

# Anchored in Our Community



**UMass Memorial Health — committed to improving the environmental, financial and physical health of the diverse population of central Massachusetts**

**MARCH 2022**

## ◆ FROM THE DESK OF ERIC DICKSON, MD

*President and CEO, UMass Memorial Health*



On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. And this time last year, we were rolling out three vaccines that we were sure would bring an end to this public health crisis. I never dreamed we would still be battling this dreaded disease more than two years after it first emerged. This is a great example of how science isn't perfect and how illness and disease can evolve. Those of us in the medical field keep trying new things to keep people healthy and safe from COVID, but this virus keeps changing and remains elusive.

As we reach the two-year mark of the official beginning of this pandemic, I've been reflecting on the lessons I've learned and the one thing that rises to the top of the list is that we as a collective community in Central Massachusetts can do amazing things when we work together toward a common goal. In this case, our goal was to save as many lives as possible and work together to keep all of us safe. Here are a couple of highlights of this "a-ha" moment for me:

- I remember two years ago swelling with pride with the outpouring of support from the communities UMass Memorial Health serves with gifts of food and beverages for our caregivers, the car parades around our hospitals to demonstrate the community stood by us; and the monetary donations that poured into our COVID-19 Crisis fund to support our patient care efforts. The community rallied around us like I had never seen before. These small (and large) acts of kindness were heart-warming and inspiring. We needed you and you came through for us and for that I'll always be grateful.
- We learned early on in the pandemic from our COVID-19 testing data that the most vulnerable, underserved people in our community were the ones who needed special interventions to keep them safe from this terrible virus. The data showed that communities of color (specifically Black and Latino communities) were hardest hit by COVID-19. Because we shared this data with key community leaders, we worked together to deploy community outreach teams to those neighborhoods to offer COVID-19 education, masks, and hand sanitizers, which then evolved to offering testing and then vaccinations. Without the support of the community, we would not have been able to successfully turn the tide on our COVID-19 response efforts. You'll learn more in this newsletter about how our data gathering and analysis informs our decision-making and ability to take action.

Needless to say, we are deeply connected to our community and our community is essential to us. That's why our Anchor Mission work is a top priority at UMass Memorial Health, and we wouldn't have it any other way. ◆

## ANCHOR MISSION STEERING COMMITTEE

### ◆ CO-CHAIRS

#### **Douglas Brown**

*President, UMass Memorial Community Hospitals Inc. and Chief Administrative Officer, UMass Memorial Health*

#### **Cheryl Lapriore**

*Senior Vice President, Chief of Staff, Chief Marketing Officer, and President, UMass Memorial Health Ventures, UMass Memorial Health*

### ◆ COMMUNITY BENEFITS DEPARTMENT

#### **Monica Lowell**

*Vice President, Office of Community Health Transformation/Community Benefits, UMass Memorial Health*

### QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

To provide feedback or request more information, email [communications@umassmemorial.org](mailto:communications@umassmemorial.org).



**UMass Memorial Health**

**THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF HEALING**

## ◆ MEASURING THE HEALTH OF A COMMUNITY

When UMass Memorial Health’s Anchor Mission was launched in 2018, Jeanne Shirshac recognized that the project would need data support to achieve its goals of improving the social, physical and financial health of people living in the UMass Memorial service area.

“Data drives performance. It’s the basis of how we identify needs, track progress and measure success, and our data analytics group in the Office of Clinical Integration (OCI) was the perfect group to take this on,” said Shirshac, who serves as Vice President of Health Policy and Public Programs, and Chief Financial Officer of the UMass Memorial Accountable Care Organization.

Since then, the OCI data team has supported the Anchor Mission by delving into city, state and federal records and gaining insight into the social determinants of health affecting area residents.

### Building Neighborhood Profiles

To identify areas with the greatest need, the data team mined U.S. Census information, brought it in-house and created unique dashboards to map the population’s characteristics. They also drew on the CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), which ranks each U.S. census tract on 15 factors, ranging from transportation to housing to food security.

A composite of the SVI shows an area’s vulnerability to a disaster like a hurricane or pandemic. SVI data can also help identify and measure ongoing issues, such as overcrowding and unemployment. Two Worcester neighborhoods are among the top 1% of most vulnerable U.S. communities.

Using these and other sources, the data team developed dozens of Neighborhood Profiles that show:

- Socioeconomic statistics
- Financial status
- Education level
- Unemployment rate
- Race and ethnicity
- Number UMass Memorial employees
- Prevalence of chronic conditions

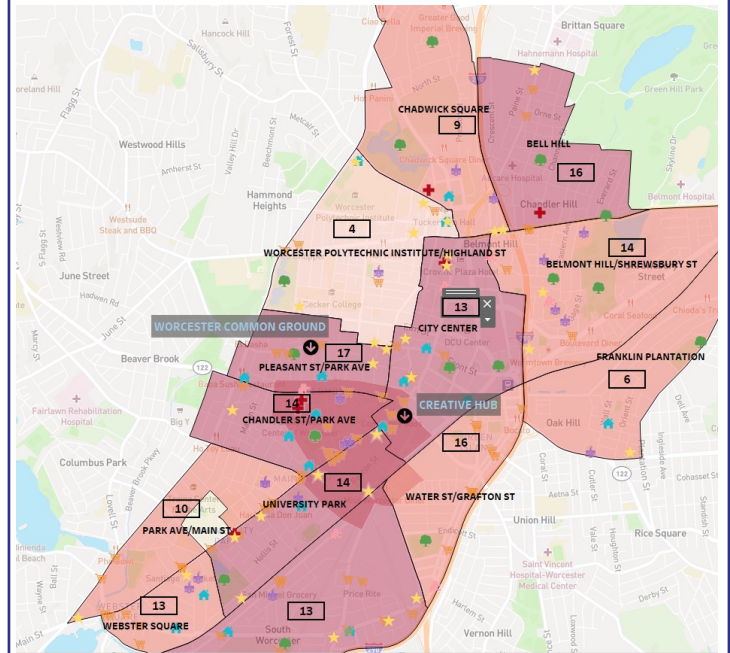
Comparing Neighborhood Profile data to the city average and the city average to the state helps identify areas with higher or lower vulnerability.

“Sometimes it’s information you may be aware of, but when you see it in the neighborhood profile, it makes you think differently about the challenges some of our patients may have,” Shirshac said.

### Creating an Anchor District

With Neighborhood Profiles in place, the data team has provided essential information for forming an Anchor District in Worcester. This is a community-driven development and revitalization effort in a area of Worcester that will serve as a pilot, or model cell, for targeting our Anchor Mission strategies.

## Anchor District Outline 2.0



Encompasses more of the most vulnerable neighborhoods

### SCORE

SVI Ranking

- Top 10%
- Top 25%
- Top 50%

3 Key Grounding Points:

- Creative Hub
- Community HealthLink (CHL)
- Homeless Collaborative (FHCW)

“This is a test case for using the neighborhood data to gain a deeper understanding of the community and of how our Anchor Mission can help improve residents’ health and welfare,” said Stephanie Doan-Soares, UMass Memorial Administrative Fellow supporting the Anchor Mission.

Qualitative and quantitative data were used to map the Anchor District, which stretches from Webster Square and South Worcester to Bell Hill and Chadwick Square. Each neighborhood was scored on factors such as SVI ranking, life expectancy, incidence of health conditions, race and ethnicity, education level and availability of health clinics, shelters and markets.

Now the Anchor Mission team is interviewing the Anchor District’s residents, business owners, workers and other stakeholders to get input directly from the community. Watch for our article on the Anchor District Listening Sessions in our next newsletter.

“We want to hear the voices of the people who live and work in this area, so we can all work together to create positive change—a better local economy, better health and well-being,” Shirshac said. “This is only the beginning of what we can do with this data.” ◆

## ◆ UMASS MEMORIAL'S IMPACT PURCHASING COMMITMENT TARGETS DIVERSE, LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE SPENDING

The UMass Memorial Health Anchor Mission Purchasing Committee recently finalized our “Impact Purchasing Commitment” that will create a major shift in our procurement strategies to help address economic, racial and environmental inequities that will impact health outcomes in our community. Along with eleven other health systems across the country, we made this commitment designed by the Healthcare Anchor Network.



Even small shifts in the spending portfolio of anchor institutions like UMass Memorial Health can make a difference in communities with a history of underinvestment. When local businesses and MWBEs are awarded business contracts, they can employ local residents and provide stable wages that allow employees to securely afford food, rent, and other necessities—all of which are crucial to individual and family health. Our commitment has four major components:

1. **Increasing Diverse Spending:** We'll be working to increase our spending with MWBE suppliers from around \$4 million in FY2020 to more than \$14 million by FY2025 – more than tripling the current amount. We'll also work with our vendors to include terms in future contracts that require them to increase their own spending with MWBEs as well.
2. **Promote Sustainable Spending:** By 2025 we will ensure that 20% of our food purchases are categorized as sustainable; 50% of our vehicle fleet purchases are alternative fuel vehicles; the harmful chemicals PVC and DEHP will be eliminated from certain priority medical supplies we purchase; and that 30% of our annual furnishings and furniture purchases will eliminate the use of chemicals of concern, such as flame retardants.
3. **Build Community Wealth:** We will work to increase spending with businesses headquartered, owned, and operated within our service area by at least \$11 million dollars by FY2025. We also plan to increase spending with employee-owned, cooperatively owned, or non-profit-owned business and will work with some of our vendors on achieving a specific number of impact hires from within the community. Finally, we are committing by FY2025 to embedding in all future contracts a requirement that all vendors pay a living local wage.
4. **Institutionalize and Incentivize:** We will align these goals with our existing policies, procedures, and data analytics. We will also build capacity in diverse, local and employee-owned businesses to support community wealth building through outreach and mentoring strategies. Finally, we will enable a more resilient and equitable supply chain ecosystem by engaging with other key partners in our community to advance these priorities within the communities we serve.

Eric Dickson, UMass Memorial President and Chief Executive Officer, said of the commitment, “With a focus on increasing purchasing efforts with local, minority and women owned businesses, UMass Memorial Health can help create job growth and make a direct impact on many of the devastating social determinants of health factors that contribute to the inequities we see in the communities we serve. This commitment further demonstrates our long-held commitment to bolstering the community’s economic well-being as well as helping individuals live vibrant, healthy lives.” ◆

## ◆ SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY FOR WORCESTER HOUSING SUPPORTS HEALTH EQUITY EFFORTS

Throughout the summer and fall of 2021, UMass Memorial Health partnered with a coalition of representatives from Worcester-based organizations to successfully advocate for the City of Worcester to invest 20 percent of its federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in housing initiatives. The coalition included community development corporations (including Main South CDC and Worcester Common Ground), Central Mass Housing Alliance, Black Families Together, Central-West Justice Center, Worcester Community Action Council, and more. UMass Memorial supported the Coalition’s efforts with advocacy centered around the evidence-based links between housing and health equity – making it clear that access to housing is a social determinant of health. We met with city leaders, including the Mayor, City Manager and City Councilors, and used examples such as our work on pediatric asthma and its clear links to poor housing conditions as well as our careful mapping of COVID-19 data that showed the prevalence of COVID-19 in neighborhoods with higher rates of housing instability.

With support from the coalition’s advocacy, the City Manager proposed to dedicating \$28 million of the city’s first tranche of ARPA funding for housing initiatives, consistent with the coalition’s 20 percent goal, and the City Council adopted his recommendation. Included in the funding is \$15 million for a new Affordable Housing Trust Fund, plus funding for a variety of other initiatives such as housing rehabilitation, first time homeowner assistance and “Housing First” homelessness support. ◆



## ◆ COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

**UMass Memorial Health – Marlborough Hospital** Stop the Spread Testing site located at the New England Sports Center in Marlborough has been a tremendous community resource during the third surge of the Covid pandemic. The Stop the Spread Team administered 41,555 tests between November 1, 2021 and January 31, 2022 at the outdoor testing site. Thank you to all the UMass Memorial Health caregivers who answered a “call to help” and assisted the Marlborough Hospital team by making testing kits, helping staff the testing site, couriering specimens to the hospital and printing labels and preparing the specimens for delivery to the Broad Institute for processing.



As part of the hospital’s multipronged approach to addressing food insecurity, **UMass Memorial Medical Center’s** Community Benefits has expanded its longstanding partnership with the Regional Environmental Council (REC) to develop and implement a voucher-based pilot program addressing linguistic, cultural and scheduling barriers to accessing food resources identified by Worcester’s large African community. The effort brings a new evening stop of REC’s Mobile Market onsite at the Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Church located at 67 Vernon Street in Worcester’s Union Hill neighborhood, a highly-food insecure area. The voucher program enables free produce purchases for patrons of a food pantry being launched onsite at the church, which the Medical Center Community Benefits office helped to establish, as well as for food insecure neighborhood residents. The new voucher effort will incorporate SNAP/HIP and healthy eating educational opportunities.



**UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital** recently provided \$5,000 to the Clinton Adult Learning Center (CALC) as part of its Determination of Need funding to support a free U.S. citizenship preparation class for individuals who are not yet citizens but who are eligible to become so. The class will help participants learn about the process, get help with their applications, practice for their interviews and study for the exam. There is high demand for this class among the community that the CALC serves. The CALC also provides free English classes for speakers of other languages, as well as education and career advising, referrals to training, post-secondary education and more.

**FREE**  
U.S. Citizenship Preparation Classes

Learn about the process.  
Get help with the application.  
Practice for the interview.  
Study for the exam.

**Monday Mornings**  
10 weeks starting February 28<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 - 12:00 p.m.

**OR**

**Tuesday Evenings**  
10 weeks starting March 1<sup>st</sup>  
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Sessions will be held in person at  
150 School Street in Clinton, MA

Must be eligible for citizenship and speak English  
**CALL TO REGISTER**  
978-365-4226

Funded by  
**UMass Memorial Health**  
HEALTHALLIANCE-CLINTON HOSPITAL

**UMass Memorial Health – Harrington** is quickly rolling out its Anchor Mission. Through its investment pillar, two projects have received funding. First, the Renaissance Medical Group in Southbridge will be able to increase capacity to provide adult day health programs to more of the 180 people currently on a waiting list to access services. Second, the Center of Hope Foundation will be able to rehabilitate a building to house Scoops of Hope, an ice cream shop to be staffed by people with disabilities. Harrington has also recently named chairs for two of its four Anchor Mission pillars: Michael Augustine, supply chain director at Harrington, has accepted the Pillar Chair role for local and minority purchasing. Madeline Laflamme, recruitment coordinator at Harrington (pictured here) has accepted the Pillar Chair role for local hiring and has already been in contact with administrators at Quinebaug Community College about a program focused on Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) advancement.



## ◆ UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH

UMass Memorial Health is the largest not-for-profit health care system in Central Massachusetts with more than 15,500 employees and 2,100 physicians, many of whom are members of UMass Memorial Medical Group and Harrington Physician Services. We are the clinical partner of UMass Chan Medical School. Our comprehensive system includes UMass Memorial Medical Center, UMass Memorial Health – Harrington, UMass Memorial Health – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, UMass Memorial Health – Marlborough Hospital, and UMass Memorial Health – Community Healthlink. Together, we impact every aspect of life in the region by making health and wellness services available to everyone, at the bedside, in the clinic or community, or even at home, advocating for social equality and providing economic stability and opportunity. There are many ways to heal. We pursue them all. Relentlessly. Visit [www.ummhealth.org](http://www.ummhealth.org).

To find a physician in your community, call 855-UMASS-MD (855-862-7763). ◆