

# Transforming Care Together

MAHHC DONOR IMPACT REPORT • WINTER 2022-2023



*"Almost three years ago, I was in the Rehabilitation Center with no idea what I'd be able to do when I got home. It's like coming full circle. Playing [the drums] here today was really meaningful for me. One of my goals when I got out was to be able to get this back."*

- John Foster, Former Patient,  
Played with his band at the  
Rehabilitation Reunion

*"It's been tough through Covid for us all, and everything has been about adapting. Covid came, we had to shut things down, we had to stop having visitors, had to put on masks... it was just one adaptation after another. Really, that's the way your recovery is. And the most important thing we can do is keep moving."*

- Belinda Needham-Shropshire,  
Director of Rehabilitation Services



## 30 Years of Rehabilitation Reunions—All About Learning to Adapt

On Wednesday, September 21st, dozens of former patients returned to the courtyard at Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center to help mark the 30th anniversary of the annual Rehabilitation Reunion. Rehabilitation Center staff were on hand to share food, conversation, and memories with former patients whose lives were transformed at the Center through hard work to improve their abilities following accident, surgery, or illness.

**The Rehabilitation Center and its patients owe much to the donors across the decades who have provided financial support to make this possible.**

(cont. inside)



*"You have done something I never would have expected. About two months ago I got a card signed by all of the nurses, PTs and OTs who had worked with me, wishing me well, about a month after I left the Rehabilitation Center. I never got that from a hospital before. Of all the hospitals I've been in, this is the one I would recommend to anybody."*

- Pete, Former Patient



## New Year, New Report

Welcome to the debut issue of *Transforming Care Together*, Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center's report celebrating the tremendous impact our donors have on healthcare in our region, and on the Hospital's ability to keep healthcare local.



Joseph L. Perras, MD,  
President and CEO, Chief Medical Officer

Our Hospital was founded with extensive community support in 1933, and that support has never wavered. For a small, nonprofit, Critical Access Hospital like ours that provides vital care to a rural area, community support is essential. It's a close partnership. You help to sustain us, and we work to provide you with exceptional care right here—care that's tailored to local needs. That's why we rely on your participation in our regular Community Needs Assessment, helping to guide our focus by telling us what matters most to you when it comes to healthcare.

You will see this focus reflected in our premier issue. You will also meet Terri DeMond, who has been an employee here since 1998. She explains what she has gotten from a career here, and why giving back to MAHHC is so important to her. You'll also be introduced to Sarwar Kashmeri, former husband of the late Deborah K. Ellis, a prominent artist whose legacy was recently celebrated with an art auction to benefit health and wellness programs as well as clinical services at MAHHC. And we'll show you how donations from across our community are transforming our ability to confront the health challenges of the opioid crisis. These are just a few examples of the kind of impact you can have, as a donor to Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center.

Thank you.

## 30 Years of Rehabilitation Reunions... (cont. from cover)

*"My name is Chris; I'm an OR nurse at Mt. Ascutney Hospital. Before I was an OR nurse, I was a patient here. I was in a car accident...I had broken my pelvis in four places and had a traumatic brain injury. I was transported to Mt. Ascutney Hospital for rehabilitation. I was so amazed at the care I received from the staff here. I'm a nurse; I definitely know what good quality care is, and it's definitely here. I realized once I got out of the hospital that I wanted to work for this hospital. It made me feel like I need to be part of something special, and Mt. Ascutney is that kind of hospital."*

- Christine Simmons, RN, Former Patient

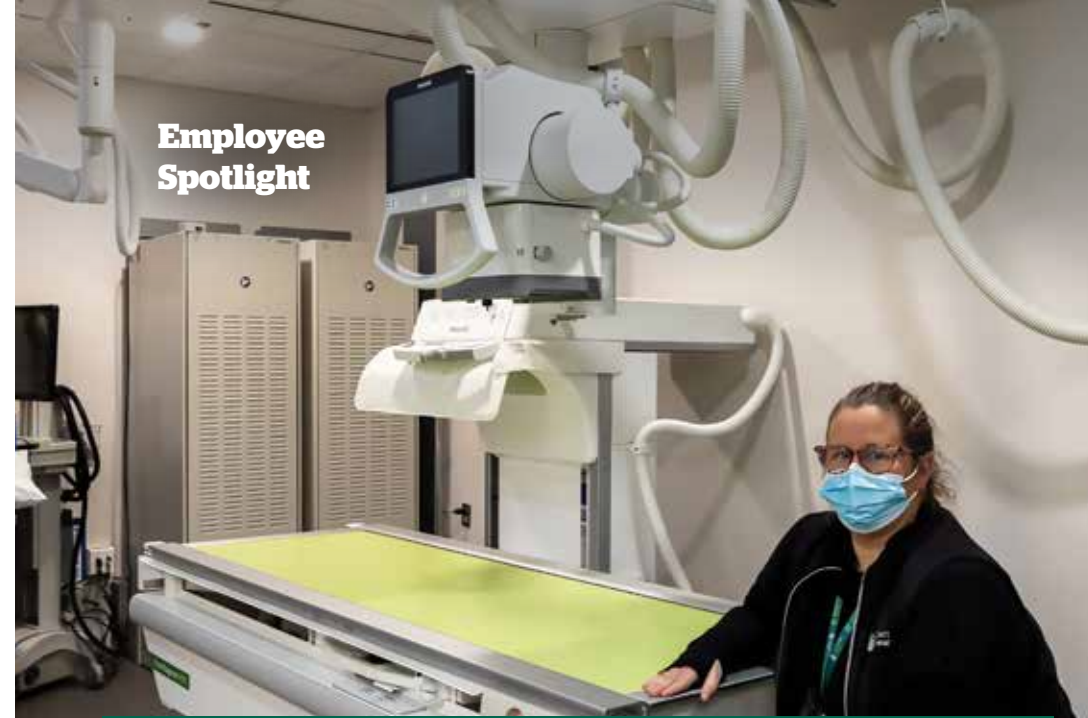


*"I was so amazed at the care I received from the staff here. I'm a nurse; I definitely know what good quality care is, and it's definitely here. I realized once I got out of the hospital that I wanted to work for this hospital."*

*"Coming here to help Dick with his rehabilitation, they taught us how to do everything. As a caregiver, I saw how they took care of Dick, but they also taught me what I needed to do to keep him safe and keep him progressing in his rehabilitation. What they did was almost magical, for someone who almost couldn't get out of bed to someone who was walking in a week's time."*

- Bobbi Lynn, Wife and Caregiver of Dick,  
Former Patient

## Employee Spotlight



*"I have worked at MAHHC for 24 years. I came to MAH as a staff radiologic technologist. Over the years I have helped to bring new technology and services to the organization for our patients. I look back on the tremendous growth the organization has had and am so proud to say that I work here."*

*Working at Mt. Ascutney has allowed me to expand my knowledge and experience, and has provided me with opportunities for growth. Today, as Director of Ancillary Services, I work closely with all areas of the Hospital. The satisfaction of being able to work with so many gifted professionals who are making a positive impact on our community and providing high quality care to our patients is what drives me to push hard each and every day as a part of this team. It's also why I support this organization's annual fund, as well as a special fund that supports the well-being of both our patients and staff. I am truly thankful for the privilege to be part of this healthcare family."*

*"I look back on the tremendous growth the organization has had and am so proud to say that I work here."*

- Terri DeMond,  
Director of Ancillary Services



## MAHHC Names Tayo S. Kirchhof as Director of Development

Formerly the Executive Director at the Ottauquechee Health Foundation, Tayo Kirchhof says she's "honored to join Mt. Ascutney to serve as the principal fundraising leader." She'll be focusing on individual giving, capital campaigns, donor appreciation, and the grateful patient program. She will also work collaboratively with colleagues to support annual giving, gift planning, and corporate and foundation relations.

"We are delighted to have Tayo on board as our Director of Development," says CEO and Chief Medical Officer Joseph L. Perras, MD. "We look forward to drawing from her fundraising, leadership, and strong relationship-building skills and experience as we continue to build greater awareness and increase support for our services across the communities we serve."



## The Art of Giving

On Saturday, October 15, the Hospital hosted a one-of-a-kind event at the Reading, Vermont Town Hall: The MAHHC Charity Art Auction. At the heart of the auction was the final work of renowned watercolorist Deborah K. Ellis, that was gifted to the Hospital by her former husband in gratitude for the quality of care she received while at MAHHC. Proceeds from the auction will support wellness programs and clinical services at the Hospital.

Deborah K. Ellis was a prolific watercolor artist whose primary source of inspiration was the natural world around her. She was particularly fascinated with plants and flowers - their colors, patterns, shape, texture, and their ever-changing forms. Much of her inspiration came from her five sheep and her donkey, who shared her Ellis family farm in Reading, where she spent more than 70 happy years.

We recently had the opportunity to speak to her former husband, Sarwar Kashmeri, about his gift of her art to the Hospital for the auction.



Deborah K. Ellis

**Thank you  
to our Sponsors!**



*Bill Smith, Auctioneer*



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## Interview with Sarwar Kashmeri

### What connection did you and Deborah have to MAHHC?

When Deborah was first diagnosed, she was treated primarily in New York, where we lived. When we moved to Reading, and we were settled in with her treatment schedule, our doctors at New York University Medical Center talked with Dr. Letha Mills and the team here and set up a plan so Deborah's day-to-day care and chemotherapy could be done here, close to home. MAHHC saved us an enormous amount of time and travel, and the chemo suite is beautiful. She could not get over the fact that despite how small MAHHC is, how much they were able to do for us.

### How did the Art Auction come about?

Deborah had a successful career doing architectural renderings. But when she got cancer, she decided she wanted to focus her life on doing what she loved. That led to more than 25 years as a fine artist. After she passed away, I discovered just how prolific a painter she was. Going through her file drawers I was stunned to see the volume of work and diversity of subjects. I wanted to pay back the Hospital for what they did for us and do for others. I couldn't think of anyone more deserving. I want to specifically thank Dr. Mills, Maggie Moore, and Patricia Stern. They are the reason Deborah was able to live comfortably for so long.

### What was your experience at the Art Auction?

I was there all week, actively taking part in preparations. We actually ran out of time during the auction, and were only able to get through half of the work! I plan to stay connected as we work through the remaining art and beyond. It's a credit to the Hospital that an auctioneer as prominent as Bill Smith gave his time to this cause.

### What would you say to others who are deciding where to focus their charitable efforts?

Resources for healthcare, not just locally but nationally, are getting slimmer by the day. **Helping this small hospital provide care that saves people from having to travel far away is enormously beneficial to the community. I'm more convinced than ever that I made the right move.**

## Local Artists Exhibit Launches

Here at MAHHC, we have a lot of wall space. We looked at all of that space and saw an opportunity—to lift spirits and strengthen community connections by spotlighting the amazing work of local artists. On our walls you will find works from various local artists on display throughout the year.

The first artist to kick off our Arts Program this past November is known for capturing nature and farm life—Isa Oehry of Greensboro, Vermont. She enjoys rescuing old barn windows and transforming them into humorous folk art, and using carving knives and a chainsaw to create wood sculptures. Learn more about her at [isaoehry.com](http://isaoehry.com).

Some of the proceeds from the sale of these and future displays of artworks will support wellness programs and clinical services at the Hospital.







## Addressing Substance Use Disorder in Our Communities

As a Critical Access Hospital, Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center is dedicated to improving the lives of those we serve, which includes assessing health at the community level. Many of our community health outreach programs are essential, yet do not generate revenue. However, they are partially funded through grants and donations. Melanie Sheehan, MCHES, Regional Prevention Program Manager within the Community Health department at the Hospital, shares her thoughts about ongoing initiatives related to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and mental health:

### Our Philosophy of Care

"In the work that we do related to SUD, we are guided by making everyone understand they matter to our community. We meet people where they are in their lives, and we treat them with dignity as human beings, understanding that SUD is a disease, not a moral failure. Our approach to care recognizes that none of us are perfect, and we are committed to expanding this philosophy of SUD care throughout our community."

### A Proactive Approach

"In the MAHHC Emergency Department, current protocols involve getting people connected with the help they need as soon as possible and in that moment, rather than making referrals that can take hours, days, or longer. Caregivers are proactive, starting Medication-Assisted Therapy (MAT) induction for those who are receptive. Recovery Coaches, who themselves have experienced SUD, are on-call and available to talk with patients as peers. There's also a focus on reducing harm. Some people may not be ready to quit, so it's important to keep them as safe as possible until they are ready, with advice on avoiding overdose, and having readily available access to free Narcan to reverse overdoses before they turn fatal. The HIV/HCV Resource Center of Lebanon, NH collaborated

with us on an Overdose Response booklet that's very useful. Counseling and nursing support are provided for patients experiencing opioid use disorder, as the Hospital participates in Vermont's Blueprint for Health "Hub & Spoke" Program, integrating SUD treatment with regular wellness programs and clinical services."

### Worthwhile Campaign

"In 2020, we collaborated with Turning Point Recovery Center of Springfield, Upper Valley Turning Point, and others to launch a story campaign about the stigma surrounding Substance Use Disorder. People who experience SUD often internalize feelings of shame and unworthiness when they experience stigma from people around them, which leads to an avoidance of getting help because they believe that they aren't worthy. This campaign focuses on people who have taken that journey to overcome self-stigma by sharing their stories, sharing their hope, and inviting others to do the same."

### Inspired by Those We Serve

"Across the Dartmouth Health system, we recognize the effect that traumatic experiences can have on people's health. There are root causes leading to poor health outcomes, and it's important to address those causes, such as economic conditions or family stress, in all of our initiatives even as we address what individuals tell us they need right now. It all comes down to that human component—every life has value. That inspires us as we work hard with our community partners to ensure that treatment with understanding and recovery are available when people are ready."



Visit [weareworthwhile.org](http://weareworthwhile.org)



## Community Health and Wellness Fair

On August 20th, 2022 at the Windsor Connection Resource Center and Windsor Welcome Center, the Hospital brought together dozens of local organizations with community residents to network with each other and to provide free information about available services. People could learn more about resources for access to nutritious food, housing, mental and emotional wellness, harm reduction for substance use disorder, aging in place, and more.

According to Amanda Jordan Smith, Program Lead with Volunteers in Action and a member of the event planning team, the well-attended event "not only provided an opportunity for local folks to learn about the myriad of services available to them in our area, but also for providers and community partners to build stronger cross-organizational collaboration, which in turn helps to facilitate a more supportive and interconnected network that improves services and access for all."



## Exhibitors Included:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Windsor Connection Resource Center                         | Windsor Community Gardens                   |
| CHIP Strengthening Families Network                        | CHIP Spiritual Health                       |
| MAHHC Family Wellness Program                              | Volunteers in Action (VIA)                  |
| Building Bright Futures Headstart                          | Windsor Community Health Clinic             |
| Hartland Library   | D-H Simulation-Based Education & Research   |
| CHIP 50+ Health Network                                    | WISE  |
| Aging in Hartland (with Community Nurse)                   | Springfield Supportive Housing Program      |
| Reading-West Windsor Aging in Place (with Community Nurse) | DCF - Economic Services                     |
| Senior Solutions   | Vermont Department of Labor                 |
| SASH   | Vermont Adult Learning                      |
| VNH  | SEVCA Tax Specialists                       |
| Aging Resource Center                                      | VSAC  |
| CHIP Windsor County Substance Use Disorder Collaborative   | HCRS  |
| Turning Point Recovery Centers                             | Windsor County Mentors                      |
| H2RC / Syringe Service                                     | We R H.O.P.E.                               |
| MAPP   | VA White River Junction Healthcare System   |
| CHIP Housing Workgroup                                     | VA White River Junction LGBTQ+ Veteran Care |
| CHIP Food Security Workgroup                               | MAHHC Health & Wellness Programs            |
| Windsor Food Shelf   | Planned Parenthood                          |
|  | Special Needs Support Center                |

MAHHC Donor Impact Report • Winter 2022-2023

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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ CCV \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

You may also donate online at [mtascutneyhospital.org/donate](http://mtascutneyhospital.org/donate). Thank you for your support!



## Charity Art Auction Raises Money for Health & Wellness Programs and Clinical Services

Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center hosted a successful charity art auction featuring work from prolific artist Deborah K. Ellis, which was originally gifted to the hospital by Ellis' former husband, Sarwar Kashmeri.

The auction, led by auctioneer Bill Smith, raised proceeds that will go toward health and wellness programs and clinical services at MAHHC.

Prior to the auction, a reception was held to remember and celebrate Ellis' life and work. It was well attended by Ellis' and Kashmeri's friends, family, neighbors, and associates.

"We are grateful for the organizations who, through their sponsorships, provided the gift of healing with the art they selected from the collection for display in our public spaces and

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"We are grateful for the organizations who, through their sponsorships, provided the gift of healing..."

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who helped offset the expenses for the event. Thank you, also to the attendees of the auction who were generous with their bids and to auctioneer Bill Smith, who provided his expertise and time to help us make this fundraiser as successful as possible," said CEO and Chief Medical Officer Joseph L. Perras, MD.

**Charity Art Auction...** (cont. inside on page 4)

