

# ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL COMMUNITY SERVICE PLAN

## INTRODUCTION:

St. Joseph Hospital is a 501(c) 3 voluntary, not-for-profit corporation with certified bed capacity of 203. On January 26, 2010, St. Joseph Hospital became a member hospital of Catholic Health Services (CHS) of Long Island. The Hospital has been renamed St. Joseph Hospital. Catholic Health Services supports St. Joseph's mission to deliver quality health care and remain a community-based hospital. Catholic Health Services is committed to continuing and expanding the important medical services provided by St. Joseph Hospital to the surrounding communities that rely upon it for quality care. With the addition of St. Joseph Hospital, CHS is now comprised of six hospitals, three nursing homes, a regional home care and hospice network and a community-based agency for persons with developmental needs.

The Board of Directors is comprised of nineteen members, consisting of voluntary community members, the Medical Staff President, a physician representative and the President & Chief Executive Officer of the Hospital who is directly responsible to the Board of Directors. The Board provides strategic, visionary guidance and direction for the Hospital's current programs, future programs, patient quality and safety, capital projects, special initiatives and for all governance responsibilities. There are six Board committees: Finance, Executive, PIPS (Performance Improvement Patient Satisfaction), Corporate Compliance, Audit and Fundraising. One or more Board members chair, co-chair and/or attend each of these committees at their scheduled meetings. The Board is very much engaged and committed in listening to and addressing community needs to further the Hospital's mission of providing high quality care to our patients and very supportive of Commissioner Richard Daines' "Prevention Agenda for the Healthiest State" initiative; aimed to improve the health of all New Yorkers.

St. Joseph Hospital has 571 physicians on the Medical Staff, including physician assistants and nurse practitioners. Every department has a Board Certified Director/Associate Director and/or Section Chief or Associate Section Chief. The Medical Executive Committee is comprised of designated members; department directors and associate directors, the Chief Medical Officer, Chairman of Credentials and Performance Improvement Committees and appointed members as needed. The mission of the Medical Executive Committee is to initiate, develop and approve the bylaws, rules and regulations of the Medical Staff. The Medical Executive Committee and Medical Staff both work very closely and cooperatively with the Administration to further the improvement of care at the Hospital.

St. Joseph Hospital is located in Bethpage, New York which is approximately 25 miles from Manhattan in the southeastern corner of Nassau County. The Hospital consists of three buildings located on one campus spanning approximately 10 acres of land, including its parking and ancillary facilities. The main building, originally constructed in 1955, with additions made in the 1970's, contains approximately 80,200 square feet on the first floor and the same square footage on the basement floor. Construction of two new buildings was completed in November 2001. One of the Hospital's new buildings is a two-story facility,

approximately 41,120 square feet. The Hospital's Emergency Department, Endoscopy and Ambulatory Surgery Units are housed in this new building, as well as a new Surgery Suite consisting of seven operating rooms, recovery room, support facilities and a new Central Sterile Services department. The one story building is approximately 14,500 square feet and houses 36 new medical/surgical inpatient care beds that replaced a former, less contemporary patient care unit that accommodated these beds.

St. Joseph Hospital is a member of the Long Island Health Network (LIHN), consisting of a 10 hospital consortium that provide additional value to the Hospital by working together with other regional facilities to lower health care costs and maintain local access to quality care to the communities served by each hospital, respectively. The primary venue used to impact quality and cost is a program called Clinical Resource Management (CRM). Its goal is to improve efficiencies and productivity while reducing cost and length of stay in the delivery of health care services, while maintaining a focus on quality improvement via benchmarking of important performance measures, employment of best practices, where possible and applicable and, use of other similar methodologies for enhancing health care delivery.

St. Joseph Hospital is licensed by the New York State Department of Health and is fully accredited by The Joint Commission. The most recent Joint Commission accreditation survey was conducted in August 2008 and the Hospital received approval for full accreditation status. The Hospital's Laboratory is accredited by the College of American Pathologists (CAP).

St. Joseph Hospital's Community Outreach Programs include Health Workshops, Support Groups, Community Health Education Lectures, "Meals on Wheels", Health Fairs and Screenings, Blood Drives and other Patient-Focused Initiatives. The Hospital is supportive of educational institutions and their respective students to provide clinical experience and education in the Hospital environment. The Hospital holds multiple affiliation agreements with educational facilities (e.g. Hofstra University, Long Island University, State University at Farmingdale, Western Suffolk BOCES) for onsite student training / mentoring in nursing, radiology technology, health administration and for other health care professions and is a designated site for training of Doctor of Pharmacy candidates through St. John's University.

St. Joseph Hospital is also an active member of Farmingdale, Bethpage, Massapequa and Amityville Chambers of Commerce and participates in many of the Chambers' activities, including health fairs, street fairs and community festival days. At these festivals the Hospital provides free educational health care material and typically offers free blood pressure screenings to community residents. The Hospital also holds health fairs on its premises, where it invites all its community members to learn about Hospital services and special programs. In fact, on October 14, 2009 and October 28, 2009, in its Ambulatory Surgery Center, the Hospital will hold a fair to provide carotid artery ultrasound, abdominal aortic screening, lipid profile and glucose screening tests, blood pressures, Dietitian consultations and Diabetes Educator consultations, among other free health services for community members in attendance. Also, in collaboration with the Bethpage Library, St. Joseph Hospital will be sponsoring a seasonal flu vaccine clinic for seniors in November 2009, offering 300 vaccines to seniors in the Nassau County area.

## MISSION STATEMENT FOR ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

Within the context of serving the health care needs of St. Joseph Hospital's communities, the mission, vision and values by which the Hospital has committed to meet and even exceed, where possible, community needs and expectations is as follows:

**Mission:** It is the mission of St. Joseph Hospital to provide high quality care to our patients in a compassionate and respectful manner.

**Vision:** It is the vision of St. Joseph Hospital to treat EVERYONE with decency while providing a caring, friendly environment and the highest quality of care.

**Values:** The values of Service, Patient First, Integrity, Respect, Innovation, Teamwork (SPIRIT) are used by St. Joseph Hospital to support its mission:

**Service:** We strive to anticipate and meet the needs of our patients, physicians and co-workers.

**Patient First:** We strive to deliver the best to every patient every day. The patient is the first priority in everything we do.

**Integrity:** We communicate openly and honestly, build trust and conduct ourselves according to the highest ethical standards.

**Respect:** We treat each individual, those we serve and those with whom we work, with the highest professionalism and dignity.

**Innovation:** We embrace change and work to improve all we do in a fiscally responsible manner.

**Teamwork:** System effectiveness is built on the collective strength and cultural diversity of everyone, working with open communication and mutual respect.

## CHANGES TO THE MISSION STATEMENT

In early 2009, the Hospital's Mission Statement, including Vision and Values, were revised to place even more emphasis on the commitment of our institution to patient-centered care and the key requirement for open communication among all direct caregivers and ancillary/support staff to deliver the highest level of quality patient care. Within the Values of our institution, the Hospital also wanted to emphasize the importance of cultural diversity in the delivery of care and that with clear open communication, diversity amongst the staff represents a strength of the health care team as it would better allow the Hospital staff's understanding of diversity among the community members that are provided health care services in our facility.

## SERVICE AREA

### Hospital Service Area

The Hospital primarily serves patients from the following surrounding communities: Massapequa, Farmingdale, Amityville, Levittown, Massapequa Park, Wantagh, Seaford, Bethpage, Bellmore, East Meadow, Lindenhurst, Copiague, Babylon, Hicksville, Plainview and Woodbury. Approximately 90% of Hospital patients who are admitted and/or provided care in our Emergency Department reside in the aforementioned service areas. This is based on annual 2008 data relative to inpatient admissions/emergency department visits to our Hospital.

## **Description of Service Area**

The methodology used to determine the principal service area of the Hospital involved the review and analysis of zip code data derived from both inpatient admissions and emergency department visits. This data has enabled the Hospital to identify those areas in the surrounding communities that most avail themselves of the Healthcare services provided by our facility.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **Participants**

The Hospital worked with the Nassau County Department of Health, other hospital facilities and other healthcare partners in the Nassau County region on the Prevention Agenda priorities. Participation of community members in the Hospital's service area was solicited via multiple venues in an effort to engage community participation in the development of this Community Service Plan.

### **Outcomes**

The public input process was announced via the Hospital's website in June 2009 whereby we welcomed and encouraged our community members to provide comments on their health care priorities and how St. Joseph could best serve their needs. Similarly, we also dedicated a section of the Hospital's Community Newsletter in July 2009, distributed to nearly 150,000 community residents to encourage community members to provide input on their health care priorities. The response to these requests was not strong but we will continue to encourage community input and participation through these venues and other media; including local press releases. The Hospital typically holds Community Lectures on a monthly basis, on varying topics in healthcare, ranging from "Stroke Prevention" to "Sleep Disorders" as well as numerous other healthcare topics of interest to the community. At each of these lectures, offered free of charge and normally well-attended by community members, each individual attendee is requested to complete a questionnaire not only about how useful the lecture material was for their personal interest and use but also for our Hospital to learn of other healthcare topics which would be of interest to the participants for future lectures. The Hospital also takes the opportunity to discuss with health lecture audiences any special needs they believe should be fulfilled by their local hospital and healthcare resource; not only on the specific lecture topic but also on any other subject matter regarding health and wellness. Since no common themes or priority trends were identified in these venues, in the future the Hospital plans to introduce a short but more revealing and concise questionnaire, in addition to the one described, to obtain additional information about our communities and their concern about the Public Health Priorities selected in conjunction with the input of the Nassau County Department of Health, other hospital providers and other health care partners in the County.

## **ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES FOR SELECTED PRIORITIES**

### **Criteria for Public Health Priorities**

In line with NYSDOH Commissioner Richard Daines' "Prevention Agenda for the Healthiest State", priorities were chosen by taking into consideration the 2-3 priorities (of the published list of 10 priorities) that would provide the greatest health care benefit to the health of the largest number of New Yorkers in our State, directly or indirectly, and specifically in Nassau County through collaboration with our Local Health Department, other hospital providers in the County and, with other healthcare partners. Collaboration, focus, attention and action by this group on the priorities selected should allow us to achieve the desired outcome; a healthier County which will contribute to the goal of a healthier New York State. The criteria used included: the benefits that the priority health focus would yield to better the quality of life for community residents, a reduced need for expensive healthcare resources for health conditions that might have otherwise been mitigated before their manifestation to a level requiring the use of extensive and expensive health resources and, ultimately priorities that would, over the course of time, free-up sufficient governmental and other health payer spending to help support the funding of health insurance for the uninsured / under-insured and to be able to reduce and eventually eliminate any barriers to high quality health care for everyone in our communities in need of care. Data used to help select these priorities was derived from the New York State Department of Health Prevention Agenda website and associated links / data tools, the Nassau County Community Health Assessment and a comparison of actual most recent available prevention agenda indicator rates for Nassau County versus prevention agenda objectives for 2013 as targeted by the NYSDOH.

In summary, the group developed a priority-setting plan to help determine which of the ten Prevention Agenda priorities would be reasonably practical to address and best meet the needs of our catchment areas. The group focused on consideration of the following criteria for selection of the Prevention Agenda priority choices:

- County indicators offering the greatest opportunity for impact
- Community Need
- Alignment and synergy with existing hospital strategy and mission
- Availability of outcome measures
- Availability of benchmarks on Performance Quality Indicators
- Potential for Grant / funding
- Existing groups, programs and resources

### **Selected Prevention Agenda Priorities**

Pursuant to a series of meetings held in collaboration with the Nassau County Department of Health (NCDOH), other hospital facilities in the County and other health care partners, it was decided by the group that the two Prevention Priorities for the County would be focused on the following two public health prevention agenda selections: **Tobacco Use: Prevention and Cessation** and **Unintentional Injury: Prevention of falls among those aged 65+ years of age**. Two work groups, named the "Thought Leaders", were established; one for each of these priorities. The Thought Leaders workgroups were comprised of a representative from each hospital, including St. Joseph Hospital, and the NCDOH to assess the current status, programming, resources and potential partners for each priority and to formulate a strategic plan to address each priority over the next three years.

**Tobacco Use:** Smoking is a significant risk factor for the three leading causes of death in the United States: heart disease, cancer and stroke, respectively. With regard to tobacco use we would like to achieve a significantly greater percentage of tobacco consumers to discontinue this most addictive and potentially life threatening practice, in order to improve their quality of life, minimize the potential health risks that are inherent to tobacco consumption, including but not limited to cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung and other types of cancer. We would also want to proactively promote early detection programs for anyone who may be at risk so that prompt treatment may be rendered before the disease process warrants extensive medical interventions. Strategically, we will need to engage and provide education on this initiative to providers, including Medical Staff, Nursing and essentially all Hospital staff. We will also work toward establishing a smoke-free campus at our facility within the first year and concurrently work with partners and resources such as the New York State Quitline and some local partners such as the Nassau County Department of Health, the Center for Tobacco Control and Nicotine Anonymous in facilitating support to the Hospital's efforts for the next two years of our Plan. We will provide more compelling education and materials regarding the potential health dangers associated with tobacco use to our Hospital patients. We will also disseminate press releases through local community papers on the subject matter of tobacco use and the high risk potential for negative effects on health and wellness.

More specifically, the Tobacco Use priority three (3) year plan involves the following activities, as agreed upon by Thought Leaders:

Year 1

- Evaluate all presently offered programs and educational materials
- Work toward the establishment of a smoke-free hospital campus
- Engage community input for development of smoking cessation classes
- Develop plan on educating hospital and physician staff
- Develop provider education on discussing tobacco use and cessation with patients. Awarding of CME credits as an incentive
- Develop media campaign with the Center for Tobacco Control and all hospitals
- Ensure that hospital pharmacies have appropriate smoking cessation medication as part of their formulary

Year 2

- Implementation of "Year 1" activities
- Measure progress through surveys of number of individuals educated, behavior change and number of patient-provider discussions on tobacco use

Year 3

- Continuation of "Year 2" activities
- Primary targeted population: physicians and other health care providers in Nassau County
- Secondary targeted population: patients of hospital providers who smoke in Nassau County

**Unintentional Injuries/Falls:** As the Hospital is realizing an increase in the senior population, among the community members it serves, the potential for accidental falls are certainly a priority focus. More than 70% of our patients are over 60 years of age. Associated risk of serious injuries and even death from falls among this population needs to be mitigated and minimized. With regard to Unintentional Injuries, especially falls and fall prevention, we would like to reduce the incidents of falls by adopting effective and proven methodologies for fall risk assessment. A Falls Committee has been established by the Nursing Department and has made significant inroads in revising and enhancing the current fall risk assessment tool. As part of this process, consideration will be given to the most effective mitigation of risk, as well as appropriate education for nursing professionals who will be utilizing the new fall risk assessment tool. Immediately following, we envision working with and educating Hospital patients, their families and/or other caregivers. During the course of this three year plan, we expect to partner with home care agencies, other social agencies and even professionals such as occupational therapists or other appropriate professionals who can assist patients and/or their caregivers on ways in which to make their community residence safer from fall risk; particularly for “at risk” individuals who live alone. We envision the minimization of risk factors for falls through the review and assessment by these professionals who can identify sources of risk in the home and who can make recommendations for elimination of identified risk factors. Implementation of these risk reduction recommendations would be at the discretion of potentially fall-vulnerable patients, their families and/or other caregivers, as appropriate.

More specifically, the Unintentional Injuries/Falls Prevention plan involves the following activities, as agreed upon by Thought Leaders:

Develop a Public Awareness Campaign

- Formulate a directory of community groups providing senior services for referrals
- Newsletters, local government mailings, public service announcements, postings in Retirement Centers and physician offices.

Create an inventory of current services to review opportunities to expand and improve:

- Senior center or retirement community programs
- Fall prevention education for hospital staff
- Home assessment tools
- Inpatient education as part of discharge planning
- Promoting balance strengthening exercises through hospital facilities

Develop a falls assessment tool, adapted from CDC and Hartford Geriatric Tool for Home Assessment, to be used in partner organizations county-wide

Evaluation of best practices relative to fall prevention

Primary targeted population: Nassau County residents aged 65+ years

## **Status of Priorities**

St. Joseph Hospital has undertaken these initiatives from the standpoint of providing education for hospitalized patients during their stay and upon discharge, publicizing relevant information to the community at large and in physician and employee newsletters. These initiatives would be classified as “new” from the standpoint that the State Health Department, Local Health Department, as well as hospital providers, including health practitioners and other community partners would all be working collaboratively toward common goals and objectives. With this magnitude and broad scale level of support and channeled effort, it is more likely that we can realize greater and more significant impact and improvement in affecting positive change in preventative care. We believe that the first step needs to be focused on raising level of awareness and working on developing new and strengthening existing relationships with our community partners.

## **Non-Prevention Priorities Considered in Assessment Process**

Among hospital public health programs not included in the Prevention Agenda, but still function to serve public health and wellness, are the following programs:

**STROKE:** Each year in the United States, an estimated 800,000 people sustain a stroke or recurrent-stroke. Based on SPARCS data review of the past five years, it is most evident that Bethpage in particular and surrounding communities reveals high hospitalization rates for stroke. Generally, across the nation, stroke represents the third leading cause of death and is a major cause of permanent disability. As identified earlier in this Plan, St. Joseph Hospital’s primary service area contains an aging population. Many of these patients are retirees from the aerospace industry which represented a major local industry until several years ago. Since the incidence of stroke increases with each decade of life, it is anticipated that in our community service area, St. Joseph will see increased numbers of emergency admissions for stroke and transient ischemic attack (TIA).

In 2009, St. Joseph Hospital received designation as a Stroke Center from the New York State Department of Health. Recognition as a Stroke Center better ensures that patients presenting with neurologic symptoms or signs, receive prompt evaluation and stabilization. In addition, patients with stroke may be candidates for thrombolytic therapy or endovascular procedures designed to dissolve or remove clots, thus reestablishing blood flow to the affected area in the brain. Physician and nurses involved in the care of patients with Stroke or TIA, have all received additional continuing medical education relative to cerebrovascular disease.

Stroke Center designation also ensures that patients receive speech, physical or occupational therapy as needed to allow the patient to resume his or her activities of daily living. This occurs during the hospital stay and, if needed and not provided within our facility, patients will be referred to more intensive rehabilitation facilities.

It is important for patients to understand that their cerebrovascular disease is a manifestation of arteriosclerosis and that they are at risk for future cerebrovascular and cardiovascular events. At hospital discharge, all patients and their families receive education concerning risk factors and behavior modification. Post discharge, patients are encouraged to attend support groups in the community which provide psychosocial therapy for patients and their families.

On a monthly basis, St. Joseph Hospital provides educational programs for our local communities. In 2009, the Hospital provided lectures on Stroke and Arteriosclerosis.

**DIABETES:** In view of the prevalence of diabetes in the Hospital's communities, especially Type 2 diabetes which is typically observed in individuals 40 years of age or older, St. Joseph Hospital has committed to making its diabetic care and education program more robust and comprehensive. Led by an R.N. Certified Diabetes Educator, the goal of this Program is to develop and enhance patient education tools, provide continuing education credit programs for nursing staff, institution of a Diabetic Nurse Champion program for Hospital nursing staff, engage in more extensive bedside education for diabetic patients, an ongoing review and update of insulin administration protocol as well as insulin pump protocol and also to provide ongoing evaluation of hypoglycemia protocol – all to ensure they meet the most current standards of care.

Additionally, this Diabetic Program would serve to provide more extensive education to patients of the Hospital's Wound Care Center who present with diabetes, as well as consultations which may be requested from time-to-time, as appropriate. The Program will also function as a resource for Medical Staff and for Medical Staff continuing education opportunities.

With the objective of community outreach, this program would include monthly meetings of a Diabetes Support Group, as well as community presentations to raise awareness of diabetes in our community and key services that will be provided at St. Joseph via this most important health and wellness program.

The long term vision and goals of this Program (commencing in year 2 of inception) include: working toward the achievement of Inpatient Diabetic Certification from The Joint Commission, establishment of outpatient diabetes education services recognized by the American Association of Diabetes Educators and to create an environment that fosters the mentoring of future Certified Diabetes Educators. We would also want to explore the possibility of securing grant funding for continued support of St. Joseph's commitment to quality diabetes education.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT SERVICES PROVIDED BY ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS**

**HYPERBARIC AND WOUND HEALING OUTPATIENT CENTER:** This Center provides comprehensive wound care services for the treatment of patients with chronic non-healing or poorly healing wounds. The Center is staffed by physicians specializing in advanced wound care techniques and hyperbaric medicine. Our highly specialized team of physicians, nurses and technicians work closely together to yield an impressive 90% overall healing rate. St. Joseph Hospital continues to make every effort to inform community members, as well as physicians and other appropriate allied health professionals in our area, of this valuable health service. We hold education sessions on the benefits of this Program, both in the Hospital as well as in the community, to raise the level of awareness of the benefits it delivers, especially for patients whose wound healing challenges are more often than not related to diabetes. Education is provided to all patients including special nutritional information that will help in facilitating the healing process and prevent recurrence of the wound condition.

**THE CENTER FOR SLEEP MEDICINE:** St. Joseph Hospital's Center for Sleep Medicine offers a comprehensive program, including Board Certified physicians by the American Board of Sleep Medicine who provide professional interpretation of sleep studies, conducted in a comfortable, contemporary state-of-the art center. In fact, the Center received Accreditation from the American Academy for Sleep Medicine (AASM) in July 2009 for its program excellence, after being rigorously and fully surveyed, from both a clinical and environmental perspective, pursuant to an AASM physician survey. Diagnosing sleep disorders and providing patients with appropriate treatment, actually also represents a preventative care initiative and ultimately supports the improvement of Public Health. It has been estimated that 70 million Americans suffer from a long term sleep disorder. Problems with sleeping beyond a few sleepless nights (which may be caused by a short-term emotional or physical problem like a job interview or a case of the flu), present serious medical issues that, if left untreated, can lead to health complications such as hypertension, diabetes, stroke and cardiac-related death. Obesity and depression have also been linked to sleep disorders. Additionally, according to the National Sleep Foundation's "Sleep in America" poll, 37% of Americans have fallen asleep at the wheel over the past year. This has led to approximately 56,000 automobile crashes resulting in 40,000 injuries and over 1500 fatalities each year. The Hospital provides community education on sleep disorders and treatment onsite and presents information on the potential health risks associated with specific sleep disorders by attending community fairs, gatherings of civic organizations and upon request by any community members or groups. We are presently working on expanding even further the scope of services to include an Insomnia Program which would encompass education and medical consultation with professionals in the field of psychology/psychiatry and sleep disorders to help individuals suffering from insomnia gain restful sleep through the night, as well as assist those with problems in falling asleep.

**OUTPATIENT BALANCE/VESTIBULAR TESTING AND PHYSICAL THERAPY:** St. Joseph Hospital is interested in expanding community awareness of its Balance Testing & Vestibular Rehabilitation Programs to help improve patient lives and reduce the risk of falls and associated injuries. Although not all falls are due to or as a consequence of imbalance, this is certainly one of the major underlying factors likely to contribute to the risk of falls. Approximately 40% of our population will suffer from dizziness, vertigo or imbalance at some point in their lives and many of these problems have treatable underlying conditions. The vestibular system in the inner ear is concerned with controlling balance. Balance testing helps differentiate the cause of the balance problem; whether it be visual, vestibular or sensory in nature. Based on the outcome of the balance/vestibular testing, you can identify the problem and develop the appropriate plan of care, determine need for further testing or commence vestibular rehabilitation/balance therapy. The Hospital conducts community education on vestibular testing onsite as well as via community outreach by presenting the benefits of this health service. It should be noted that this initiative should also help foster support of the Nassau County selected prevention priority of reducing unintentional injuries/falls.

**MRI SERVICE:** In an effort to provide a comprehensive radiology program within our community hospital, St. Joseph has recently introduced a state-of-the-art Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) service which, for the first time in the Hospital's history, is allowing for patient use of this diagnostic testing equipment onsite within the Radiology Department. It has been fully integrated into the PACS system that the Hospital implemented in 2008, thereby allowing physicians and other appropriate health care professionals to access study results onsite and offsite via secure digital technology. In addition to the inherent merits of the MRI diagnostic imaging technology in identifying potential medical problems within virtually any part of the human anatomy, inpatients as well as community outpatients are provided this service in an expeditious manner. Expansion of service hours for our MRI yields greater flexibility in patient scheduling such that we can better accommodate community members for early diagnosis of serious health problems.

**SPEECH SWALLOWING AND VOICE DISORDERS:** The Hospital offers both inpatient and outpatient speech, swallowing and voice disorder services and provides a comprehensive variety of treatment modalities for individuals who are experiencing speech, cognitive, voice and swallowing difficulties that frequently develop due to: CVA (stroke), head trauma (e.g. from falls, accidents or other sources), developmental delay, autism, respiratory disorders, Parkinson's Disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), multiple sclerosis and laryngectomy, just to name a few. Speech Language Pathologists, licensed and certified by New York State, are specially trained to assess, diagnose and treat disorders of communication and swallowing. They work in partnership with each patient's physician and other appropriate health care professionals to provide a state-of-the-art approach to the treatment of communication and swallowing disorders. As part of our Community Service Plan, we believe this is an important service to expand within the context of our broader goal and objective of treating stroke patients as well as other patients who may exhibit speech, cognitive, voice and swallowing difficulties.

## **FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM**

### **Successes and Challenges**

Since the inception of the financial aid policy, St. Joseph Hospital has expanded the number of individuals who are provided aid, as well as the amount of aid rendered since 2004. The Hospital has included all of New York in our catchment area and excluded consideration of a patient's assets in the decision-making process to determine qualification for financial aid. We have hired a financial counselor to meet with all patients that may qualify for charity care and have instructed all billing and collection agencies to follow our policy. Our overall plan has helped numerous patients obtain health coverage through a variety of products including traditional Medicaid, Medicaid Health Maintenance Organizations, HMO's through New York State products such as Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus. In conjunction with the Nassau Suffolk Hospital Council, the Hospital has open enrollment meetings for Medicaid and Medicaid products on a weekly basis. Every person that is treated at NIH who does not have health coverage (in whole or in part) receives correspondence and information pertaining to our charity care program. We make every attempt to involve all parties in this process, who do not have insurance coverage or are underinsured. The most challenging issue is with patient compliance to actually provide the necessary documentation to qualify and to do so in a timely manner. In many cases patients have the ability to qualify for charity care but do not take the necessary steps explained to them to help themselves to secure such financial assistance. This places patients and the Hospital in a very difficult position. It is St. Joseph Hospital's policy and strong belief that if a patient does not have the financial ability to pay for their emergent care needs that care will be provided, as necessary, and should be rendered on a charity basis. Hence, financial ability to pay should never present a barrier for the community to receive the emergent care needed by community members. We plan to further our efforts in raising patient/public awareness and hopefully cooperation in securing financial assistance from charity care programs available at St. Joseph Hospital, as applicable and appropriate for those who qualify. This will be accomplished through numerous marketing efforts including the Hospital's website, internal brochures and signage and coordination with local agencies/community groups and the Nassau Suffolk Hospital Council.