

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Michele Hutchins
(603) 238-6468



SMH Community Benefits Reflect Needs Assessment

PLYMOUTH, N.H. --- It is the mission of Speare Memorial Hospital to “provide and coordinate quality healthcare services based on principles of compassion and professionalism while promoting wellness and prevention.” SMH works to achieve this by not only making critical healthcare services available to central New Hampshire communities, but through monetary grants and donations, low-cost or no cost health and wellness programs, classes and medical services designed to meet demonstrated community needs.

As a health care charitable trust, Speare Memorial Hospital annually reports on the community services it provides. During fiscal year 2008 SMH provided central New Hampshire \$3,348,355 in community benefits, not including the more than \$900,000 in prescription assistance for obtained patients of Speare Memorial Hospital and its affiliated practices. The complete report can be found online at www.spearehospital.com/06comm04.html.

Additionally, Speare is required to assess communities’ needs every five years to assure programs and services the hospital provides are addressing demonstrated needs. SMH’s most recent assessment was completed in December 2008 through the use of a survey available online and distributed to patients in waiting rooms. Some notable results:

- Dental care (19%) is the number one healthcare service respondents indicated they have trouble accessing. This was followed closely by eye care and primary care.
- The availability, or lack thereof, of adult dental care was the specialty care service respondents felt was most important at 44.4%.
- Cost of prescription drugs (42.9%) tops the list of most important healthcare issues facing residents in central New Hampshire. Health insurance for uninsured and underinsured was a close second (41.7%), followed by dental care for adults (35%).
- Weight loss support was the support or specialty service respondents were most aware of at 47.5%.
- Urologic care was the specialty service respondents were most unaware of at 10%.

What is Speare Memorial Hospital doing about these results? Relative to dental care, Speare Memorial Hospital’s School Dental Program is available to serve children in need from qualified families. In 2008 the program provided more than \$83,000 in dental care services to approximately 2000 area students. For adult dental care, a Community Dental Care Task Force

has been established under Speare Memorial Hospital's leadership to identify opportunities for better meeting this care need in central New Hampshire, despite limited resources and available funding.

Speare's Prescription Assistance is a free program available to help eligible uninsured and underinsured patients of all ages receive needed prescription medications. As noted previously, more than \$900,000 in prescription assistance was obtained on behalf of SMH patients last year. Speare's Community Care program also provides financial assistance for income qualified patients having difficulty paying their healthcare costs. For children, SMH actively promotes and provides application assistance for insurance through NH Healthy Kids.

As part of our physician recruitment activities, SMH recently hired Dr. Kathleen Pearson, D.O., a family practice/adolescent medicine specialist who works at Tenney Mountain Internal Medicine and is accepting new patients. Appointments can be made by calling (603) 536-6355. SMH also provides funding to other primary care providers to help support operations and ensure primary care access for patients. To help further meet the eye care needs of central New Hampshire residents SMH is actively recruiting an ophthalmologist (eye surgeon).

Through partnerships with the Center for Urologic Care at Concord Hospital and Lakes Region Urology, Speare is able to offer access to an urologist in Plymouth at the hospital's Visiting Physician Office located on the second floor off our Avery Street/Emergency Room entrance.

For more information on these programs, other hospital services or to review the 2008 Community Benefits Report, please visit online at www.spearehospital.com. Speare Memorial Hospital is a 24-hour, acute care, non-profit community hospital and health care provider serving Plymouth and the communities of central New Hampshire for more than a century.

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