

**PALOMAR
HEALTH**

COMMUNITY HEALTH

IMPROVEMENT REPORT



For the
fiscal year ending:

JUNE 30

2016

PALOMAR HEALTH COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT REPORT FY2016

Whether an emergency room visit, a health class, or an outpatient surgery, Palomar Health is committed to enhancing access to care and improving our community's health.

As a public health district, Palomar Health received \$15 million from property taxes in fiscal year 2016 (FY16), while devoting more than \$120 million to the community through community health improvement programs and services. Community health improvement projects include:

- Programs and activities that respond to identified community needs
- Health education and training programs
- Unreimbursed medical care services

Palomar Health collaborates with other health systems, government agencies, and community groups to identify the greatest health needs in the region. Based upon the 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), the top health needs in San Diego County are cardiovascular disease, diabetes (Type 2), behavioral health, and obesity. In addition, the CHNA identified the region's most prevalent social determinants of health, which included: food insecurity/access to healthy food, access to care, housing issues and physical activity.

Although numbers never tell the whole story, Palomar Health reports community health improvement activities as a way to be accountable to the communities we serve. This report offers a snapshot of some of the community health improvement programs offered by Palomar Health in FY16.

**OUR
MISSION:**
To heal, comfort and
promote health in the
communities we serve.



2015-16 PALOMAR HEALTH QUICK FACTS

→ **31,409** inpatient discharges

 **4,345** total births

 **144,986** ED visits

 **19,161** surgeries

← **153,653** outpatient visits

 **392** free health classes

 **6,671** class participants

 **339** Ask-A-Nurse

 **1,000** blood pressure screenings

 **3,307** flu shots in the community

 **216** support group meetings



Protecting School Kids & Parents from the Flu



Taking Services to the Community

Palomar Health's mission extends beyond the walls of our hospitals by taking health services to the community. Programs such as free blood pressure screenings, Ask-A-Nurse forums, health education classes and influenza vaccination clinics are just some of the ways Palomar Health promotes health in the community.

Imagine 3,307 sleeves rolled up with arms waiting for flu shots. Luanne Arangio-Law RN doesn't have to imagine — she and her team administered all those vaccinations during the 2015-2016 flu season at clinics hosted by Palomar Health.

The flu shots were given to adults and children all over San Diego County's North Inland region — during a season that saw more than 6,000 cases of influenza throughout the county.

Beyond protecting our community from influenza, one of the benefits of the flu shot is keeping children in the classroom rather than home in bed with the flu.

In a note, Olivia Leschick, Administrator of Special Projects at the Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District, expressed her gratitude for a flu shot clinic held at one of their schools:

"I cannot overstate how grateful we are for your service and that of the Palomar Health staff that provided the flu shots to our

needy families last night.

It is very much appreciated by all and a great public service to our community. Your dedication to these flu shot clinics over the past four years has been instrumental in helping our students maintain better school attendance."

"We have numerous people tell us about their positive experiences in our hospital system, share their health needs and express heartfelt thanks for the protection against influenza," said Arangio-Law. "We have people who come back to the clinics time and again, waiting patiently for the date when we arrive at their favorite location."



Helping Patients Focus on Healing



Access to health care remains a serious problem for some in our community. Palomar Health's goal is to ensure that everyone receives medical help, regardless of their ability to pay. The organization offers financial assistance programs for those who are uninsured, underinsured, ineligible for a government program or otherwise unable to pay for medically necessary care.

Palomar Health provides uncompensated care for patients unable to pay for services and absorbs the unreimbursed costs of public programs such as Medi-Cal, Medicare, Tri-Care, San Diego County Indigent Medical Services (CMS) and the Low Income Health Program (LIHP).

Peace of Mind

Sleepless nights and stress often give way to tears of joy when Cynthia Burns and her team in financial services visit a patient's room to help them address their hospital bills.

That's what happened recently when "Letitia," a 40-year old Palomar Medical Center Escondido patient learned that she and her husband would likely qualify for Palomar Health's charity program.

"I offered charity because I could see on both of their faces that they were stressed about more bills coming in," said Patient Financial Representative Ruby Martinez. "After I explained that they might qualify for charity, you should have seen their faces."

Director of Patient Access Cynthia Burns, oversees the charity care program, which forgives the patient's entire hospital bill—in Letitia's case, a five-day stay.

"It's just the biggest relief to the patient," said Burns. "It takes the stress away immediately."

Letitia and her husband felt an obligation to pay their entire hospital bill, but doing so would have been a huge financial burden and would have taken many years to pay off—so the charity application made the most sense and helps Palomar Health fulfill the hospital's role in the community.



"It goes back to our mission statement—the need to heal, provide comfort, and promote health in the communities we serve," said Burns. "It is a charitable contribution that shows on our financials."

And taking away the stress of a hospital bill allows the patient to focus on both the emotional and physical parts of healing.

Families who have been beneficiaries of the charity often come back to visit and express their heartfelt gratitude—as Elizabeth and Tony Vukovics recently did on behalf of Elizabeth's mother, whose hospital bill was forgiven under the program.

Through tears of joy, Elizabeth thanked the Patient Access Team for helping her family become physically and financially whole again.

Palomar Health Pathmakers in FY16

- More than 850 Pathmakers
- More than 140,000 internship hours
- Students from 34 high schools & 23 colleges



Jeff Bethune, RN
Former Pathmaker



Empowering Tomorrow's Workforce

The demand for healthcare workers continues to rise. To support the workforce of tomorrow, Palomar Health provides educational programs and opportunities today.

Palomar Health collaborates with local high schools, colleges and universities to help students explore healthcare careers through the Pathmaker internship program. In hospital settings, students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in healthcare under the guidance of Palomar Health staff.

When Jeff Bethune worked as a salesman at Guitar Center in San Marcos in 2010, he would look across the freeway and watch them build the brand-new Palomar Medical Center Escondido – and dream that someday he would work there as a nurse.

His dream came true in 2017 when he was hired as an emergency department (ED) nurse at the hospital.

Palomar Health's Pathmaker Internship Program helped create Jeff's path to the ED, allowing him to attend nursing school and intern at Palomar Medical Center Escondido and the Downtown Campus.

"Pathmakers was an invaluable experience," Jeff said. "And after I got in the ED, I felt like I belonged." He adds that his new colleagues in the ED are great teachers as well as supportive colleagues.

Jeff says his experiences as a guitar salesman were easily transferable to patients in the ED

— "you never know who is going to come through the door at the store or the hospital but you have the opportunity to build rapport with every one of them."

The Pathmaker Internship Program at Palomar Health has helped launch the healthcare careers of many participants—from ages 16 to as old as 57.

"Jeff took this opportunity very seriously and wasted no time learning new skills, experiencing new departments, and meeting new healthcare professionals every chance he got," said Christi Perdomo, manager of the Pathmaker Internship Program. "As a result, he found his niche, which is my goal for each intern: figure out what you love to do, and then go do it. If I was a patient at Palomar Health and Jeff walked into my room as my nurse, I would know I was in the best hands possible, because he loves what he does."

Jeff may have taken a longer pathway than some, but his pride is evident when he looks at his badge that says: Jeff Bethune, RN.

Forensic Health Services' Investigative Role

In honor of Sexual Assault Response and Child Abuse Awareness Month, Palomar Health displays pinwheels, each representing a patient cared for by the FHS team last year.

Palomar Health plays a vital role in the community as one of two Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART) in San Diego County. The Forensic Health Services (FHS) team conducts examinations in sexual assault cases that are part of law enforcement's case against perpetrators.

And now, FHS has a new countywide role in the investigation of non-fatal strangulation cases and other forms of domestic violence. Trained forensic nurse examiners are now performing medical exams to document injuries sustained during domestic violence assaults, including strangulation.

San Diego County received funding from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to create a coordinated community response on handling non-fatal strangulation cases—which show a much greater likelihood of leading to homicide.

"Palomar Health was invited to join our San Diego community partners to identify gaps in the capacity and accessibility for adult and teen strangulation, and domestic violence victims to receive forensic

medical examinations," said Michelle Shores, program manager of FHS. "We discovered that these exams do not exist."

FHS has capacity to perform 130 forensic exams for domestic violence and strangulation, according to Shores. "There will be no cost to the victims and we have the equipment," she said.

"We're excited to have Forensic Health Services as a part of this pilot program," said Escondido Chief of Police, Craig Carter. Their overall level of cooperation has been outstanding. This program is needed because a victim of a near-strangulation is hundreds of times more likely to become the victim of a homicide in the future."





Meeting Unmet Health Needs

Since their inception in 1992, the Palomar Health's Community Action Councils (CAC) have given Palomar Health a direct connection to the community's unmet health needs. The five regional CACs bring together leaders from human service organizations, health agencies, schools, law enforcement, local government, community clinics, senior centers, faith communities, businesses and community members to collaboratively address health-related issues in our district.

Produce Therapy

"It's a wonderful thing that we're doing here," said volunteer Barbara Kokasa, as she worked among the row of kale plants in the Backyard Community Produce Project. "It's garden therapy."

The garden sprouted from an idea the Poway/Rancho Bernardo/Rancho Peñasquitos Community Action Council (CAC) had to grow produce for families in the community that weren't getting enough fresh fruits and vegetables.

"It's a great way to provide service to our community," said volunteer Bob Hilchey between turns of the shovel. "We provide between 200-300 families with organic fruits and vegetables."

The project began as just a drop-off site for area residents to bring the excess fruits and vegetables they were growing in their own backyard and the produce was in turn delivered to the Friends and Family Community Connection.

Then came the idea: Why not grow our own produce?

The land, the water, the greenhouse and some expertise were all donated starting in 2010 by the Sunshine Care Assisted Living Facility, where the community garden is located. CAC provides the dedicated volunteer gardeners.

"The volunteers are absolutely amazing," said Jane Radatz, chair of the Backyard Produce Project. "They know all of the fruits of their labor are going to be donated to people in need!"

"That's a great feeling," said volunteer Annette Tannenbaum. "When we deliver this, we know that it's going to people who really need it and they really appreciate it."

For more information about the Community Health Improvement Report, contact **Elly Garner**, Director, Government Affairs, Elly.Garner@PalomarHealth.org, PalomarHealth.org/Community-Health-Improvement

