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it is vital that your senators and representatives understand how your hospital's work improves the overall health of your community. While your local legislators may know many members of your hospital family, do your local and federal legislators truly understand your hospital's mission and the vital role it plays in the health, safety and strength of the community? Are all your employees, volunteers and trustees aware of the many programs you provide? In today's political climate, it is vital that legislators are fully aware of the good hospitals do. That knowledge must come from hospitals themselves...

Invite your member of Congress to visit and see firsthand the essential services you provide.

Share your community service report and the new Form 990 with members of Congress and local leaders, as well as employees and volunteers so everyone recognizes and takes pride in your hospital's commitment to the community.

Make sure your trustees are aware of all the community outreach programs your organization provides, as well as the stories and numbers behind them. Encourage trustees to include aspects of the hospital's community programs in public presentations.

SHARE YOUR HOSPITAL STORY

Every hospital's story is important and unique. That's why the AHA collects and shares the many hospital stories we receive. These case examples are shared not only with other hospital colleagues but also with members of Congress and governors, as well as state and metro associations. Please visit www.caringforcommunities.org and share an example of the many community outreach programs you are involved in through our easy online submission process.



community CONNECTIONS



www.caringforcommunities.org

Photos, courtesy of Doug Haight, photographer, illustrate programs from recent Foster G. McGaw Prize winning organizations.

**Helping HOSPITALS reaffirm
their rightful place as
a valuable and vital
COMMUNITY RESOURCE**

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Hospitals do more than treat injury and illness.

Every day in America, hospitals like yours are hard at work helping to improve health and access to care in the communities they serve. Yet hospitals are forced to do more with less. Medicare and Medicaid funding are continually threatened and public scrutiny remains high. Now, more than ever, it's important that we effectively connect with our communities—our patients, our caregivers and our neighbors to better tell the hospital story. Are you sharing with the public, the media and legislators the many ways in which your hospital serves the community and finds ways to care for the poor, uninsured and those in need? Are you telling the untold stories of the work you do every day, over and above delivering patient care?



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The American Hospital Association's Community Connections initiative is designed to help hospitals reaffirm their rightful place as a valued and vital community resource that merits broad public support. At a time when so much of what we do is called into question, it's essential that policy makers and the public get a complete picture of the work we do, not just the business we are in.

That's why AHA is partnering with state and metro associations to help hospitals across the nation more effectively communicate with their communities and channel that strong community support into a partnership for advocacy.

Through targeted resources created for CEOs, communications with Capitol Hill and plenty of successful examples from the field, we're making sure people know about the many good things hospitals do.

TELL US YOUR STORY

Every community is different. That's why we want you to tell us about the ways you make your community healthier, better.

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ESOURCES

The materials listed here are just a few of the resources that can help you listen and communicate more effectively with the patients, families and community you serve. All of them are at the AHA's special Web site, www.caringforcommunities.org.

Community Connections: Community Accountability and Transparency Helping Hospitals Better Serve Their Communities — policies, guidelines and checklist.

Community Health Assessment Toolkit The ACHI Community Health Assessment Toolkit is a guide for planning, leading and using community health assessments to better understand—and ultimately improve—the health of communities. It is a product of AHA's Community Connections initiative.

Ideas and Innovations for Hospital Leaders Community Connections Case Examples

Strengthening Community Trust: Strategies for CEOs This guide will help you and other members of your leadership team advance a community leadership strategy. It has three parts: "Measuring the Community Connection: A Strategy Checklist for Leaders", "Testing the Community Connection" and "Ideas in Action".

Trust Counts Now This powerful report by former AHA Board Chair and CEO, John King, looks at how hospital leaders can bring the community closer to their organizations by leading the organization closer to the community.



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The new Schedule H portion of the IRS Form 990 presents new challenges and opportunities for hospitals. Now, more than ever, it's important that we effectively connect with our communities—our patients, our caregivers and our neighbors to better tell the hospital story. The new IRS form will ask hospitals to compile and report on the many services they provide to the community in numerical terms. While this numerical data must be reported, it only provides an initial step in illustrating a hospital's worth to a community and should be augmented with concrete examples of community benefit efforts. Program examples and personal accounts should be combined with percentages, statistics and tax forms to more clearly illustrate the very real and very personal benefits of improved health status for patients and the role hospitals play in keeping communities healthy.

Hospitals should have ongoing processes for planning and monitoring how their commitment to community health is met through services and programs for the community.

Provide community members with a listing, as well as contact information, for all the community programs and services offered including specialty services; extended care; and programs that address social and basic needs, health promotion, access, coverage and quality of life.

Hospitals should voluntarily, publicly and proactively share or report to their communities the full value or benefit they provide.

IRS Form 990 filings should be posted on hospitals' Web sites. When finalized, hospitals should use Schedule H of the IRS Form 990 but also go beyond the form to inform their community about the entire range of benefits they provide including those that are not easily quantifiable.

Hospitals should develop an annual community benefit report and attach or include a link on the home page of their Web site to these reports and/or make them available at their offices.

