

Oral health takes center stage in rural Bingham, Strong areas

Oral health isn't the first thing that comes to mind when someone is asked if they are healthy.

Recent medical studies, however, have linked a person's oral health directly to their overall health. This has left Maine residents in rural areas in a difficult situation because it is challenging for them to find and receive the dental care they need.

For residents in the Strong and Bingham areas, however, dental care is once again right around the corner from where they live.

"It's great that so many people are coming to receive dental care again in Strong," said Amy Alexcovich, DMD. "A patient's mouth can tell a lot about their overall health, including if they are diabetic or if they are undergoing chemotherapy."

With the Health Center located in the same building as the Dental practice, providers and staff are able to collaborate on patient care, alerting each other to possible health problems, sharing charts, and scheduling follow-ups if needed.

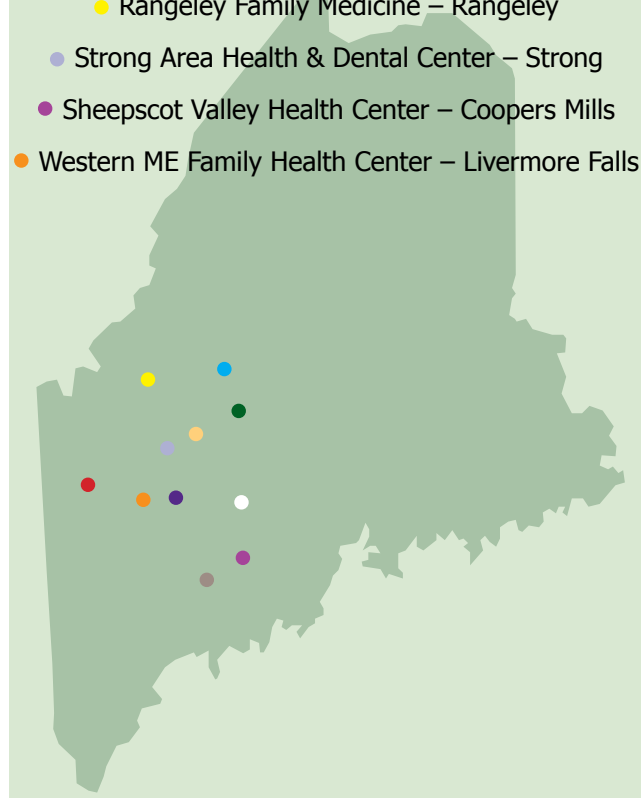


Lawrence Jacoby, DMD, MPH works at Bingham Area Health Center.

Oral Health, continued on page 3

11 locations to serve you:

- Bethel Family Health Center – Bethel
- Bingham Area Health & Dental Center – Bingham
- Belgrade Regional Health Center – Belgrade
- Lovejoy Health Center – Albion
- Madison Area Health Center – Madison
- Mt. Abram Regional Health Center – Kingfield
- Richmond Area Health Center – Richmond
- Rangeley Family Medicine – Rangeley
- Strong Area Health & Dental Center – Strong
- Sheepscot Valley Health Center – Coopers Mills
- Western ME Family Health Center – Livermore Falls



Robertson bids goodbye to Bingham, retiring in 2009



Dr. Cindy Robertson (far left) watches as University of New England medical student Tad Lanagan works with a patient at Bingham Area Health Center. Robertson is retiring this year after 30 years with the health center. Read more on page 2.

Doctor adjusts to rural lifestyle "adventure"

"There's a skunk in your basement."

And with those words from her visiting father, Rangeley Family Medicine's new doctor realized she wasn't in West Newton, Pennsylvania any more. In fact she was approximately 750 miles away from her hometown, starting a new job at a rural health center, and moving into a new home. And now there was a skunk in her basement. More on that later.



Rangeley Family Medicine's Amanda Hepler, MD poses in front of the practice's roadside sign with "Cosmo the Wonder Dog."

"Coming out of residency, practices in North Dakota and near my hometown were interested in hiring me," Hepler said during an interview almost eight months to the day after she moved into town. "I chose Rangeley because I wanted an 'adventure' before I got to a point in life where moving to a remote location would be more difficult."

And now Hepler excitedly explains that she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I grew up wanting to be a doctor in a small town," Hepler said. "When I was about four years old I had a little toy doctor's kit that I would use to pretend with, and I'd tell everyone I was going to be a doctor someday."

Her childhood fantasy, however was brushed off as 'cute' by relatives and family friends. In elementary school, however, she had made up her mind that she was going to be a doctor,



Rangeley physician Amanda Hepler, MD smiles as she stands behind a large piece of driftwood she found on an outing with friends on Mooselookmeguntic Lake near Rangeley, Maine.

Adventure, continued on page 4

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HealthReach Community Health Centers

10 WATER ST., SUITE 305
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Message from the Board Chair and President

Dear Community Members:

The economic strain on many businesses and families in 2008 was also felt by HealthReach Community Health Centers and our dedicated, caring team of providers and staff. Even with those challenges we are proud to report we continued to provide high-quality, affordable primary and preventive medical care and dental services to over 32,500 patients.

Those economic challenges didn't stop us from expanding our services to those in need, especially to rural areas where dental care is sparse or nonexistent. With governmental support through the U.S. Public Health Service, and the Bingham Health Council Board of Directors, we re-opened the dental practice at Bingham Area Health center. The Board was instrumental in raising the necessary funds to outfit the dental practice with the equipment needed.

Additionally, the dental practice at Strong Area Health Center saw the arrival of a full-time dentist to service that area. With medical studies showing an ever-increasing link between oral and overall health we are extremely pleased that Capt. Lawrence Jacoby, DMD, MPH was assigned to Bingham and Amy Alexcovich, DMD accepted a position in Strong. You can read more about these individuals elsewhere in this report.

Our front page story also delves further into the importance of oral health from our patients' and providers' perspective. From the interviews we conducted we learned that many patients would not receive dental care because of travel distance or affordability. Our dental practice locations, our ability to accept MaineCare, and our affordable care program greatly improve the chances that our neighbors in those regions will receive the oral care they need and deserve.

Many of our medical practices also improved accessibility to their patients by adding walk-in hours, same-day scheduling, and Saturday hours. With the hectic lifestyles of the 21st century our patients asked for these services and we are proud to offer them.

As we increase our patient services we continue to implement tools that will help our providers and staff deliver the medical and dental care they've come to expect from HRCHC.

Electronic Practice Management (EPM) software has now been implemented at all sites, dramatically improving front office scheduling and billing capabilities and the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system is now active at nine sites. Both of the systems mentioned above have helped improve overall operational efficiencies, benefiting our patients, providers, and staff.

Finally, as we look forward to 2010, we continue to stress our mission of providing the highest quality of care to people in our service areas regardless of their ability to pay.

With our Affordable Care Program, Prescription Assistance Program, and Navigator Program we aim to deliver the care and service that people living in rural areas have come to expect from us at prices they can afford. And, rest assured, we will not stop looking for ways to make the overall experience for our patients, providers and staff the absolute best it can be.



Roger Renfrew, MD
Board Chair



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President/CEO

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Italicized names are HealthReach employees. We have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of this report. If you note omissions or errors, please notify the Development Office at 207-861-3466

Assistance available to patients for prescriptions



The cost of medication was the number one concern across our entire health center system in our last community survey.

To address this issue, we partnered with CarePartners of MaineGeneral Health through a generous grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation.

Representatives at each of our health centers now help patients with no prescription coverage apply for free medications from drug companies.

In 2008, our patients received free medications worth over \$400,000. Patients tell our medical providers that before this program they used to skip some of their medications altogether or buy less groceries or oil for their furnaces.

This "Prescription Assistance Program" is just part of HRCHC's "Navigator" program which also helps patients access services and programs they may be unaware of, provides information, and offers personal guidance to help utilize those services and programs.

By the numbers...
\$400,000
The amount our patients saved through our Prescription Assistance Program in 2008

Oral Health *continued from front page*

"If a patients' blood pressure is elevated when they are in the chair we can take a look and see if they have a history of high blood pressure," Alexcovich continued. "And if they don't we can suggest they come back for a follow up blood pressure check just to rule out the possibility."

When Strong was without a dentist before the arrival of Alexcovich in July 2008, patients were unable to receive the level of care they needed locally.

"They were left with very few choices, particularly low-income families and Mainecare recipients," according to Strong Practice Manager Jewell Baker. "Our hygienist on staff could continue to perform routine maintenance and cleanings, but they had to travel for other procedures."

Because of the travel many Strong area residents chose not to continue receiving regular dental care because of the distance, cost, and lack of insurance. For those that required care, such as Strong's 17-year-old Hope Gould, traveling outside of Strong was "a major pain in the butt, and terrifying during snowstorms."

Meanwhile, Jennica Wyman chose to go elsewhere, rather than investigate the Strong Dental practice.

"I figured they didn't have a dentist so they couldn't really help me, even though I was covered under MaineCare until I was 21," said Wyman. "After I turned 21 I couldn't afford to continue with dental visits until I was hired at Strong in November of last year and I found out about the sliding free program."

Now, according to Wyman, "My family, my boyfriend and I have become patients because it is convenient and the quality of care is excellent."

In Bingham the arrival of Capt. Lawrence H. Jacoby, DMD, MPH



Provider Profile – Strong Area Health Center Amy Alexcovich, DMD

A National Health Service Corps Scholar Amy received her undergraduate degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2002 and her Doctor of Dental Medicine degree from Temple University School of Dentistry in 2007. Dr. Alexcovich is a member of the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, the American Dental Association, and the American Association of Women Dentists.

Dr. Alexcovich shared her reasons for moving to Maine and choosing to practice in Strong: "Since doing a SEARCH summer program in Maine during dental school, I wanted to work in Maine. This job allows me to fulfill my obligation to the National Health Service Corps and live in a wonderful place. I have been enjoying the many outdoor activities that this region of the country affords."

Opportunities to support your Health Center

Once again, we sincerely thank the generous donors who contributed to HealthReach in 2008. The support of individuals, businesses, foundations and community partners plays an essential role in our ability to accomplish our mission.

Every day our medical and dental providers offer high quality care to area residents and visitors. We are committed to make those services affordable and accessible to every person in the communities we serve.

Charitable gifts and grants help reduce costs, provide access to care for those who cannot afford it, and improve the quality of care for our patients and families. Everyone has been affected by the economic situation and HealthReach is no exception. Shortfalls in Medicare, MaineCare (Medicaid), and other programs for the elderly, disabled and low income

“ Before Emma (Ansara, FNP) told me about the Navigator program I sometimes had to skip prescriptions because I just couldn't afford them. Two of them were \$116 alone!
~ Bertha Moreau, Western Maine Family Health Center patient ”

created excitement amongst the residents.

"Before this year I last went to the dentist around 2005," said Lurie Bean, a patient at both the medical and dental practices of Bingham Area Health Center. "Between the price of gas, the 20-30 mile one way trip to Skowhegan or Waterville, and the cost of the visit, it just wasn't an easy thing to continue doing."

"Having both a medical and dental practice right here in Bingham is critical for the people in the area," continued Bean. "We have a lot of retired and elderly people around here so traveling to receive care is sometimes just too much for them."

Now that Bingham has a dentist and hygienist on staff, however, Bean has made dental visits a priority. "It's more likely I'll go see the dentist on a regular basis," she continued. "I just went for a cleaning last week and will have another follow-up soon."

Bingham resident Michael Thomas Sr. had a frustrating experience trying to ensure his grandchildren received the dental care they needed, having to travel almost 100 miles away so they could receive cleanings. "Car trouble and bad weather didn't make things any easier on the family either," Thomas added.

Then, around 2006, Thomas' then 12-year-old granddaughter Kristi, went over the handlebars on her bike and "really messed up her teeth," said Thomas. He brought her to the health center for initial treatment because it was close and convenient, with the family living only two houses down from the health center.

Bingham's Dr. Cynthia Robertson used her contacts to set the family up with a dentist appointment in another town where they put a splint on the tooth. "That was great she could get Kristi seen, but it was about 50 minutes away and they didn't accept MaineCare," said Thomas.

Oral Health, continued on page 4

Provider Profile – Bingham Area Health Center Capt. Lawrence H. Jacoby, DMD, MPH



Captain Jacoby is a Ready Responder in the United States Public Health Service. He will provide dental care at Bingham Area Health Center and Strong Area Health Center through 2010. Dr. Jacoby possesses a license in dentistry as well as a master's degree in public health. "I feel it is very important for dental care to be integrated into the realm of overall healthcare," states Dr. Jacoby. "Everyone deserves access to medical and oral health care across the entire age span."

The Ready Responder Program was initiated after the 9/11/2001 attacks. It is a unique group of primary care clinicians, commissioned by the U.S. Public Health Service, who serve in some of the neediest locations throughout America. Dr. Jacoby recently provided dental care to Gustav and Ike evacuees, and in 2005 provided relief efforts to families affected by Hurricane Katrina.

families severally affect our bottom line.

Gifts from donors enable us to purchase state-of-the-art equipment and offer cutting-edge treatments that improve our patient's health status and quality of life. Donations also enable us to sponsor patient education and support the cost of continuing education for our health care professionals.

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Check out our new website feature - now you can donate to your health center securely online: https://www.healthreachchc.org/giving/donation_form.php.

Community-minded doctor retiring after 30+ year career

Early experiences in life help mold and shape the adult we turn out to be. In the case of Bingham Area Health Center's Dr. Cindy Robertson no truer words could be written.

Growing up in Auburn, NY, near the Finger Lakes region, Robertson got to see first-hand the impact a rural doctor could have on a community.

"My dad was a rural doctor there," Robertson said fondly. "His office was right below my bedroom and when a baby was born he would bring the newborn into the back of the house so we all could see."

Inspired by her father's contentment in being a rural doctor, Robertson grew up knowing that she wanted to give back to the community and take care of people. That sense of community ultimately led her to Bingham, Maine where she has served as the town's physician for over 30 years.

Now looking forward to retirement this fall Robertson recently took time out of her busy schedule to reflect back on her time serving the Bingham community, and what the future may hold in store.

"Bingham is like a second home to me, but now is the right time for me to retire," stated the 65-year-old Robertson, who resides down the road in Skowhegan. "With Sarah (Andel, FNP) and the superior staff at the health center I know the patients will still receive the care they need."

"I have mixed feelings about retirement, but a new doctor is coming this fall, so there's no turning back now," she said, laughing.

Although Robertson thinks now is the right time for her to retire, two longtime patients aren't quite ready to see her go.



Dr. Robertson listens to a young patient's heart.

"I'll be honest... I hate the fact she is going to retire," Michael Thomas Sr. stated. "Without the health center and Dr. Robertson I don't think I would be here today."

Thomas had a pulmonary embolism after losing a leg due to a blood clot. During his hospital stay in



Dr. Cynthia Robertson

“ (Dr. Robertson) goes above and beyond what she has to do, so she deserves a nice, peaceful, quiet retirement.”

~ Bingham Area Health Center patient Lurie Bean ”

Waterville he remembers Robertson stopping in to see him and dropping by his house in Madison afterwards to see how he was doing.

"I briefly considered moving closer to Waterville or Skowhegan," added Thomas. "But with the health center two doors down, and Doctor Robertson there, I didn't need to move to receive great care."

Lifetime Bingham resident Lurie Bean confessed she is "bummed out"

that Robertson is retiring. "But I'm happy for Cindy," Bean continued. "She has always been there to guide and support me, not only on a physical level, but emotionally as well. She goes above and beyond what she has to do, so she deserves a nice peaceful, quiet retirement."

How much of a break she will take remains to be seen. She intends to continue residing in Skowhegan, while keeping up with her gardening, traveling, maintaining her involvement in the

Bingham community, and teaching one day a week at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine.

She also plans on getting involved with Doctors without Borders, advocating for medical students to travel abroad to third-world countries, and continue to encouraging them to conduct rotations in rural areas to better understand the great need for primary care physicians in our country.

"I recently worked with my 66th student doing a medical rotation," said Robertson. "Maine needs primary care doctors badly, and I would like to continue to help solve the shortage in rural areas."

Much was accomplished during her tenure at Bingham, but one thing she wishes she could have made happen quicker was getting dental care into the area.

"It should have been a part of the health center since its inception," Robertson said. "But dental care back then was considered more of a luxury. We have a better understanding of the health impact oral care has on the overall body now."

Nearing the end of the interview the normally talkative Robertson paused when patients' quotes about their experience at the health center were read to her.

"Working here in Bingham has been a dream come true for me and I'll miss all of my patients," Robertson mused. "They don't know how much I owe my life to them."



Sharing a laugh with a patient.

Bingham Area Health & Dental Center Joined HRCHC: 1975 1,865 patients totaling 5,520 visits in 2008	Madison Area Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1977 1,865 patients totaling 5,408 visits in 2008	Belgrade Regional Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1977 2,518 patients totaling 7,029 visits in 2008	Richmond Area Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1977 3,043 patients totaling 8,421 visits in 2008	Lovejoy Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1978 4,365 patients totaling 13,343 visits in 2008	Sheepscot Valley Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1980 4,346 patients totaling 13,721 visits in 2008	Strong Area Health & Dental Center Joined HRCHC: 1986 2,662 patients totaling 7,343 visits in 2008	Mt. Abram Regional Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1986 1,493 patients totaling 4,051 visits in 2008	Western Maine Family Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1987 4,653 patients totaling 12,616 visits in 2008	Rangeley Family Medicine Joined HRCHC: 1994 1,931 patients totaling 4,040 visits in 2008	Bethel Family Health Center Joined HRCHC: 1999 3,908 patients totaling 11,418 visits in 2008
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Adventure

continued from front page

so that doesn't surprise her. Neither does the fact she ended up so far from home.

"Rangeley is a little like my hometown, there are nice people, it's peaceful, and there's plenty to do for outdoor activities," Hepler said. "But back home if I wanted to go to Wal-Mart, or Lowe's I didn't have to plan a day around the trip. It's forced me to become organized and keep lists of things that I need."

Rangeley's sense of community involvement was something that piqued Hepler's interest when she was making her decision to accept the job. Since moving to town she has gotten involved in the community. Although sometimes not in a manner she envisioned.

"I was unpacking, tired after a long day, and all I wanted to do was get a pizza, come back home and relax," Hepler said with a wry smile across her lips. "So I get to the pizza place, and the people who were there got curious about who I was. You know...a stranger in their town."

As she waited for the pizza questions from the townfolk started to pop up:

"Who are you?" "What are you doing here?" "Well, if you are a doctor why did you move here?"

"I wasn't prepared for that type of reaction," continued Hepler. "As everyone got to know me and I answered their questions things started to get easier, but I quickly came to realize it's hard to have a social life up here (chuckling again)...everywhere I go I run into my patients!"

To pass her free time, Hepler has enjoyed many local recreational activities, such as snowshoeing and hiking with her loyal companion she refers to lovingly as "Cosmo the Wonder Dog."

"Wherever I was going to work I took Cosmo into consideration," said Hepler. "I rescued him from a pound in Philadelphia when he was about a year old so we were a package deal. Wherever I go you'll see him with me."

Another way Hepler has integrated herself into the community is by performing home visits with patients who are unable to get to the health center for follow ups.

"I try to do 2-3 home visits a month and I get to play a little bit of detective when I'm at a patients' home," Hepler said. "I get to see how they are living, and I may be able to offer them some safety tips, or ways to adjust their living space to make it easier for them, and possibly alleviate areas where they may trip or fall."

As well as the home visits, Hepler is also credited with "saving the town play" which was going to be cancelled due to a rash that appeared on two performers before she intervened.

"I examined the students and the rashes were a coincidence with no medical worries," Hepler said. "So I wrote a letter assuring the school board that the rash wasn't contagious

and that 'The Show Must Go On!'"

Now back to the skunk, which was discovered during the night because Hepler's father thought he heard water in the basement...so he went to investigate.

"I came downstairs in the morning and my Dad was just sitting on the couch, sort of pale," Hepler chuckled, but she wasn't laughing at that time. "I asked him what was wrong he very calmly said: 'There is a skunk in your basement.' He's scared of skunks so I figured he mistook it for something else."

Hepler decided to descend the stairs to the musty old basement, and quickly ran back up the stairs.

Being new to town she didn't know where to begin her search, so she called local law enforcement and town agencies, but none of them could help her.

"Finally I called a guy in Farmington who traps animals, but he told me he wasn't going to drive an hour to catch one skunk," Hepler said. "I told him I didn't care what it cost I just wanted the skunk out of my basement!"

Not knowing what else to do, Hepler called Rangeley's Front Office Coordinator, Sara Eustis, who has spent her entire life in the area and is a "real nature lover."

"A little after I called Sara and explained what was going on, she shows up with a black t-shirt and gardening gloves, saying that she was here to catch my skunk."

But before Sara could successfully nab the skunk another local resident who heard about the dilemma was kind enough to show up with a trap and placed it in her basement, ridding Hepler of the skunk in a couple of days.

"He took away all of my fun," Eustis said kiddingly as she walked by during the interview, which led Hepler to talk glowingly about the medical practice's staff.

"The staff here is great, they really make my job easier," she added. "When I started I was a little green about policies and procedures, where to send patients for treatment... things like that. They all stepped up to the plate and I think they will do anything for me because they really care about the community."

And the Rangeley community has made one thing certain in Hepler's life: She wanted an adventure and so far she's gotten one.



Dr. Hepler listens to the heart of Rangeley Family Medicine patient Joanie Mitchell.

Oral Health

continued from page 3

"With the amount of time it took to find proper treatment for Kristi's initial injury she's now faced with a root canal that will thankfully be done right here in Bingham," continued Thomas. "She's not scared about it though because Dr. Jacoby sat her down and explained everything in an easy to understand way."

Thomas' youngest grandson, 13-year-old Seth, didn't have to endure the difficulties his sister did when he chipped a tooth snowboarding this past winter.

"We made an appointment right here (in Bingham) and the dentist was able to fix it on his very next visit," said Thomas. "If Dr.

Jacoby wasn't here we would have been faced with

the same type of situation we had with Kristi."

Since Dr. Jacoby has been here there has been an "endless parade of children" coming through the door, according to Robertson, but it hasn't ended there.

"I was seeing a mom in her 30s for a medical issue, and in walks her 7-year-old son, who is absolutely beaming because he just got his teeth cleaned," she continued. "As we talked I learned that her 10-year-old son, her husband and his mother had all recently been seen on the dental side!"

And one patient in her 70s who lost a filling was happy to learn that the tooth wouldn't have to be extracted thanks to a new bonding material that Jacoby applied to the tooth.

"It's amazing what (Dr. Jacoby) has been able to accomplish," Robertson added with exuberance. "Kids just love him...even a little girl who had a previous 'unhappy' experience with a dentist likes him. He's great with all the kids."

And the kids, says Robertson is what it is all about.

"We're taking care of the next generation of dental patients today," she said. "And when you think about it, the children are our future so it's a great place to start."

2008 FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Statements

Year ending December 31, 2008

Statement of Financial Position

Assets	2008	2007
Total Current Assets	\$1,633,680	\$1,931,753
Total Assets Limited as to Use	867,107	1,013,117
Other Assets	<u>770,579</u>	<u>787,767</u>
Total Assets	\$3,271,366	\$3,732,637

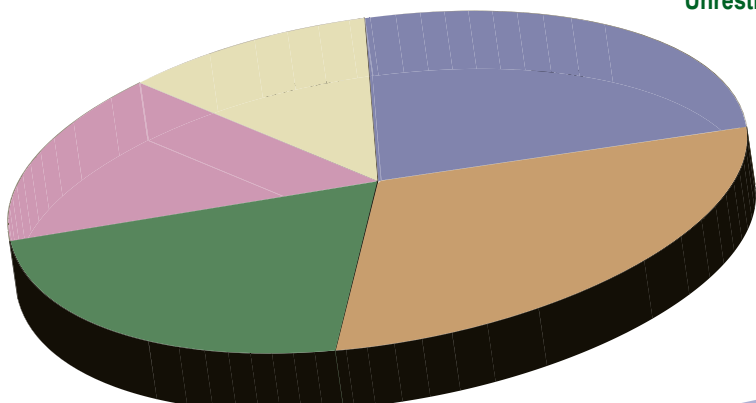
Liabilities and Net Assets

Total Current Liabilities	\$1,653,301	\$1,455,432
Long-Term Debt	<u>127,962</u>	<u>187,217</u>
Total Liabilities	1,781,263	1,642,649
Total Net Assets/Equity	<u>1,490,103</u>	<u>2,089,988</u>
Total Liabilities & Net Assets/Equity	\$3,271,366	\$3,732,637

Statement of Activities

Revenue	2008	2007
Gross Revenue, Gains & Other Support	\$15,687,403	\$16,264,059
Deductions from Revenue	<u>(3,107,551)</u>	<u>(2,690,464)</u>
Net Revenue, Gains & Other Support	\$12,579,852	\$13,573,595
Expenses		
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	\$8,914,635	\$9,294,421
Supplies & Other	3,698,674	3,826,256
Provision for Bad Debts	<u>259,444</u>	<u>500,357</u>
Total Expenses	13,142,177	13,889,279
Net Operating Income/(Loss)	(562,325)	(315,684)
Non-Operating Gains/(Losses)	(109,225)	55,493
Increase/(Decrease) in Unrestricted Net Assets	(\$671,550)	(\$260,191)

Gross Revenue



- MaineCare
- Medicare
- Blue Cross
- Other Commercial Payers
- Self Pay

Our mission:
To provide quality, affordable, patient-centered healthcare in the medically underserved communities of Central and Western Maine.



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