



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

## ELIZABETHTOWN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

*A not-for-profit charitable organization*

### NEWS FROM YOUR COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

## HOSPITAL CEO AND VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION DEVELOP PROPOSAL TO CONGRESS

### *Plan aims to secure VA clinics located in rural areas*

The proposal will allow the nation's VA clinics to remain viable in the most rural areas of the nation. It aims to establish a collaborative effort among three federal programs: Critical Access Hospitals (CAH), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and the Veterans' Administration (VA). Currently, there are 1,300 CAHs and 1,100 FQHCs across the nation, typically located in rural communities.

The proposal suggests that these three entities deliver primary healthcare to veterans.

Critical Access Hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers were instituted by the federal government to ensure viability of rurally-based hospitals and clinics. The CAH designation allows hospitals to be reimbursed at a slightly higher rate through Medicaid and Medicare, to offset the cost of providing healthcare services within smaller communities.

This ultimately allows small hospitals and clinics to continue operations. Without CAHs and FQHCs, those who live in

rural areas of our nation would have to travel hundreds of miles to receive basic healthcare.



*Rod Boula meets with D.A.V. Chapter 179 Members Robin Stein and Lloyd Brockney at the VA clinic located in the hospital.*

Boula states that the plan's simplicity is what makes it so attractive. "CAHs and FQHCs were established by the federal government; and the Veterans' Administration is a federally-established entity," he said. "It simply makes sense for a federal organization (the VA) to take advantage of these federally-established programs to improve access and provide continuity of care to our veterans."

Since this is a new concept, Boula is hoping that the plan will be put into place in the Northeast, as a pilot program; and ultimately instituted throughout the nation.

The proposal has been delivered to Congressmen Owens and Murphy, along with Senators Schumer and Gillibrand for consideration.

### Inside this Issue:

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Quality matters • New medical initiative • ECH events*



## ECH MISSION

TO PROMOTE WELLNESS IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE BY PROVIDING QUALITY HEALTH CARE WITH SKILL, COMPASSION AND DIGNITY.

# Meet and Greet

A genuine interest in people, a sense of compassion and a desire to make a real impact on patients is what makes Diana House love her job as ECH pharmacy director. She offers the unlikely combination of psychology and pharmacy degrees; a blend of sciences that has worked to her advantage in a smaller hospital setting.

"At the hospital, I'm interacting with nurses, doctors, therapists and patients," she said. "Understanding personalities ultimately makes me much better at what I do."

Diana has witnessed significant changes in the hospital's pharmacy department over the past 15 years; and each change has taken place under her direction. "It's overwhelming to reflect on the progress we've made," she said. "The increase in our hospital's technology has really driven much of the pharmacy's transformation."

The pharmacy at ECH is responsible for management of all patient medications. This includes oversight of the Pyxis MedStations, verification of appropriate dosage, inventory control, and proper disposal of medication. Diana also sits on the hospital's interdisciplinary team, which meets to discuss patients' care plans.

An important aspect of her job includes preparing medications for chemotherapy and infusion patients. Chemotherapy patients often receive multiple medications that must be produced just prior to infusion – they cannot be developed ahead of time. Diana must prepare the drug mixtures precisely as the patient requires them.

"I'm happy to be able to offer this service to patients in our region," she said. "It's a combination of technology, physician experience, nursing skill and pharmacy expertise. I'm really proud to be part of this program."

**An extraordinary combination of education, mixed with a sense of compassion ensures that Diana always makes a positive impact on the hospital and its patients.**



## NEW PORTABLE X-RAY UNIT AT ECH

The hospital has purchased a new portable x-ray unit, replacing a device that has been in use at the hospital for over 30 years.

The portable x-ray unit is an important part of the hospital's all-digital radiology department, allowing technologists to obtain patient images anywhere in the hospital. The new unit is much smaller and maneuvers easily throughout the building, ensuring that radiology staff can get to a patient quickly.

Technologists can take advantage of a variety of automatic settings that make the imaging process much easier. The unit, which runs on a battery, recharges quickly and produces up to 50 high-quality exposures with a single charge.

"Each time we upgrade a piece of equipment, our staff is thrilled," stated Molly Thompson, director of the hospital's radiology department.

The new unit utilizes technology that offers clear images, even with small children and emergency patients who are less likely to remain still. Its x-ray tube is attached to the unit by an arm that can be freely moved to practically any angle for accurate positioning, no matter where the patient is located.

Portable x-ray units are used when it is not practical to move a patient to the radiology department – most often in emergency-room scenarios and some inpatient situations.

In the event of a significant emergency with multiple traumas, the unit can be used anywhere in the building. "When the hospital is faced with an unusual surge in emergency room trauma cases, hospital procedures enable staff to triage in non-traditional areas of the hospital," stated Jane Hooper, director of community relations. "This might include clinic rooms or office areas. The portable x-ray unit is small enough that it can be used anywhere."

The unit also produces much less noise during transport. This is important in a hospital setting where patients are trying to rest. "X-rays are needed throughout the facility, at all hours of the day and night," said Thompson. "It's nice to be a bit quieter when we're headed down the hall."



*Radiology staff pose with the hospital's new portable x-ray unit.*

## SERVICE LINE SPOTLIGHT

### **Chemotherapy & Infusion Services Available at ECH**

Essex County residents who have had to travel for their regular chemotherapy or infusion treatments now have a much more convenient option.

Since last October, people have been able to receive chemotherapy and infusion services at Elizabethtown Community Hospital. The hospital boasts state-of-the-art communication equipment that allows patients to meet with their oncologist through a high-definition television system.

The hospital has also purchased high-tech infusion equipment to provide the safest and most efficient method for delivering chemotherapy and blood-related infusions.

“This service is wonderful for our patients – no more traveling for treatment,” said Cecile Lawlor, a nurse practitioner and certified oncology nurse at ECH. “It’s an incredible relief to them and their families.”

Surveys of local community members have indicated a need for chemotherapy services. ECH added other infusion-based treatments at the same time, since the basic procedure is similar. These services include: blood transfusions, delivery of IV antibiotics, the administration of medications for treatment of anemia and multiple sclerosis along with others to combat lead poisoning. Another popular use of the service is the administration of yearly bone-strengthening medications for patients with osteoporosis.

“It’s important that our hospital is responsive to the needs of our neighbors in Essex County,” said Bonnie Rata, chief nursing officer for the hospital. “We believe that patients should receive care as close to home as possible.”

Oncology services have been available at ECH for some time. Oncologist Jan Duus has been seeing patients at ECH twice a month but until recently, an option for receiving chemotherapy locally did not exist.

The cornerstone of the program is the hospital’s high-tech telemedicine system. This technology allows patients the ability to meet with Dr. Duus even though they are miles apart. Using the hospital’s telemedicine equipment, the physician and patient are

able to see each other – allowing the opportunity to discuss questions or concerns. Using a remote control in his office, Dr. Duus is able to control the camera attached to the television unit in Elizabethtown, offering him the ability to closely examine patients.

The hospital’s digital stethoscope allows the physician to listen to the patient’s heart and lungs through the electronic connection.

“This is impressive technology,” said Brett Sicola, director of information systems at ECH. “We have a nice high-speed connection, and have recently doubled capacity. Additional fiber-optic improvements will add an even stronger high-speed connection this spring.”

“ECH has incredible doctors, nurses and clinicians who possess exceptional knowledge and skill,” Rata said. “Combining those assets with outstanding technological capabilities allows us to provide excellent care to our community.”

*Adapted from Press Republican article written by Jeff Meyers*



*Nurse Practitioner Cecile Lawlor and Meredith King, RN, along with Dennis Aubin. Patients, like Dennis, are able to meet with their doctor using the hospital’s high-definition telemedicine units.*



*that the hospital is very high-tech? The organization utilizes fingerprint readers, RFID tags that allow staff access to the building, voice-recognition software, high-definition telemedicine units, “smart” IV pumps, digital image storage for x-rays, a telemetry system for patient monitoring, computerized medication dispensing, and other high tech devices throughout the facility.*

## Quality Matters

We often hear about “quality measures” or “performance improvement” but the concept never seems to be explained; we never learn exactly what that means.

At Elizabethtown Community Hospital there is a hospital-wide performance improvement plan developed each year. It is based on ECH statistics, national patient safety goals, surveys, state initiatives and comparisons against similar hospitals. The plan also provides for technological upgrades and continuing staff education.

### What does that mean for patients?

“It means that ECH is constantly working to enhance service, advance safety procedures, and improve patient outcomes,” said Bonnie Bigelow, director of quality control. “Our performance improvement plan impacts everything from food service and emergency room procedures to medication safety, technology and training.”

The hospital develops yearly goals and objectives; and puts specific plans in place to meet those goals. The plan changes each year as objectives are attained and procedures improved. “Quality management is a proactive, ongoing process,” explained Bigelow.

Bigelow has worked at the hospital for over 30 years. Her nursing background and administrative experience offers insight about how clinical departments function in conjunction with the hospital’s overall performance. Bonnie helps refine procedures that significantly impact clinical processes, patient care, satisfaction, safety, business results and financial outcomes.

Yearly goals also include equipment and staff training objectives. Clinical staff must receive ongoing training, ensuring that they have the most up-to-date information. Technological improvements help ensure safety while enhancing standards of care.

The hospital’s ultimate goals are patient safety and ensuring the best possible outcome for each patient. “Nobody wants to be a patient in the hospital,” said Bigelow. “Constantly refining our policies, procedures, knowledge and equipment ensures that patients receive the best possible experience while under our care.”

## ADIRONDACK REGIONAL MEDICAL HOME PROJECT

Elizabethtown Community Hospital is taking part in the Adirondack Region Medical Home pilot program. This initiative is designed to improve access to health care, emphasize disease prevention efforts and help retain physicians in the region.

“This is exciting for our hospital and for the entire area,” said ECH Administrator and CEO Rod Boula. The hospital is one of several involved in the “medical home” program.

### HOW IT WORKS

The intent is to ensure that patients receive coordinated primary care, making them less likely to suffer severe illness due to conditions that can be prevented or effectively managed.

Physicians who take part in this program receive higher insurance payments in exchange for expansion of their responsibilities. They will be responsible for coordinating care, managing chronic diseases and providing preventive care to patients. This means that doctors will proactively help manage patient progress.

Program organizers anticipate that this will lead to a drop in high-cost emergency room and hospital visits; lowering payouts from insurance companies over the long-term.

Insurance companies are interested in the program. “Other than Medicare, all the major insurance companies are supporting this plan,” Boula said. “They’ve been involved from the beginning.”

### BETTER PAYMENTS

The region’s doctors have been concerned that reimbursements received from insurers do not meet the costs of providing care. They are also discouraged with their inability to negotiate better rates with insurers; issues that have forced some physicians to leave the area, severely impacting local hospitals.

“This plan will improve reimbursement rates, which will have a tremendous impact on recruitment,” Boula said. “It will make our region more competitive.”

### LOCAL INVOLVEMENT

Participants include many of the region’s medical practices which includes over 100 physicians, 75 physician assistants and nurse practitioners, along with the medical staff of local hospitals.

Since technology is a cornerstone of the program, grant funding is available to pay for computer systems so doctors can link to the network. Many local telecommunications providers have plans in place to upgrade broadband service over the next few years, in support of the project.

“Consensus is that the current health-care system is broken and needs to be fixed,” remarked Boula. “Our hospital wants to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.”

## MEDICATION SAFETY

Elizabethtown Community Hospital has used one of the safest methods for dispensing medication for the past seven years. Pyxis MedStation 3000 allows the hospital to realize significant gains in both medication control and patient safety.

The Pyxis system combines a computer program with a dispensing cabinet resembling a multi-drawer ATM machine. Computer software links these drawers with pharmacy department data. Dispensing cabinets are located throughout the hospital.

As patients are admitted, physicians prescribe various medications which are double-checked by the pharmacist for accuracy and appropriate dosage. The pharmacy stores information about each patient, along with a list of prescribed medications.

To fill patient prescriptions, staff members enter their individual access code and scan their fingerprint to verify identity. Once access to the computer system is granted, they enter patient information and a list of doctor-approved medications for that patient appears. The required medication is selected by touching the screen, and the drawer corresponding to that particular drug pops open, allowing access.

The system also prompts staff to check for patient allergies and warns about sound-alike or look-alike medications.

The system controls access depending on staff clearance levels. The pharmacist has access to each medication, while doctors, physician assistants and nurses have access to medications, depending on their patients' particular requirements.

This helps to avoid errors, virtually eliminates waste, and improves inventory control. "The system is very important," said Matt Nolan, director of facilities. "It offers a measure of control, improves overall hospital efficiency, and helps to ensure patient safety."

In the emergency department, the system is essentially the same but the medications contained in the drawers may be very different, due to different requirements. Medical staff in the emergency department may need access to fast-acting or immediate life-saving medications. They may also need access to stronger pain medications and medications geared toward children.

The Pyxis system also provides medication management at the Elizabethtown Community Health Center and the Westport Health Center.

The hospital leases the system software, allowing it to receive updates as they become available; continually ensuring that it has the most up-to-date information. The hospital plans to upgrade the entire system in 2010.



*Jim Hewitt, RN uses the Pyxis system to access patient medication.*

### BREAKING NEWS

ECH has outfitted its health centers in E'town, Westport and Wilmington with wireless, high-tech equipment to support electronic medical records (EMR). The health centers began using the system April 1. Now, information can be immediately accessed by the physician during patient appointments, providing the doctor with a more complete overview of the patient's medical history.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**ECH Auxiliary meeting**  
**May 5 at 6 pm**

**Nurses Week**  
**May 6-12**

**Book Fair**  
**June 16, 8-4 pm**  
ECH boardroom

**Blood drive**  
**July 20 3-6 pm**

**10th Annual ECH Golf Tournament**  
**August 10**  
Westport Country Club

**Healthcare Environmental Services Week**  
**September 5-11**

Elizabethtown Community Hospital  
75 Park Street  
P.O. Box 277  
Elizabethtown, NY 12932



## ECH AUXILIARY LEADS FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Elizabethtown Community Hospital's auxiliary knows the importance of fundraising on behalf of the hospital. The group organizes fundraising events that ultimately award the hospital with new medical equipment each year.

Hospital Administrator Rod Boula offers appreciation for the auxiliary's effort. "In my 26-year career in healthcare, I have never encountered a more active auxiliary," he said. "Unfortunately, it's often necessary to trim budgets – so it's wonderful that our auxiliary chooses to support ECH this way."

The auxiliary isn't alone in its charitable giving effort. Individual community members also contribute to the hospital throughout the year.

Contributions from patients, friends, out-of-town visitors, volunteers, employees and medical staff have made a significant impact on ECH. As a non-profit organization, the hospital accepts contributions of all sizes in support of its mission. Gifts support patient care, new services, equipment, state-of-the-art technology, facilities and staff education.

According to Jane Hooper, community relations director, the hospital is proud of the community support during the recent capital campaign; and she explains that the fundraising efforts continue. "The current economic reality, coupled with the fact that healthcare and technology changes so quickly means that ECH must continue fundraising efforts to maintain these important services for our community."

Donations have helped increase and enhance services at ECH. Some of these enhancements include:

- **A new ER, equipped with state-of-the-art technology**
- **Recently-purchased IV pumps that double-check medication dosage**
- **Addition of chemotherapy treatment – due to the hospital's investment in technology**
- **Mobile MRI services**
- **Implementation of cardiac rehab services in 2010**

Each improvement has been completed with one goal in mind: to ensure that patients can receive quality care close to home.



*Anne Marie Denton, Mary Bell, Laura Newmark and other ECH auxiliary members organize fundraisers throughout the year.*



# Yes! I want to contribute to ECH



### Donor Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Enclosed is my gift of:

\$25    \$50    \$100    \$250    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Elizabethtown Community Hospital

**Thanks for your kind support!**