



## NCH Leadership Corner

Tom Mee, RN, BSN, MBA, Chief Executive Officer



In the midst of current events - such as the establishment of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), discussions about federal funding halts, and potential changes to Medicare and Medicaid - it is understandable that concerns may arise regarding our roles and the future of our healthcare System. However, it is imperative that we maintain our unwavering commitment to high reliability and optimal patient outcomes, which have always been, and will always be, the cornerstone of our Mission.

Recent developments have introduced uncertainties in federal funding and healthcare policies. The creation of DOGE, led by Elon Musk, aims to streamline government operations but has resulted in significant budgetary adjustments and workforce reductions, causing widespread concern among federal employees and the public.

Additionally, the House of Representatives has advanced a six-month stopgap funding bill to prevent a government shutdown, proposing a \$7 billion reduction from 2024 spending levels. This includes a \$13 billion cut in non-defense discretionary spending, while increasing defense spending by \$6 billion. Notably, mandatory spending programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are not included in this discretionary funding bill.

High reliability in healthcare signifies our dedication to consistently delivering safe, effective, and patient-centered care. This commitment transcends external challenges and is rooted in our organizational culture, which

prioritizes safety, quality, and continuous improvement. By adhering to evidence-based practices and maintaining rigorous standards, we ensure that our patients receive the best possible care, fostering trust within our community.

Our primary objective is to achieve optimal patient outcomes. This involves not only addressing the immediate health needs of our patients but also considering their long-term well-being. By concentrating on preventive care, chronic disease management, and patient education, we empower individuals to take charge of their health, thereby enhancing the overall health status of our community.

While external factors such as policy changes and funding uncertainties may influence the broader healthcare landscape, our focus must remain steadfast on our Mission - to improve lives by assuring consistently excellent, integrated healthcare. It is essential to stay informed about these developments; however, we must not allow them to distract us from our core responsibilities. By concentrating on what we can control - our commitment to excellence, patient safety, and quality care - we can continue to thrive even amidst uncertainty.

Each member of our organization plays a vital role in upholding our standards and ensuring the delivery of high-quality care. Whether you are involved in direct patient care, administrative support, or facility maintenance, your dedication contributes to our collective success. In times of uncertainty, our unity and shared

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commitment become even more critical. By supporting one another and fostering a collaborative environment, we enhance our resilience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

As we navigate these challenging times, let us reaffirm our dedication to high reliability and exceptional patient outcomes. By focusing on our Mission and Values, we can continue to provide the compassionate, high-quality care that our community relies upon. Our steadfast commitment to excellence will not only sustain us through current challenges but also strengthen our position as a trusted healthcare provider in the future.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication and the exceptional care you provide every day. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

## Nursing Leadership Communication

**Tiffany Haynes, MSN, RN,  
Chief Nursing Officer, NCH**



Happy March! I am pleased to announce that NCH continues to reach the barcode scanning goal and closed out February at 99.1%. As champions of this System-wide goal, Greg Cook, FACHE, President & CEO of Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital, and I, have been meeting with leaders throughout the System to identify areas of opportunity. Meetings have been held with respiratory therapy, surgical services, inpatient services, diagnostic imaging, and occupational health. We are currently focused on reducing missed scans on nebulizers, insulins, lidocaine/bupivacaine, and IV fluids. In March, we will be halfway through our fiscal year and at that time I am hopeful all affiliates will be scanning above 99%.

### MEDICATION AND BRACELET SCANNING (BOTH MET)

	AVH	UCVH	WMC	NCH	Mean (98.1)	FY2025 GOAL 99%
MONTH						
OCT	97.3	99.2	98.4	97.7	98.1	99.0
NOV	98.6	99.3	98.3	98.4	98.1	99.0
DEC	99.2	99.7	98.7	99.0	98.1	99.0
JAN	99.3	99.5	98.7	99.1	98.1	99.0
FEB	99.3	99.5	98.6	99.1	98.1	99.0

### Rounding:

We have completed our first quarter of affiliate rounding throughout NCH affiliates, and I want to thank all of you

for your willingness to speak candidly with Tom Mee, RN, BSN, MBA, Chief Executive Officer, and me. We spent approximately TEN-hours with frontline staff and management during this rounding initiative and spoke with 15 clinical staff members about opportunities, resource allocation, support, idea, and concerns. It was a true pleasure to meet with the frontline staff, we look forward to meeting more staff when we round again on the following dates:

### April & May

- 4/22 at Weeks Medical Center
- 4/24 at Androscoggin Valley Hospital
- 5/7 at North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency
- 5/29 at Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital

### Clinical Organization Structure:

Over the next few months, I will be working on implementing a new clinical organizational structure within NCH. On our journey to High Reliability, function-based leadership will be imperative to ensure that we are functioning at the highest level possible. The restructure has been discussed with the nursing leadership team and I will be sharing the organizational chart in the near future.

### Yellow Belt Projects:

Nursing leadership has embarked on an ambitious goal, to have 50% of nursing leaders Yellow Belt certified by the end of this fiscal year. We currently have four leaders certified and will need seven more certified by the end of the fiscal year.

# IT System Updates

Darrell Bodnar, BS, CPM, CPHIMS,  
Chief Information Officer



## **Current and Completed Projects and Highlights**

### **Netsmart Care Quality Interface**

The integration of MEDITECH Expanse with the Home Health and Hospice's Netsmart systems is moving forward as planned. We are now in the queue for implementation, and momentum is building as we prepare for the next steps. This project will significantly improve interoperability, enhancing access to NCH and other hospital partners for North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency, ultimately streamlining care coordination.

### **Dartmouth Pathology Interface**

Progress continues on integrating MEDITECH Expanse with Dartmouth Health's Pathology System. The real-time, discrete result sharing from Dartmouth Health's Epic Beaker System is expected to bring a notable boost to efficiency and workflow standardization. As we move closer to completion, this interface will help facilitate faster diagnostics and improved patient care collaboration between organizations.

### **MEDITECH Expanse 2.2**

The MEDITECH 2.2 upgrade remains on track, with significant improvements in system scalability and workflow efficiency. With June 2025 as the target go-live date, our team is focused on extensive testing and parallel runs to ensure a seamless transition. While these preparations require time and effort, they are crucial to leveraging MEDITECH's most advanced capabilities. We appreciate your continued support and engagement in this process.

### **Software and Hardware Lifecycle**

This fiscal year, we are making excellent progress in modernizing our software and hardware infrastructure. We remain committed to replacing outdated systems that have reached the end of their lifecycle while proactively addressing necessary upgrades. With Microsoft phasing out support for widely used platforms such as Windows 10, Windows Server 2016, and older SQL Server versions, we are staying ahead to ensure operational security, efficiency, and compliance. These efforts will position us for a more stable and sustainable technology environment.

## **Ambient Voice Technology**

Our expansion of the Augmedix ambient voice solution pilot continues to yield promising results. Providers have responded positively, noting reduced administrative burdens and improved documentation efficiency. We are carefully evaluating its potential across various service lines, particularly in Behavioral Health, where unique challenges require further refinement. This initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to implementing innovative solutions that enhance provider experience and support high-quality patient care.

## **Traverse Exchange**

MEDITECH's Traverse Exchange is proving to be a valuable tool in bridging the gap between different Electronic Health Record systems, ensuring real-time, secure patient data exchange. This functionality is increasingly recognized as a game-changer for improving care coordination and informed decision-making. As we advance with this integration, we are seeing encouraging signs of enhanced workflow efficiency and streamlined communication across healthcare teams, leading to improved patient outcomes.

## **Upcoming Project Highlights**

### **UniteUs**

The UniteUs platform is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at building a statewide, closed-loop referral network to enhance resource sharing and care coordination. By eliminating barriers to access for underserved populations, it empowers healthcare providers, community organizations, and stakeholders to deliver timely and appropriate care. With its ability to leverage real-time data exchange, UniteUs is set to make a profound impact on vulnerable communities, fostering collaboration and driving measurable improvements in population health outcomes.





# Quality Corner

Barbara Peaslee, Quality Informatics Analyst



## The Importance of Rounding

Rounding on frontline staff is vital for building trust, encouraging open communication, and identifying issues early. It shows leadership's commitment to listening to employees involved in daily operations, leading to better engagement, service quality, and workplace satisfaction. By connecting with frontline staff, leaders gain insights into operational challenges and can implement effective solutions. It's crucial for staff to feel empowered to share their thoughts, knowing their voices are heard and valued.

There are Key benefits of rounding on frontline staff:

- Improved communication
- Enhanced employee engagement
- Proactive problem-solving
- Culture of safety
- Relationship building
- Staff development
- Increased visibility

In the summer of 2024, I was fortunate to round on 20 departments at Weeks Medical Center, asking the staff five questions:

1. What is working well (or NOT) for you today, or since the last visit?
2. Any quality or safety issues to discuss? Risk to patients, staff and visitors.
3. What have you done this week/month to impact patient experience?
4. How can we, as an organization, improve communication?
5. Is there someone I can recognize?

Below are some of the Highlights of the Findings:

1. **Working Well - Team Collaboration:** The Staff demonstrates strong teamwork and a commitment to quality patient

care. However, like everyone in healthcare, they face challenges related to staffing shortages, overtime, and access to necessary supplies. This suggests a need for ongoing support and resources to enhance team dynamics.

2. **Quality and Safety Concerns:** Broken into four main areas of concern. Those areas are equipment, facility improvements, processes, and training and orientation. When someone wants to improve a process in their own work area, it can be a great opportunity for a Yellow Belt project! If you're interested in doing a Yellow Belt project, or you have a completed project charter, please email [PDCAproject@northcountryhealth.org](mailto:PDCAproject@northcountryhealth.org).
3. **Patient Experience:** The Staff are proud of their efforts to prioritize patient care. Continued focus on enhancing patient experience will be vital as we move forward.
4. **Communication Opportunities:**
  - Recommendations include designating specific individuals for information dissemination and increasing management visibility to foster a more transparent environment.
  - Utilizing communication platforms like Microsoft Teams effectively could streamline interactions and reduce unnecessary email traffic.
5. In addition, **Recognition** - 21 staff members were recognized by their peers for excelling in their roles. Their contributions are invaluable.



# Human Resources Corner

Human Resources Team



March brings with it the promise of fresh beginnings, and we are excited to seize new opportunities for both personal and professional growth. Our focus this month is on heart-centered initiatives that enhance employee wellness, foster a supportive work environment and celebrate the diverse talents within our team. But we understand that finding harmony between family, home and work is a crucial component of overall well-being. Whether you're a seasoned multitasker or newly navigating family dynamics, our experts are here to support you in integrating all parts of your busy life. From childcare options and medical providers to guidance on legal, financial and eldercare demands, and even assistance with mental health, we're committed to making March a month full of blossoming warmth, connection, and balance. Let us help you flourish in every aspect of your life!

## Welcome to the NCH Team!

We are excited to welcome the following new members to the team that had successfully been through our January Orientation. Give a warm NCH welcome to the following members:

Aleksandra Sith		LNA Med/Surg, AVH
Ashley Lebron		Pharmacy Technician, AVH
Brandon Jones		EVS Technician, AVH
Kelsey Carlson		RN, Women's Services, AVH
Jadyn Ricker		EVS Technician, UCVH
Celina Moon		PT, Physical Therapy, AVH
Hillary Leavitt		LNA, MedSurg, AVH
Justin Bowie		EVS Technician, AVH
Chelsea Williams		Intake RN, NCHHHA
Sarah Trahan		Retail Customer Svc. Rep., NCHHHA
Alexandria Tichy		Phlebotomist, Lab, UCVH
Alice Beauchemin		Patient Access Rep., NCH at UCVH
Jillian Caron		LNA, Nursing LNA Acute, UCVH
Chantal Lampron		RN House Coordinator, WMC



### Trying to balance family, home, & work?

Whether you're a pro or just starting a family, our experts can help you integrate all parts of your busy life. Get assistance with:

- Childcare options
- Medical providers
- Legal and financial questions
- Career Skills
- Mental health support
- Eldercare demands
- Relocation and housing
- And much more!

[Call now](#)

[Schedule an appointment](#)



KGA is your Employee Assistance Program, paid for by North Country Healthcare.





# Androscoggin Valley Hospital

Michael Peterson, FACHE, President and CEO



One of the six pillars which are crucial to all that we do and the effect we have on our patients, is that of Community.

Over the past month, AVH team members, both employees and Ambassadors, played integral roles in the success of two such community efforts: a bake sale on February 14, and the Annual Ambassadors Meeting on Monday, February 17.

The bake sale, which raised an impressive \$750, supported the efforts of National Donor Day, sponsored by Donate Life America. National Donor Day celebrates those who have signed up to donate organs and raises awareness about the importance of organ, eye, tissue, blood, bone marrow and platelet donation.



Did you know that you can sign up to be an organ donor when you renew your license? Contact your local Department of Motor Vehicles for details! You can also register at [donatelife.net](https://donatelife.net).



The Annual Ambassadors Meeting is truly an event that I always enjoy attending. Held at the Town & Country Inn and Resort again this year, Candy O'Neil, AVH Ambassador Coordinator, detailed all of the amazing work, fundraising and otherwise, that the team did over the past year. It was truly impressive. I was pleased to be able to accept a \$25,000 check made out to AVH to purchase equipment identified during last year's Golf Tournament planning process. Thank you, AVH Ambassadors and for everyone else who helped support the Tournament.

Finally, I'd like to thank Claire Blanchette, ASA Orthopaedics & Neurology Scheduler for 2PC, and Rick Lorenz, PA-C, each of whom recently received these comments from patients of AVH:

- *"Claire is always smiling, helpful and willing to go the extra mile to make sure your visit goes smoothly."*
- *"For several years, Rick has treated various joints which have given me trouble. When I arrive at his office, I'm in great pain and have difficulty walking or using my hand (thumb joint.) He knows exactly how to treat and inject the proper joint. After a day or two, my mobility's restored and am no longer in pain."*

Thanks to both of you for the exceptional patient care.

Have a great and safe St. Patrick's Day!





# North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency

Jessica Foster-Hebert, RN, CHHCM, CHCM, Interim President and CEO



I can't believe we're already in March - time sure does fly when you're having fun!

## **Hospice Special Focus Program**

The hospice industry has been buzzing with the recent news that CMS has halted the Hospice Special Focus Program (SPF). Hospice leaders have welcomed this decision, as it allows CMS to reevaluate the program's structure. While the hospice community continues to support increased oversight to protect patients and prevent fraud, the SPF program has been widely criticized as "flawed and harmful." Originally designed to identify underperforming hospices for increased scrutiny, the program failed to differentiate between fraudulent providers and reputable organizations. This pause is a positive step toward more effective and fair oversight.

## **AVADE Training**

At North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency, we are excited to announce the official launch of [AVADE Training](#). Led by our Board Chair, JJ Bujeaud, and staff RN, Will Cunningham, this essential training - Awareness, Vigilance, Avoidance, Defense, Escape - equips our team with the tools to prevent and mitigate workplace violence. All field staff are scheduled to complete AVADE Training this year, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to a culture of safety. This commitment is further reflected in the introduction of POM (Peace of Mind) Safe Devices, enhancing the safety of our staff in the field.



## **Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Goals**

We're also making great strides toward our FY 2025 goals. I'm proud to share that we've already achieved one major milestone - the successful implementation of the online ordering platform for Hospice Home Medical Supply. Many other goals are progressing well, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our incredible team.

## **New NCHHHA Board Member**

Lastly, we are excited to welcome Christopher St. Cyr as our newest Board Member. We're confident that Christopher will bring fresh perspectives, new energy, and a shared commitment to excellence.



# Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital

Greg Cook, FACHE, President and CEO



As we continue to progress through the year, I wanted to take a moment to update you on a few exciting developments and initiatives that reflect our ongoing commitment to better serving our community and patients. We've been making great strides, and I'm proud of the work everyone is doing. Here's a look at some of the key highlights from February:

## **Wellness Center Update**

On February 13, 2025, a gathering was held at The Tillotson Center in Colebrook (and via Zoom), for those interested in the Wellness Center redevelopment, a project that has been explored over the past several years by the Board of Directors of the North Country Community Recreation Center (NCCRC) and Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital (UCVH).

Participants at the meeting shared input in an interactive Question & Answer session and ideas for possible ways to move forward. Another community meeting is scheduled for March 22nd at the Colebrook Academy Elementary School, bringing together community members who have expressed interest in leadership and moving forward.

## **Collaboration Corner – Employee Forum**

The second in a quarterly series of "Collaboration Corner" Employee Forum Meetings, held on February 19th, brought 41 employees together over the three meetings that day. The Collaboration Corner meetings provide me an opportunity to foster communication, update staff on UCVH and NCH initiatives, share ideas and concerns, and enhance collaboration across all departments. Keep an eye out for upcoming sessions and invites!

## **New Service: Allergy Shots Now Available**

I'm pleased to share that February also marked the launch of a new service for our patients. Through our Ambulatory Nursing Services Department, we are now offering allergy shots to patients. This is a significant improvement for many, as patients can now receive treatment closer to home. This will make a real difference for those in our community and is a notable example of how we are continuing to improve access to care locally.

## **Primary Care Stabilization**

Sustaining Primary Care Services in Colebrook continues to be one of our top priorities. We are working closely with Weeks Medical Center and Coös County Family Health Services, Inc., to address this critical issue collaboratively. It's essential that we stabilize and maintain this critical access to care for our community members.

As always, I want to thank you for your dedication and hard work. Together, we continue to build a stronger, more connected community and provide the best possible care for our patients.





# Weeks Medical Center

Matt Streeter, MBA, FACHE, FHFMA, Interim President, Weeks Medical Center



## List of services for Weeks Medical Center:

The following is a list of the services offered at Weeks Medical Center. In future editions on the *NCH News*, we will be highlighting services in more detail.

Departments		
Acute Care Clinic	Home Health, Hospice And Palliative Care	Pediatrics
Addiction & Recovery	Hospitalist Services	Podiatry
Audiology	Imaging Services	Pharmacy
Ear, Nose, Throat / Allergy	Infusion Services	Primary Care/Family Medicine
Behavioral Health & Psychiatry	Laboratory/Pathology	Pulmonary Care
Cardiac Care	Neurology	Rehabilitation Services (PT/OT/SLP)
Child Development	OB/GYN	Respiratory Therapy
Dermatology	Oncology	Sleep Medicine
Diabetes Care & Education	Orthopaedics	Urology
Emergency Care	Pain Support Program	Vascular Medicine
General Surgery	Palliative Care Services	Wound Care & Healing



**Evan Tassis and Anita Newll** representing the Employer of Choice Committee, handing out goodies on Valentine's Day. When Evan and Anita team up to hand out awesome pens and goodies during Valentine's weekend, love isn't the only thing in the air - creativity is too!



**The DAISY Award Initiative** kicked off this month at all hospital affiliate locations! Patients, families and colleagues can share their stories (by [clicking here](#)) of outstanding nursing care witnessed or received by our team members and nominate them for this prestigious and inspiring award.

## Recent Patient Comments for Weeks Medical Center Providers:

- Dr. Broadwater gave me EXCELLENT treatment.
- Dr. Soraghan is always professional, a great communicator and very pleasant to be with. | Dr. Soraghan is always top notch.
- Gina Bedell's so amazing that I travel over an hour to see her.
- I'd recommend Dr. Ford for care to any of my friends or relatives.
- Dr. Sweeney always follows through on your care. | I'm very satisfied with Dr. Sweeney.
- Linda White is a great care provider. She explains, what, where and how. | Linda White discovered a problem and saved my life. A most excellent experience.
- Dr. Ruelle and her staff are simply the best.
- I'd highly recommend Dr. Khangura.
- Dr. Brown's the best! He has shown support and encouragement. He is so caring and knowledgeable. He never rushed me during my appointment! He has an amazing bedside manner. I have referred family and friends to him. | Dr. Brown is an excellent doctor. He helps me very much.
- Anna Lingelbach-Lorenz was amazing. She listened to everything I said when performing the exam and took her time. She asked me every time, 'I am going to do this now, ok?' and waited for my response. She stopped the exam and answered any questions I might have had before continuing the exam. | Anna Lingelbach-Lorenz is very helpful. I would go back to her in a second. Very good!
- Dr. Kim is excellent!
- Dr. Goolman's great.
- Mary Judd has always been great. | Mary Judd was my provider who found my cancer. She got me the correct treatments right away. She saved my life.

# Marketing Update

James Patry, FACHE, Vice President, NCH  
Marketing & Community Relations



Happy March!

In the Marketing portion of last month's newsletter, I showcased the second-lowest five service lines, correctly identified by employees and providers who completed a 2024 survey, as existing within one or more NCH affiliates: Palliative Care; Ear, Nose, Throat; Obstetrics & Gynecology; Pulmonology; and Wound Care.

This month, we focus on the five which were just slightly better than those in terms of employee knowledge of their existing within NCH:

- Podiatry
- Hospice
- Urology
- Home Health
- Sleep Medicine

Podiatry helps identify potential foot and ankle issues at an early stage. Weeks Medical Center provides outreach podiatry services at all hospital affiliate sites (AVH, UCVH, WMC) and in Whitefield.

Services offered include, but are not limited to:

- Biopsy of suspicious skin lesions
- Edema control
- Treatment of lower extremity wounds
- Negative pressure wound therapy
- Venous insufficiency management

For an appointment at any of the locations where podiatry is offered, please call (603) 788-5095. For more information about this important service, please [click here](#).

I will continue to feature other departments within NCH, in future issues of this newsletter. In the meantime, a list of departments can be viewed here: [Services - North Country Healthcare](#).

If you're like me and enjoy listening to a good podcast, check one featuring NCH's own Chief Quality Officer, Bernie Adams. Bernie speaks about the exciting developments within NCH, including Yellow Belt training. To listen, please [click here](#).

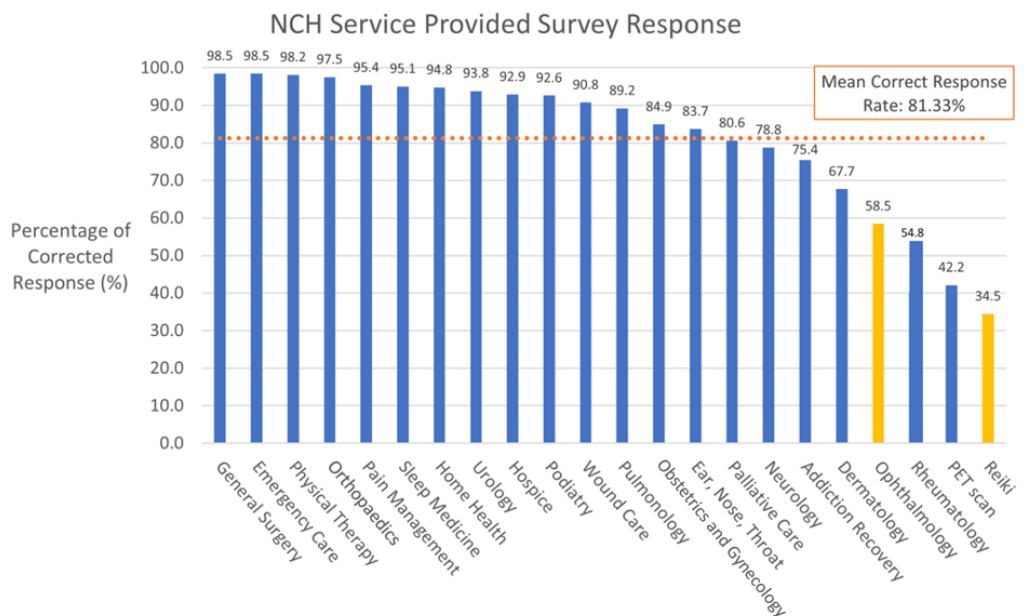
Thank you very much to everyone who took the time to complete a recent survey about the Intranet. Here are the findings:

- 290 individuals completed the survey
- Nearly 98% of all respondents were aware that NCH has an intranet
- Nearly 92% of all respondents indicated that they use the intranet
- 90% of respondents indicated that the intranet opens on their browser
- 59% of respondents find the intranet easy to navigate
- The top three uses of the intranet are 1) Policies; 2) Cafeteria Menu; News & Announcements

The information will be valuable in continuing to make the Intranet a tool that meets the needs of our employees and providers.

Finally, please [click here](#) to see our NCH logowear item of the month. It's available in green, as well as many other colors, just in time for St. Patrick's Day celebrations! As a reminder, NCH doesn't receive any proceeds from any logowear sales, but we love to see our items worn proudly in our communities.

Have a wonderful and lucky St. Patrick's Day!





# NCH

north country healthcare

## North Country Healthcare

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