



UMH Joins Forces with Local Legislators in NY to Fight for Medicaid Reform

On February 2, we were honored to host a press conference on the Hilltop Campus with Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo leading the charge. The sole purpose of the press conference was to draw much-needed attention and address the financial crisis facing the long-term care industry in the state of New York, along with proposed solutions.

New York's nursing home industry is dramatically underfunded, putting stress not only on the nursing home industry, but the entire healthcare system. There have been closures of 75 facilities statewide over the last ten years, and 20 just in the last four years. This has also

led to thousands of nursing home beds being taken offline. The impact has had a ripple effect, negatively affecting hospital operations, creating bedlock situations with extended wait times for nursing home beds for patient transfer, as well as posing challenges for the EMS services with extended wait times for ER visits and patients having to be treated in hallways.

The main cause of the funding gap can be attributed to the Medicaid reimbursement rate, which is in dire need of reform. The NYS Medicaid rate is currently based on 2007 costs despite the cost of care increasing dramatically since then. In addition, the Executive's budget proposal cuts the long-term care sector by \$600M, on top of the state's Medicaid funding gap of \$810M.

Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo said, "This is an all hands-on deck moment for New York's nursing home industry. With many closing and thousands of beds off-line, we are also seeing direct negative impacts at area hospitals.





**Stronger
Together**

UNITED METHODIST HOMES

United For A Cause



This year, our organization remains focused on sustainability and improving operations to position UMH for future growth and expansion. We continue to face challenging times in healthcare, specifically in the long-term care sector. Recruitment and retention of staff are a hurdle, alongside reimbursement shortfalls, which are most pronounced in New York State due to a flawed Medicaid reimbursement system that is among the worst in the country.

Despite challenges, the preservation of our Mission remains a central focus. We continue to navigate and implement action plans to improve operational efficiencies throughout our facilities. We are actively advocating for change regarding the inadequate NYS Medicaid reimbursement system, which negatively impacts our NY nursing home operations. We are united in this cause, joining an Advocacy Alliance with 28 other long-term care non-profit providers throughout New York. The group's sole focus has been seeking support from local Legislators to effectively urge the Governor of NY to prioritize and allocate increased financial support and resources to long-term care.

One of our five Pillars of Excellence is "Strong Financial Position," which is key to our organization's sustainability and serves as a platform for improvements, growth, and expansion. The NYS Medicaid reimbursement system significantly strains the financial position and improvement efforts under this pillar. The program has been severely underfunded for decades. Seniors and residents deserve to be prioritized and enjoy peace of mind that quality care will be there for them when needed. A critical flaw of this system is that the rate is based on 2007 rather than current-day costs. The Governor's proposed budget fails to address the issues and proposes funding cuts, which will only add to nursing home operators' financial burdens and the nursing home crisis that is mounting throughout the state. There is currently an \$810 million coverage gap in NYS. This trend cannot continue, or seniors, providers, and the entire healthcare system will pay the price.

We must stand together and be united in the cause, as there is strength in numbers. In February, we hosted a press conference on our Hilltop Campus, joining forces with several other area providers, our local Legislators, Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo and Senator Lea Webb, who stand behind us and recognize the dire need for reform to the NYS Medicaid reimbursement program. Specifically, the ask is for an increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate by 16.5% and a change in the rate-setting methodology to reflect the present-day cost of care, which has risen by more than 40% since 2007.

I believe it's important to increase awareness throughout our organization and communities. Please consider joining our advocacy efforts by writing the Governor. Your voice can impact positive change, whether you are a resident, family, staff, or general concerned citizen. We are grateful for the support from LeadingAge New York and our local legislators and the support we are receiving from our own residents, staff, and families. As always, we remain grateful for the ongoing support of our Board of Directors, residents, staff, and families. Thank you for your loyalty to UMH.

In appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Picchini". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Picchini, President & CEO

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(Continued from front page)

Financial circumstances facing nursing homes are unsustainable and have been for a long time, with annual losses in the millions. It's time to admit that we are in the midst of an emergency. How hard can it be to acknowledge that the cost of providing nursing home care has increased much faster than the current Medicaid rate?"

"A Medicaid rate increase now is critical to ensure the sustainability of long-term care, enable staff recruitment, and thus improve access to quality care today and into the future. It's time to stand up for our most vulnerable! Our seniors deserve a reimbursement system that they can rely on, which matches current costs of care.", stated Brian Picchini, UMH President & CEO."

Also in attendance was Senator Lea Webb, who remarked, "Seniors deserve quality health care. I am proud to join Assembly member Lupardo to stand up for seniors and our nursing home industry by insisting on an increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate so that nursing homes can operate more efficiently, recruit and retain staff, and ensure quality care for all of our seniors."

There were many staff, residents, and families, along with nine other area long-term care providers in attendance, displaying their support, including Jason Santiago, CEO of Good Shepherd Communities, who joined the Assemblywoman, Senator Webb, and Brian Picchini in speaking. We are also grateful to Sheila Madigan, one of our Hilltop Campus residents, who shared her unique and personal perspective as a resident. Madigan urged for our officials' support-- "Increasing Medicaid reimbursement is not just about numbers; it's about preserving the dignity and quality of life for seniors who have paved the way for the vibrant state we live in today. Many of us depend on the compassionate care and expertise of healthcare professionals. However, the current reimbursement rates are putting undue pressure on these facilities, jeopardizing the very essence of our well-being."

The press conference was successful in drawing attention with news media providing thorough coverage highlighting the issues, crisis, and proposed solutions—namely rejecting the current proposed budget cuts and implementing a 16% Medicaid rate increase.

Assemblywoman Lupardo commented that the Hilltop Campus press conference would serve as the model for forthcoming conferences throughout the state. LeadingAge NY has also been instrumental in standing behind our industry, advocating on our behalf as well as assisting providers with social media campaign tools, template letters, and encouraging press events to "noise" on the issues.

We are hopeful and will follow up in a subsequent newsletter with the outcome of our efforts and involvement with the New York Advocacy Alliance, which consists of 28 providers throughout the state of New York.

Meet the UMH Foundation

Catherine Young, VP of Development, has been visiting our campuses and conducting "Meet the Foundation" educational seminars, which have been open to those interested in learning more about our Foundation. Fundraising is an integral part of the United Methodist Homes Foundation. It is a crucial source of revenue and support for UMH's overall operations, improving the lives of our UMH residents in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

The Foundation's mission is to enrich the lives of those we serve by providing critical resources to meet resident and campus needs, ensure continuity of care, and deliver innovative and enhanced programming for vibrant and active senior living.

In this newsletter, you'll read about the Sensory Arbor Immersion Garden on our Elizabeth Church Campus. As you read, this was the work of our Foundation in action, and without the generosity of others, it would not be possible.

Ways that individuals can help may include:

- **Planned Giving**
- **Gifts in a Will or Trust**
- **Gifts by Beneficiary Designation**
- **Gifts That Pay You Income - Charitable Gift Annuity**
- **Donor-Advised Funds**
- **Major Gift and Memorial Funds**
- **The UMH Fund - Unrestricted Use**

For more information about the UMH Foundation or to arrange a personal meeting to learn more about how you can help, contact Catherine Young, VP of Development. She looks forward to meeting with you and assisting you with your philanthropic ideas and efforts.



Catherine Young, VP of Development
Phone: 607-725-7112 or
Email: cyoung@umhwc.org

Campus Highlights

Tunkhannock - In a heartwarming gathering, residents and employees of Tunkhannock Campus came together with their loved ones to revel in the joy of Valentine's Day. Attendees indulged in a delectable charcuterie as they crafted beautiful bouquets with Mayflower Florist & Farm Market flowers. The air was filled with love from the fragrant blooms and memories made.

Wesley Village - A group of talented crafters from Brooks Estates got together to form the Brooks Estates Crafter's Club. The group meets weekly in the Community Center to work on their projects. So far, they've taught three people in the community how to crochet. They recently finished making four full-size blankets and 13 lap robes to donate to our residents in the Partridge-Tippet Nursing Facility. Their next project will be fidget sleeves.

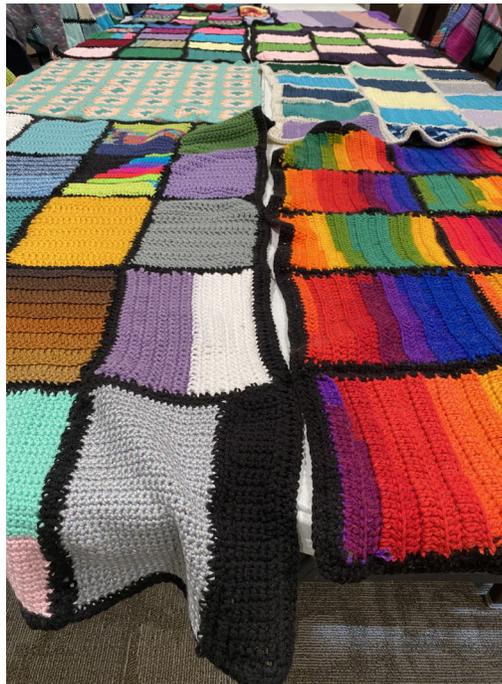


Photo 1 - Chelsea Newhart & Cameron White. Photo 2 - Resident Leona S with her daughter and son-in-law. Photo 3 - Chelsea Newhart and Amelia B., daughter of Joyce B., a PCA at Tunkhannock. Photo 4 - A collection of the items made by the Crafter's Club. Photo 5 - L to R (standing): Fran M., Marianne W., Alberta Hetro., Jeanne W., and Marybeth D. (seated): Maurita B. and Ang S.



Campus Highlights

Hilltop - In February, the Hilltop Activities team brought back a fan-favorite Valentine's Day event. The Auditorium was bursting with laughter when the residents played Let's Make a Deal- Valentine's Edition! Residents enjoy winning the gag gifts just as much as the actual prizes.

Photo 1 - Lanie N. Photo 2 - Edward F.
Photo 3 - Vera C. Photo 4 - Betty V.

Elizabeth Church - In February, residents shared their love advice, then enjoyed a live performance by Mike Pero and indulged in mini heart-shaped pizzas. The Activities team kicked off March with their annual Mardi Gras parade, which travels throughout the campus. Employees make different "floats" and hand out beads, candy, and other goodies to residents.

Photo 5 - Beverly L. Photo 6 - Mary D.
Photo 7 - Employees with their Mardi Gras Floats. Photo Below - Kathy Micha's dog visiting for Valentine's Day.



Holiday Memories

The campuses came alive with the spirit of Christmas! Residents enjoyed their annual Holiday Parties with friends and family. Santa delivered gifts to the nursing homes, and residents enjoyed singing along with carolers who stopped in to spread Christmas cheer!



Photo 1 - Tunkhannock resident Ray B. with his daughter, Connie K. and son-in-law Marty K at the Holiday Party.



Photo 2 - Wesley residents Bonnie O. and Ann I. at the Mingle & Jingle Party



Photo 3 - Local Girl Scout Troup that came to sing carols at Wesley Village.



Photo 4 - Santa handing out gifts at Partridge-Tippett to resident Casimer A.



Photo 5 - Santa at Tunkhannock with resident Mellie D.

Photo 6 - Wesley residents Dawn I. and Marie P. at the Mingle & Jingle Party



Holiday Memories



Photo 1 - St. Louise Manor residents Judy M. and Elanor C. at the annual Holiday Party. Photo 2 - St. Louise Manor residents Valerie A. and Mary T. with Santa at the annual Holiday Party. Photo 3 - Hilltop resident Sandy H. with Kate McHugh's dog. Photo 4 - Brian Picchini at Hilltop playing "deer hunt" with the residents. Photo 5 - St. Louise Manor resident Marie F with Michael K at the annual Holiday Party. Photo 6 - Hilltop resident Pat P.



A Look Inside the Sensory Arbor Immersion Garden at Elizabeth Church

The United Methodist Homes Elizabeth Church Campus is the proud recipient of the first Sensory Arbor Immersion Garden created by the Sensory Dispensary Company. This project was fully funded and made possible by the United Methodist Homes Foundation.

The Sensory Arbor and Immersion Garden is a unique structure with Montessori elements designed to engage all of the senses. Designed by two horticulture therapists, the Sensory Arbor and Immersion Garden includes aromatherapy and guided meditation. The garden has many intricate details, including live and removable plants to prune and water, satchels with lemon peel, rose, and lavender to stimulate the sense of smell. The Sensory Arbor has speakers for guided meditation or simply for playing soothing music. A moss wall hangs for residents to touch or spray with a mister. Felt magnets adorn one side, allowing our residents to create their own art. A garden table equipped with an iPad can be used to play videos of familiar places, including those in the Binghamton area, such as the carousels and Ross Park Zoo. The opportunities for tactile stimulation are abundant with handcrafted honeycomb links that can be removed and palpated, as well as a felt tree with leaves and flowers for all seasons and roses that pop out when pulled.

The Sensory Arbor has enhanced the already remodeled Memory Care unit at Elizabeth Church Manor, which was also funded by the UMH Foundation. It has been thoughtfully redesigned to incorporate a Montessori approach to Dementia care. In addition to the sensory arbor, numerous engagement areas are designed to stimulate residents' interest. The Montessori approach to Dementia care is a relatively new approach to memory care that uses fundamental principles from Dr. Maria Montessori's teaching method with children. "This new and revolutionary approach to caring for people with dementia or other cognitive deficits is quite extraordinary as it allows residents the freedom to walk about, offers purpose with hands-on experiences, and independence in a safe environment. I've been in the Long-Term Care field for 20 years. I've heard people say how important person-centered care is. However, I've never witnessed such an elevated person-centered experience until I was introduced to The Montessori Approach by the Brush Development Team. I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this to UMH. The Sensory Arbor and the enhancements to the memory care program have far exceeded anything I could have ever imagined.", states Kathy Micha, Activity Director.

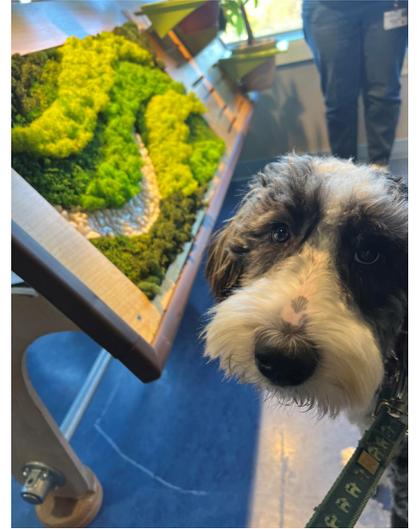




Photo 1 - L to R: Mikkele Lawless, Melanie Riese, Kathy Micha, Fred Ellman, and Adam Straws.

Photo 2 - Lily the dog enjoying the moss.

"I would also like to extend a special thank you to Fred Ellman, Mikkele Lawless, and Adam Straws, the creators of the Sensory Dispensary Company for their hard work and attention to detail. And a very special thank you to Melanie Riese, dedicated Activity Leader and champion of the Montessori approach. And, of course, my sincere appreciation is extended to the United Methodist Homes Foundation for recognizing the tremendous benefit of this addition to our programming and providing the financial resources to make this happen!" - Kathy Micha.



James G. Johnston and Partridge-Tippett Receive US News & World Reports Accolades

James G. Johnston Memorial Nursing Home and Partridge-Tippett Nursing Facility received the 2024 "Best Nursing Homes - Long-Term Care" and "Best Nursing Homes - Short-Term Rehabilitation" distinction awards from the annual US News & World Reports data analysis. We are honored to receive these prestigious awards. We strive to uphold our Mission of providing a wide range of senior living services with exceptional care and compassion. Offering our residents quality care and programming on our campuses is an essential part of our mission and we strive for continual improvement.



Photo captions and media links can be found on the back cover

Resident Spotlight

Donald Harbaugh - Tunkhannock Campus

Donald "Don" Harbaugh is a resident of Tunkhannock Manor. He grew up in the small town of Waynesboro, along the southern border of Pennsylvania in Cumberland Valley, between Hagerstown, Maryland, and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. He stated that it is just two miles north of the Mason-Dixon line.

Don shared that he grew up in a very large family of 12 children, which was more common back then. He had eight brothers and three sisters of which his sister Catherine is still living. He attended college in Lebanon Valley, where he met his late wife, Ruthie. The two were happily married for 52 years and had three children, two surviving. He has six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Don shared how his granddaughter Rebecca fostered children and adopted four children. He loves his grandchildren so much! Don's son, Devan, lives near the Manor, so he enjoys frequent visits.

Don became an ordained minister, and Ruthie became an English teacher. In the 1960s, Don took a position as Executive Director of Public Assistance in Clinton County and began preaching part-time. However, he ended up taking two part-time preaching positions, so he was preaching just as much as before. He commented that one of his favorite places that his job took him was Israel, where he and his wife spent about a month.

In response to questions about his hobbies and interests, Don remarked that his main interest now is "surviving" while chuckling. He said at 95, soon to be 96, what more could one do? He later shared that he used to enjoy fishing and took advantage of any opportunity to fish. Today, he does enjoy visits with his family and fellow residents. Don said he hasn't regretted moving into an "old folks' home," as he phrased it, stating he enjoys the fellowship of being around those his age. "I'm making friends and attending everything they have to offer here." Don attends group activities and games, takes trips, and enjoys mealtime. He particularly likes the fact that they get choices for their meals.

He again references his trip to Israel when reflecting on his most memorable trip or vacation. "That one is hard to top. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and it's a place that many don't have the opportunity to venture to. Don feels the secret to living such a long and vibrant life is to remain social. He also attributes it to his "clean living," stating that he doesn't drink or smoke and remains dedicated to his faith, keeping prayer and God a part of his daily living.



Top Photo - Donald with Devan and Margaret Harbaugh

Bottom Photo - Wedding photo of Donald with his wife, Ruthie

UMH Promoting Health & Wellness

Welcome to "UMH Promoting Health & Wellness," a new section in our newsletter. Each story will focus on various topics, from nutrition and healthy eating to fall prevention, heart health, and more! **Become a guest writer for Connections! We are seeking volunteer contributors for this section. Do you have a topic of interest that could benefit the public in this area? Contact Betsy Vannatta or Abbie Evans at bvannatta@umhwc.org or abevans@umhwc.org.**

Stress & Brain Health

By Megan Dean M.S., CCC-SLP

By now, most people are aware that stress plays a role in many health conditions and diseases, but just how much is our cognitive brain health affected by stress? How can stress affect higher-level mental functions such as memory, language, problem-solving, and decision-making? Well, a growing body of research suggests the ill-effects of stress can cause damage to the intricate and delicate neural networks within our brains.

The brain is made up of billions of neurons (thinking cells) capable of creating trillions of messages. Each area of the brain has specific functions that influence and shape higher-level mental acts. Neurons form a communication chain within and between these areas at lightning speeds. The nature of these cells and the pathways they use change and adapt depending on what we experience, learn, and do.

When our brain repeatedly endures stress, especially without reprieve, it can cause an imbalance of brain activity, giving more "attention" to the systems that handle stress (fight-or-flight) and less attention to cortical systems needed for thinking-related skills. Simply put, the brain may get stuck in a repeated pattern, leaving less of a support system for other functions. Without its support, these systems are more vulnerable to damage and deterioration. The aging brain may be particularly vulnerable to these changes.

Reflection:

- What activities do you engage in to balance stress?
- How can we better help our loved ones with dementia feel less anxiety and stress and experience more comfort, joy, and peace?

Tips:

- Choose meaningful activities that require thought, such as volunteer work, joining a book club, or a bible study.
- Choose activities incorporating physical movements such as yoga, walking, or an exercise class.
- When planning activities for a loved one with dementia, choose themes that interest that person. For example, you could sort recipes into simple categories for the individual who loves to cook.



UMH Brings “Candoo” to Residents

The use of technology among our senior population continues to grow. At UMH, we are finding that our residents not only use social media but also desire to learn more and become more comfortable with their devices, including iPads and smartphones. They want to stay up with social media platforms. Technology is being embraced because it provides a means of social interaction and a way of staying in touch with family and friends who live out of the area. FaceTime and Zoom meetings are not just for staff! Residents are using these platforms as well. For those that aren't, they have expressed interest in learning it.

UMH recently began a partnership bringing in the services of Candoo Tech, which specializes in assisting seniors with their technology to get them more comfortable with using today's technology and the devices they may already have or desire to purchase. Candoo Tech founder and CEO Liz Hamburg was inspired by her father to start the company. Liz said, “My dad was always an early tech adopter, but he needed help learning how to use his new devices! I saw how helpful it was for him to have patient, easy-to-understand tech support and training. He was hard of hearing and loved to read but had Macular Degeneration, so he needed help connecting his devices to his hearing aids and adjusting the screen to make things easier to see. When he wasn't able to read well, he learned how to listen to audiobooks and podcasts. Technology made such a difference in his life. We love to help people realize that they “can do” it!”

Candoo Tech launched welcome sessions for residents of the independent cottages at the Irene Raeder clubhouse at Brooks Estates and the Highlands Community Center. The new tech support program is free for residents to subscribe. UMH has decided to continue this program for 2024 with availability for all of our independent living residents at Highlands and Brooks Estates and may also include residents in our independent living apartments. Both Wesley Village and Hilltop will host group lessons throughout the year. Additionally, one-on-one support remains a popular option for residents. Once they subscribe, they are offered a welcome one-on-one session with Candoo.

Our activities and lifestyle staff and admissions staff are informing both new and current residents about this program. **Any independent resident interested in subscribing or learning more can reach out to Jessica Balkan at jbalkan@umhwc.org in PA; or in NY, Sandy Lane or Teresa Felter at slane@umhwc.org or tfelter@umhwc.org. Registration link: www.candootech.com/umh**



Photo Captions

JGJ & Partridge-Tippet Recieve US News & World Reports Accolades - Photo 1- L to R: Nicole Policare, Staff Development/Employee Health, Amy Morrison, HIM, Karen Acly, Admin Asst., Kate Conant, Hilltop Senior Administrator, Jennine Best-Baker, Case Management Director, Brian Picchini, President & CEO, Karen Weeks, Unit Manager, Laura Kostyshak, RNAC, Jackie Otremba, DON. Photo 2 - L to R: Kathy Harrington, DON, Lisa Ferry, Asst. Unit Manager, Bernie Lombardo, ADON, John McGurk, Physical Therapist, Eric Yashinski, Administrator, Brian Picchini, President & CEO, Danielle Janeski, Executive Director, and Elysa Lyman, Unit Manager.

Media Links

<https://www.wbng.com/2024/02/02/lupardo-webb-say-nursing-homes-are-underfunded-by-16-billion/>

<https://www.wicz.com/story/50411947/elected-officials-pushing-for-state-nursing-home-help>

<https://www.binghamtonhomepage.com/news/top-stories/local-officials-call-on-hochul-to-address-nursing-home-crisis/>

https://health.usnews.com/best-nursing-homes/search?name=James%20G%20Johnston%20&int=hero_search

https://health.usnews.com/best-nursing-homes/search?name=Wesley%20Village%20Pittston%20&int=hero_search&fbclid=IwAR2ad1m1Jsjsj5wlfF8wQ1w1y2lQgj3Q35pPLHyhGdL1rorEbCqwF8z-Fc

News & Announcements

Campus Employee Updates

Nicole Johnson was promoted to Assistant Director of Nursing at Elizabeth Church.

Kiley Utter was promoted to Unit Manager at Elizabeth Church.

Faye Clark, Campus Life Director, will now oversee all Independent resident programming at Hilltop Campus.

Denise Reilly, Activities Director at JGJ will now be the Campus Activities Director for Skilled Nursing and Adult Care.

Victoria Morabito is now the Senior Administrator at Elizabeth Church Campus.

Kate Conant is now the Senior Administrator at Hilltop Campus.

Patricia Gozikowski was hired as the Activity Director for Myers and Anderson at Wesley Village.

Connections is designed for easier readability. Contact Abbie Evans at abevans@umhwc.org

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