Westford to provide two gardens to each of the town's six elementary schools.
- Provided weekly chronic disease education and screenings to the community on Pawtucket Boulevard's riverwalk throughout the spring and summer months.
- Participated in the Merrimack Valley Food Bank's community markets to provide weekly health education on chronic disease and nutrition to low-income residents of Lowell.
- Partnered with Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA) to provide education and resources to residents on topics such as heart health, nutrition, cancer prevention, and infant nutrition in multiple languages.
- Participated in health fairs throughout the community offering health screenings and education.

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Lowell General Hospital recognizes that in order to improve our communities' health we must partner with and support other businesses, non-profits, and the community members to reach the populations we serve.

RESPONSE

- Staff participated on more than 30 community boards, coalitions, committees, and task forces throughout the Merrimack Valley amounting to more than 950 hours per year.
- Volunteered with Habitat for Humanity to assist in three community builds to renovate homes for families in need.
- Continued financial support for the Greater Lowell Health Alliance (GLHA), which brings together healthcare providers, business leaders, educators, and civic and community leaders with a common goal to improve the overall health of our communities.
- Commissioned the 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment in collaboration with University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Greater Lowell Health Alliance, which will be used to develop our community benefit plans over the next three years (2017-2019).
- Offered workforce development opportunities in healthcare for student internships and clinical practicums by dedicating approximately 16,000 staff hours to more than 950 students.
- Offered free Tdap (tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis) vaccination clinics to the community.
- Coordinated flu clinics for the community that resulted in vaccination of nearly 700 people.

Community Benefit Partners

Circle Health is proud to partner with and support a diverse variety of area agencies and organizations throughout the communities we serve. Whether through direct sponsorship, funding, providing tailored health and wellness programs and events, or participation on key committees and boards, we are making a powerful difference in the lives of countless people living and working in the Merrimack Valley. These community benefit partners include (but are not limited to):

50 Legs
A Childs Light, Inc.
African Cultural Association
Alternative House
Billerica Alliance
Billerica Boys & Girls Club
Billerica Fire Department
Billerica Health Department
Billerica Health and Wellness Fair
Billerica Police Department
Billerica Public Schools
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell
Budget Buddies
Catie's Closet
Center for Hope and Healing
Circle Home
City of Lowell Festival Foundation
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
Challenge Unlimited, Inc.
Chelmsford Business Association
Chelmsford Health Department
Chelmsford Public Schools
Chelmsford Pop Warner
Coalition for a Better Acre
Community Health Network Area 10
Community Teamwork, Inc.
Dracut Public Schools
D'Youville Foundation
Elder Services of Merrimack Valley
Free to Breathe
Fresh Start Food Gardens
Girls Inc. of Greater Lowell
Greater Lowell Community Foundation
Greater Lowell Health Alliance
Greater Lowell Technical High School
Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce
Greater Lowell YMCA
Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau
Groton Dunstable Regional School District
Habitat for Humanity
Health Care for All
Home Health Foundation

House of Hope
Hope Worldwide
KIDS In Disability
Kiwanis Club of Greater Lowell
Littleton Children's Fund
Littleton Community Farms
Littleton Parks & Recreation
Lowell Association for the Blind
Lowell Community Health Center
Lowell Festival Foundation
Lowell Health Department
Lowell House, Inc.
Lowell Housing Authority
Lowell Plan
Lowell Police Department
Lowell Pop Warner
Lowell Public Schools
Lowell Sun Charities
Megan's House
Merrimack College
Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities
Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation
Merrimack Valley NAACP
Merrimack Repertory Theatre
Merrimack Valley Food Bank
Middlesex Community College
Middlesex District Attorney's office
Mill City Grows
MITSS, Inc.
Centralville Community Coalition
Northern Essex Community College
NuPath, Inc.
Power of Flowers Project
Project Learn
Rotary Club of Lowell
Roudenbush Community Center
Salvation Army
Saydanar Community Development Center
Shane's Antbullying Program
South Bay Mental Health
Share Our Strength
Sustainable Westford
Tewksbury Health Department
Tewksbury Police Department

Tewksbury Senior Center
The Catholic School Foundation
The Joseph Middlemiss Big Heart Foundation
Tyngsboro Public Schools
UMass Lowell
Veterans Assisting Veterans
Westford Against Substance Abuse
Westford Business Association
Westford Charitable Foundation, Inc.
Westford Education Foundation
Westford Parent Connection
Westford Health Department
Westford Family Funfest Foundation
Westford Kiwanis
Westford Parent Connection
Westford Public Schools
Westford Rotary Foundation
Whistler House
WIC of Lowell
Women Working Wonders Fund
Zack's Team



2016 UMass Lowell
Fitness Field Day

Providing adults with tools to identify, address mental health issues in youths

Circle Health supports roll-out of Youth Mental Health First Aid

Supporting Mental Health in Youths

Circle Health is working closely with public schools, first responders and youth mentors by providing education and funding so they can identify and address mental health issues in young people.



Ingrid Markman

The risk of mental illness in the delicate minds of adolescents is not a new phenomenon. However, the rise of modern-day pressures like social media and opioid abuse have presented new challenges to young people.

Ingrid Markman, a District Support Specialist with Lowell Public Schools and a licensed social worker, sees the impacts of these pressures on young people across her district. To address these problems, she and her colleagues sought ways to give teachers and other role models the tools to help them cope.

“I feel like in today’s world we have many more kids dealing with mental health issues, anywhere from anxiety and normal transitional issues to some pretty serious issues like trauma and mental illness,” she says. “It’s important for the staff to be aware of that.”

The 2016 Greater Lowell Community Health Needs Assessment identified access to and funding for mental health services as a priority in the region, and noted that youth are accessing drugs and alcohol as young as age 10.

One way Circle Health has worked to address these challenges in 2016 was to aid in the execution of a \$100,000 federal grant to Lowell Public Schools designed to educate adults who work directly with young people through an innovative training course.

Called Youth Mental Health First Aid, the program introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), and eating disorders.

“We’re not training them to be a therapist,” Markman says. “We’re more training them to recognize the symptoms of mental illness, how to address that student and get them where they need to be for help.”

One of the trainers is Heather Hilbert, part of Circle Health’s Community Health and Wellness team. Hilbert led several trainings during the year, and Lowell General Hospital hosted several more.

In the first year of the grant, Lowell schools trained 24 people in the community, including four social workers in the public schools. Another 20 were trained to teach the program, allowing them to hold more than a dozen trainings with agencies like Middlesex Community College, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell and public safety. With this foundation, in the second year of the grant the group was able to train about 250 teachers across the city.

The feedback, Markman says, has been extremely positive. “The social workers feel the teachers really responded to it,” she says. “A number of teachers I’ve seen recently said that they’ve really been able to use it, not only in their professional lives, but their personal lives as well.”

Developing the next generation of healthcare professionals

Lowell General Hospital hosts the Careers in Healthcare program

To be a great hospital, it takes a talented staff of more than 3,600 employees – physicians, nurses, technicians, therapists, social workers and many other support staff.

But Lowell General Hospital isn't just invested in being an employer of choice in the region. We also want to help develop the next generation of healthcare workers to ensure a strong future for healthcare in the region.

To promote workforce development, Circle Health's Community Health and Wellness (CHW) team has hosted the Careers in Healthcare program. The staff works with local high schools to recruit students potentially interested in a healthcare career to take a guided tour of several different departments in the hospital.

The goal, according to Amanda Clermont, manager of Community Health and Wellness, is to cultivate the next generation of healthcare professionals. "The program is important because it gives these students hands-on experience," she says. "They can see with their own eyes whether this is something they want to pursue."

Lyn Blouin, a Director of Support Services with Lowell High School, said her students learned a lot from their tour. "I was so impressed with the way the staff welcomed our students and prepared for their visit within each department," she says. "The students were so excited to learn first-hand what it was like to work in an Emergency Room, see an operating room and visit a maternity ward."

Two years ago, the successful program expanded to include a summer camp-like experience, for which only 20 students are chosen from dozens of applicants to participate in a five-day program that provides a more in-depth, up-close view of hospital operations.

For Christina Ceballos of Acton, the program proved instrumental in her decision to pursue studies in the healthcare field. The daughter of two nurses, she says the experience for her was eye-opening.

"I thought I wanted to be a nurse, but I was second-guessing myself through the college search process. I thought it would be a good idea to see all aspects of the hospital and came out knowing I wanted to go to nursing school."

Stacey Cayer, a nurse in Lowell General Hospital's Heart and Vascular Center, leads many of the tours.

"It's important to share with students about the career path we take for different jobs in the hospital," she says. "A lot of education goes into these jobs."

Christina went on to win Lowell General Hospital's Medical Staff Scholarship and is now a freshman at UMass Amherst, planning to major in nursing.

"I really like helping people," she says. "I can't see myself doing anything else."

Promoting Workforce Development

As the region's largest employer and primary healthcare organization, Circle Health is committed to fostering the next generation of healthcare professionals to meet the future health needs of Greater Lowell.



Christina Ceballos and family