



Northeast Georgia Health System and Affiliates
Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) Gainesville/Braselton
NGMC Barrow
NGMC Lumpkin
NGMC Habersham

Executive Summary
FY23 Community Benefit Report
October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

Improving the health of our community in all we do



= Relates to NGMC's Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Plan progress

Overview

Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) is a Georgia not-for-profit community health system with the mission to "improve the health of the community in all we do." The Health System serves more than one million people in 19 counties across Northeast Georgia offering a full range of healthcare services, including oncology, orthopedics, cardiac surgery, critical care, surgical trauma, neonatology, and women's care.

As a not-for-profit health system, all revenue generated above operating expenses is returned to the community through improved services and innovative programs. It is led by volunteer boards made up of community leaders.

NGHS operates the following hospital campuses: **NGMC Barrow, LLC**: a 56-licensed-bed hospital in Winder, Georgia. In July 2018, NGHS acquired **NGMC Lumpkin, LLC** (formerly Chestatee Regional Hospital) and reopened the closed rural hospital to preserve emergency services, inpatient care and other support services for residents in Dahlonega and surrounding communities. In June 2022, NGMC Lumpkin broke ground on a new replacement hospital in Dahlonega which will enhance access to healthcare services for area residents. Northeast Georgia Medical Center (**NGMC Gainesville and Braselton**), operates a 557-licensed-bed inpatient facility in Gainesville and a 134-licensed-bed inpatient facility in Braselton. On July 1, 2023, NGHS acquired Habersham Medical Center, now called **NGMC Habersham, LLC**. This hospital operates a 53-licensed-bed inpatient facility in Demorest. Other affiliates include The NGHS Foundation (The Medical Center Foundation, Inc. d/b/a The Northeast Georgia Health System Foundation), Georgia Heart Institute, LLC (GHI), and Northeast Georgia Physicians Group (NGPG). NGPG brings together more than 650 physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, midwives, and other clinical staff at more than 135 locations across North Georgia. NGPG is the state's sixth-largest physician group offering expertise in more than 40 specialties. GHI is made up of more than 70 physicians and advanced practice providers representing multiple cardiac specialties through 14 locations across Northeast Georgia. NGHS also has nine urgent care facilities, three long-term care

centers, one mental health facility, a satellite cancer treatment facility and seven rehab locations providing outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapy.

Economic Impact

NGMC continues to have a positive financial impact on the local community and state, according to the latest annual study conducted by the Georgia Hospital Association. For 2022 (latest study available), NGHS (NGMC Gainesville, NGMC Braselton, NGMC Barrow, NGMC Lumpkin) contributed more than \$7.4 billion in economic impact on local and state economies, sustaining more than 22,000 full-time jobs in addition to the 12,000 employed directly by NGHS. This is in addition to the more than \$194 million provided in charity care and over \$17 million provided in community outreach. NGMC serves as a strong financial engine for the local economy.



Charity Care

In FY23, NGHS hospitals provided charity care in the community at the cost of an estimated **\$76.4 million** and received no local tax revenue from Hall County or any other counties to support operations or care provided to indigent residents. The charity care policy provides financial assistance up to 300 percent of the poverty level – many hospitals provide charity adjustments only to the level that matches the state definition of medically indigent but not at the level that NGHS offers. NGHS’s Charity Care Policy supports providing care for indigent patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

As a not-for-profit health system, all revenue generated above operating expenses was returned to the community through improved services and innovative programs. NGHS reinvested in the future with the following projects:

- Braselton Campus Services
 - Endovascular Suite
 - Georgia Heart Institute Expansion
 - NGPG Expansion
- Braselton Cancer Center
 - Second Linear Accelerator
- Gainesville Campus Services
 - Hospice Unit Renovation
 - Second MRI
- Gainesville Imaging Center
 - MRI Replacement
- Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility

Total Estimated Charity Care Cost for Each Hospital Entity in FY23:

NGMC Gainesville/Braselton: \$31.9 million for Hall County residents + \$40.0 million for regional residents outside of Hall for a total of \$71.9 million.

NGMC Barrow: \$2.5 million for Barrow County residents + \$670,000 for regional residents outside of Barrow for a total of \$3.2 million.

NGMC Lumpkin: \$510,000 for Lumpkin County residents + \$385,000 for regional residents outside of Lumpkin for a total of \$895,000.

NGMC Habersham: \$225,000 for Habersham County residents + \$185,000 for regional residents outside of Habersham for a total of \$410,000.

Total Estimated Charity Care Cost for Each Hospital Entity in FY23: \$76.4 million



Low-income and Uninsured Patient Programs: NGMC hospitals are key participants and fiscal sponsors in programs aimed at treating low-income and uninsured patients, including clinics such as Good Shepherd Clinic in Dawsonville, Community Helping Place in Lumpkin, and Good News Clinics in Gainesville, the largest free healthcare clinic in Georgia, and Health Access, a local service that matches financially eligible patients to specialty physicians and provides access to care, among other services. NGMC was the primary hospital for low-income patients in Gainesville-Hall County and throughout the region in counties such as Banks, Lumpkin, Rabun, Union, and White, where many key medical specialties are unavailable.

NGMC Tax Funding: Since 2000, NGMC Gainesville has provided slightly more than three times the amount of indigent and charity care outlined in requirements by the Georgia Department of Community Health to pass a certificate of need for new services successfully. Unlike many Georgia not-for-profit hospitals held to the same requirements, NGMC does not receive tax funding from its local county to help fund indigent care for area residents.

IRS Obligations

As a not-for-profit hospital, **NGMC carries additional responsibilities as established by the IRS in 1965.** These obligations are:

Operate a full-time emergency room that is available to all people, regardless of their ability to pay:

- NGMC Gainesville and Braselton had 153,819 ER visits, operating the busiest emergency department in Georgia; NGMC Barrow and Lumpkin also operate 24-hour emergency rooms.
- In FY23, 15% of all NGMC Gainesville and Braselton emergency room visits were made by self-pay patients; 19% for Barrow, 15% for Habersham, and 15% for Lumpkin.
- Provide emergency services to anyone unable to pay, and medically necessary services to anyone in the NGHS service area not able to pay.
- NGMC provides high quality, advanced specialty, and primary healthcare services to the Northeast Georgia community, serving over 1 million people in more than 19 counties.
- In FY23, NGMC's payor mix at Gainesville and Braselton was 59% Medicare/Medicaid, 32% commercial/other insurance and 8% self-pay.
- In FY23, NGMC's payor mix at Barrow was 53% for Medicare/ Medicaid, 34% for commercial/other insurance and 13% for self-pay.
- In FY23, NGMC's payor mix at Lumpkin was 52% for Medicare/ Medicaid, 35% for commercial/other insurance and 13% for self-pay.
- In FY23, NGMC's payor mix at Habersham was 82% for Medicare/ Medicaid, 9% for other insurance and 9% for self-pay.

Participate in Medicaid and Medicare: 59% of patients served by NGMC Gainesville and Braselton in FY23 were Medicaid and Medicare patients; 53% for Barrow, 82% for Habersham, and 52% for Lumpkin.

Create a governing board that is representative of the community it serves: More than 90 community members and more than 25 medical staff members are actively involved in governance through NGHS, NGMC and other subsidiary boards and committees.

Indigent Care Trust Fund (ICTF): In 2023, NGMC Gainesville Braselton received \$5.2 million in net funds allocated through the Medicaid DSH (ICTF) program to partially offset a financial loss of \$26.1 million in cost the Medical Center incurred treating uninsured and Medicaid patients. In addition, NGMC received \$18.7 million in net funds allocated through the Medicaid UPL program to adjust Medicaid payments upward to match Medicare payment levels. Established in 1990, the ICTF expands Medicaid eligibility and services. It supports rural healthcare facilities that serve the medically indigent and funds primary health care programs for medically indigent Georgians. Georgia’s Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program is funded through the ICTF. It assists hospitals and other health providers that care for high proportions of Medicaid, uninsured, and/or low-income patients.



Community Health Needs Assessment: With significant input from the community, the hospital entities of Northeast Georgia Health System completed a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2022. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community’s most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low incomes who are uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews, plus online surveys that garnered approximately 4,500 responses, well above expected response rates. The study identified the three health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization's strategic direction: **Mental & Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Behaviors.** Information from this study continues to drive community benefit activities today. The below dashboard reflects Year One progress on the CHNA Implementation Plan.



CHNA Implementation Plan Dashboard

2022 Baseline	2023 Progress
<p>Goal 1: Reduce unhealthy behaviors including tobacco use, sedentary lifestyles, obesity rates, and chronic condition rates, such as hypertension and diabetes.</p>	
<p>Overall Outcome Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of Northeast Georgia community members are obese • 18% drink excessively • 17% are current smokers • 10% of adults age 20+ have diabetes • 32% of adults age 18+ have high blood pressure <p>Source: CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (2019), CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2019).</p>	<p>Overall Outcome Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27.9% of community members are obese ↑ • 15.51% drink excessively ↓ • 13.9% are current smokers ↓ • 8.4% of adults age 20+ have diabetes ↓ • 32.1% of adults age 18+ have high blood pressure - <p>Source: CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (2021), CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2021).</p>
<p>Goal 2: Work to improve access to care throughout the region through growth in workforce, residency slots filled in Graduate Medical Education programs, master facility plan, and digital front door.</p>	

<p>Overall Outcome Measures: 210 residency slots filled in various specialties by 2025. Source: <i>NGMC GME Program</i></p>	<p>Overall Outcome Measures: 178 residency slots filled in various specialties as of 2023. Source: <i>NGMC GME Program</i></p>
<p>Goal 3: Reduce suicide and opioid overdose rates within our service areas.</p>	
<p>Overall Outcome Measures: The rate of deaths in the region related to suicide, alcohol-related disease, and/or drug overdose (also known as “Deaths of Despair”) was 37 deaths for every 100,000 people each year in the region between 2016 and 2020, higher than the Georgia rate. Source: <i>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics System, 2016-2020</i></p>	<p>Overall Outcome Measures: The rate of deaths in the region related to suicide, alcohol-related disease, and/or drug overdose (also known as “Deaths of Despair”) was 35.9 deaths ↓ for every 100,000 people each year in the region between 2017 and 2021, higher than the Georgia rate. Source: <i>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics System, 2017-2021</i></p>

Grants and Commitments



\$5 Million Maternal Cardiac Health: NGHS was one of nine recipients of a \$5 million federal grant from Health Resources and Services Administration to support maternal health innovation. In 2023, NGHS assembled a statewide maternal health task force, developed an electronic tool that screens all postpartum mothers for cardiac risks, collaborated with community partners to provide education and created a maternal health patient registry in Epic. Senator Raphael Warnock visited NGMC Gainesville to learn about the work that NGHS is doing to improve maternal health outcomes in northeast Georgia.

\$2.1 Million in Congressional Funding: Georgia Senator Jon Ossoff visited the NGMC Gainesville campus to celebrate the \$2.1 million of appropriated congressional funds NGMC received to help with construction costs for a rooftop helipad on the new patient tower, as well as an elevator that connects the helipad to the emergency department, catheterization lab and other areas in the tower.

Achievements

Verified Level 1 Trauma Center: In February 2023, NGMC Gainesville was verified as a Level I trauma center, making it one of five state-designated Level I trauma centers in Georgia and only the fourth nationally verified Level I trauma center in the state.



Center for Complex Coronary Disease Launches: A new Center for Complex Coronary Disease opened in FY23 at Georgia Heart Institute led by interventional cardiologists Glen Henry, MD, Nima Ghasemzadeh, MD, and Falgun Patel, MD.

Birth Tissue Donation: New mothers at NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Braselton now have the opportunity to donate birth tissue – the placenta, umbilical cord, cord blood and amniotic fluid – to the national Birth Tissue Donor Services center, where they use it to make transplantable grafts to treat burns, surgical wounds and other health issues.

Donor Breast Milk: NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Braselton are two of the first hospitals in Georgia to offer donor breast milk on the Mother/Baby units as an alternative to formula when an infant needs to be supplemented for medical reasons, such as hypoglycemia or weight loss.



Accreditations

Pain and Addiction Care in the Emergency Department: NGMC Gainesville was among the first hospitals in the state to become accredited by the American College of Emergency Physicians in Pain and Addiction Care in the Emergency Department (PACED). PACED accreditation recognizes emergency departments with comprehensive programs to provide optimal care for patients suffering from pain and/or addiction using progressive treatment, protocols, training and resources. Soon after, NGMC Braselton also earned PACED accreditation.

Cancer Center Accreditation: NGMC's cancer centers in Braselton, Gainesville and Toccoa received national accreditation from the American Society for Radiation Oncology, which evaluated the radiation oncology service's safety and quality processes, as well as effective communication, coordinated treatments and strong patient engagement.

Center for Simulation and Innovation Accredited: The Center for Simulation and Innovation was recognized as an accredited simulation center in the area of Teaching/Education by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare, which recognizes NGHS' commitment to excellence in simulation-based education.

NGMC Hospitals Receive Emergency Cardiac Care Reaccreditation: Four NGMC hospital campuses were reaccredited as emergency cardiac care centers, an accreditation which helps EMS professionals in the field know what level of emergency cardiac care services are provided at a hospital to ensure they transport patients to the appropriate level of care. NGMC Gainesville was reaccredited as a Level 1, NGMC Braselton as a Level 2, and NGMC Barrow and NGMC Lumpkin as Level 3 centers, while NGMC Habersham has now begun the accreditation process.

In-Home Palliative Care Accreditation: NGMC's In-Home Palliative Care program is the first in the state to be accredited by Community Health Accreditation Partner, an independent non-profit accrediting organization for home and community-based healthcare organizations.

Adolescent Bariatric Weight Loss Accreditation: NGMC's Bariatric Weight Loss Center earned adolescent accreditation from the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program, making the program one of only two programs in Georgia to be nationally accredited in adult surgery, adolescent surgery and obesity medicine.

Accreditations for Stroke, Heart and Diabetes Care: The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association recognized NGMC's hospitals in Braselton, Gainesville and Barrow for providing exceptional stroke, heart and diabetes care. Their Get with the Guidelines and Target awards honor programs that ensure patient care is aligned with the latest research- and evidence-based guidelines so that patients get care faster, have fewer complications, enjoy more healthy days at home and return to the hospital less often.

Awards and Recognition



NGMC Gainesville Named a Top Charitable Hospital: NGMC Gainesville was named A Top Hospital for Fair Share Spending by the Lown Institute. This means we had a “fair share” surplus in 2020, spending more on financial assistance and community investment than the estimated value of our tax exemption.

“A” Safety Grade from The Leapfrog Group: In FY23, NGMC Braselton and NGMC Barrow received a “A” Safety Grade from The Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit upholding the standard of patient safety in hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers.



NGMC Barrow Named Small Hospital of the Year: NGMC Barrow was named the 2023 “Small Hospital of the Year” by the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals, which is presented to facilities that have made extraordinary strides and exhibited exceptional achievement within their health system and community. Specifically, NGMC Barrow provided \$3.8 million worth of charity care, improved access to care through on-demand virtual visits, and expanded EMS Ambulance services, as well as contributed over \$102 million to the local economy and provided over 749 jobs to the Barrow community.

Governor Nathan Deal Award for Trauma Excellence: Jesse Gibson, RN, trauma program director at NGMC, received the Governor Nathan Deal Award for Trauma Excellence at the Region 2 Trauma Advisory Committee’s Northeast Georgia Trauma Symposium for her lasting clinical and/or system impact on trauma care in northeast Georgia through education, legislation, leadership or philanthropy.

Lantern Award: In FY23, NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Barrow were two of the first hospitals in the state to be awarded the 2023 Lantern Award by the Emergency Nurses Association, which recognizes emergency departments that demonstrate exceptional and innovative performance in leadership, practice, education, advocacy and research.

NGMC Gainesville Selected for National Trauma Trial: Researchers at NGMC Gainesville are participating in an international clinical trial to study how a drug could increase trauma patients’ chances of survival. NGMC Gainesville was chosen as one of eight Level I trauma centers across the United States and Canada to participate in what will be the second-largest trauma trial ever conducted.

New Horizons Receives Four-Stars: Two of our skilled nursing facilities, New Horizons Lanier Park and New Horizons Limestone, received the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services four-star ratings.

Georgia Center for Oncology Research: Angie Caton, RN, assistant nurse manager at NGMC, was honored as “Today’s Innovator” for her remarkable contributions to cancer care at the Georgia Center for Oncology Research annual gala in 2023.

Physician Assistant of the Year: Georgia Heart Institute's Haley Queen, PA-C, was named the 2023 “PA of the Year” by the Georgia Association of Physician Assistants (GAPA). This award honors a physician assistant who has demonstrated exemplary service to the PA profession in their community and the state.

Georgia Trend’s 100 Most Influential Georgians: NGHS President and CEO Carol Burrell was selected for Georgia Trend Magazine’s annual list of the 100 Most Influential Georgians for a ninth year in a row.

Georgia Trend's 40 Under 40: Georgia Trend magazine honored Blake Fulenwider, NGHS' Executive Director of Government Affairs, on its annual 40 Under 40 list.



2023 Healthy Hall Awards: In FY23, Monica Newton, D.O. with NGPG Family Medicine, Ashley Simpson, NP for the Georgia Heart Institute, Tracy Vardeman, Former Chief Strategy Executive, and Philip Wilheit, Sr., NGHS Board Chair Emeritus, were recognized for their efforts in the Hall County community at the Healthy Hall Awards.

Help for Healthcare Professionals: At the Help for Healthcare Professionals' annual celebration of healthcare workers and first responders, Erine Raybon-Rojas, MD, with NGPG Critical Care Medicine, received the Physician of the Year award, and Juan Turner, with NGHS Nutritional Services, received the Nutritional Wellness Champion of the Year award.

Outstanding Woman in Healthcare: Deb Bailey, retired Executive Director of Governmental Affairs at NGHS, was honored by the Georgia Association of Community Hospitals as the inaugural recipient of the "Outstanding Women in Healthcare" award.



Community Service Award: In FY23, Georgia Heart Institute received the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Community Service Award, which recognizes a person or business providing outstanding services that are transforming the community.



Digital Health Most Wired Survey: For the 10th year in a row, the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives included NGHS on its annual list of Healthcare's Most Wired for 2023. NGHS received Level 9 certification, one of just four organizations in Georgia to receive this designation.

NGMC Auxiliary Volunteer Support: In FY23, more than 591 Auxiliary volunteers provided over 47K hours of service throughout the health system, which equates to 28FTEs and a value of \$1.5 million to enhance the quality of services provided by NGHS. This level of community service is an indicator of the strong community relationships that are maintained throughout the region.



Digital Health & Innovations

In 2023, NGMC saw a 60% increase in appointments scheduled online, with 16% of those being new patients to NGHS.

NGPG Introduces On-Demand Urgent Care Visits

In FY23, NGPG launched on-demand urgent care video visits, allowing patients to see a trusted NGPG urgent care provider from the comfort of their homes. Patients can be seen for immediate care needs such as colds, flu symptoms, sinus issues, sore throats and rashes. Since the February 2023 launch, NGMC has completed over 2,300 visits.

NGPG Launches Post-Discharge Virtual Visits

To help prevent hospital readmissions and facilitate transition of care, NGPG launched an ambulatory virtual clinic for high-risk patients after they've been discharged from the hospital. Through the clinic, patients see a doctor virtually to ensure they understand their discharge plans, are appropriately taking their medications and have follow-up appointments scheduled.

NGMC Gainesville and Braselton

Highlights of NGMC Gainesville and Braselton Community Benefit Activities:

NGMC Gainesville and Braselton value cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. This is demonstrated through many partnerships ranging from serving as the lead agency of Safe Kids Northeast Georgia, to partnering with organizations such as Good News Clinics and Public Health to reach at-risk populations in need of health care.

Health education was provided through free community lectures, health screenings, and various support groups. NGMC also offered education seminars for health professionals in the community, region, and state and worked to train students pursuing health careers. In addition, NGMC helped support the work of local non-profit organizations that serve the health and social needs of the community.



Charity Care

Like NGMC Barrow, Habersham and Lumpkin, Gainesville and Braselton's charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within our service area, beginning with free medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income was zero to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent qualified for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate. In FY23, the estimated cost of indigent and charity care through NGMC Gainesville and Braselton was \$71,900,000 for an 40,360 patient encounters. In addition, NGMC incurred bad debt expense during FY23 of over \$134.7 million as measured by charges. This represents approximately 7.8% of net patient revenue as reflected in the audited financial statements. A significant percentage of this amount is estimated to be the result of patients that are employed but unable to pay medical expenses and are therefore considered "medically indigent."



Financial Navigation

NGMC Gainesville and NGMC Braselton employs financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured, be it through Medicaid, PeachCare, or other programs. NGMC's Financial Navigators focus on being advocates for uninsured and underinsured patients aiding them in finding viable means to access care. The team's focus is finding the best solutions for helping patients apply for Medicaid, disability, accessing the new healthcare exchanges, or processing charity, when appropriate.



Indigent Patient Fund

At NGMC, financial assistance is provided for indigent patients to obtain urgently needed discharge medications and transportation. Individuals eligible for these funds are patients whose needs cannot be met through primary insurance, their funds, government programs, or other charitable services. This helped to ensure medication compliance and maximize conditions for recovery and recuperation. The NGHS Foundation provided funding for this program at an estimated cost of \$37,974 across all campuses in FY23.

Patient Navigation

NGMC employs patient navigators who provide guidance to cancer patients and they are seen as a "living resource directory" for patients. Services include: connecting patients with community resources, providing emotional support, helping patients understand their diagnosis, communicating with healthcare staff and providers, addressing logistical issues such as transportation and helping patients

understand medical terms and treatment options. These efforts came at a total estimated cost of \$555,873 for 8,998 people for NGMC in FY23.



Good News Clinics Support

NGMC provides annual support to Good News Clinics (GNC), a Christian ministry that provides medical and dental care to the indigent and uninsured population at no charge, by providing operational support, access to the same electronic medical record system used by the health system, staff time of NGMC physicians, and funding towards GNC's capital building campaign. For more information, go to <https://www.nghs.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Partners.pdf>.



What Drives Community Health Improvement Activities

With significant input from the community, the hospital entities of Northeast Georgia Health System completed a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in partnership with District 2 Public Health, Stephens County Hospital, Habersham Medical Center and Good News Clinics in 2022. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low incomes who are uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews, plus online surveys that garnered approximately 4,500 responses, well above expected response rates. The study identified the three health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization's strategic direction: Mental & Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Behaviors. For details on how NGMC and its partners are actively addressing the significant needs identified in its CHNA, go to www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources.

In FY23, Director of Community Health Improvement Christy Moore met with Kel Lee Cutrell, Interim Director of Student Counseling at the University of North Georgia regarding the Community Health Needs Assessment methodology and shared lessons learned so UNG could use it in their own assessment work.

In FY23, Eagle Ranch, a non-profit in Hall County focused on improving family relationships through counseling, reported using NGMC's Regional CHNA data to inform their expansion of Eagle Ranch's programs to include the Wings Center, which provides outpatient counseling to address family needs at all ages and stages of life.



Workforce Development & Health Professions Education

NGMC continues to serve as a pipeline to attract and prepare qualified individuals and students interested in healthcare positions. From job shadowing to the nursing student education program, the Accelerated BSN program and significant support to Foothills Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), NGMC works to train, educate and recruit students for careers in healthcare. NGMC spent over \$15 million in these areas:

Accelerated BSN Partnership with the University of North Georgia: NGHS and UNG partnered to create an Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program to add 280 nurses to the workforce over the next five years. The 15-month program is for students who already have a bachelor's or master's degree in another field and want to transition into a career in nursing. In FY23, NGMC provided \$1,762,760 towards this program.

Allied Health Student Education: The allied health student education program helps students learn valuable skills in a clinical environment and promotes careers in healthcare, improving the community's

access to care. Educational affiliation agreements are maintained with each school/program, and NGMC ensures completion of all orientation and student health requirements prior to rotations. Most of these students work directly with NGMC staff as there are no instructors on campus, except for select groups who are accompanied by instructors. In FY23, NGMC provided clinical rotations for 777 allied health students.

Clinical Simulation: NGMC is a facilitator of simulation learning, designed for participants to practice patient safety by improving detection and response to potential complications, facilitate the development of communication and collaboration and incorporate evidence-based practices and standards of professional practice.

Foothills AHEC: NGMC provided support towards Foothills Area Health Education Center, which is a community-driven, non-profit corporation, supported by federal and local sources. The mission is to increase the supply and distribution of healthcare providers, especially in medically underserved areas. Through joint efforts, communities experience improved supply, distribution and retention of quality healthcare professionals. Foothills AHEC serves 31 counties in the Northeast Georgia area.



Graduate Medical Education: Northeast Georgia Medical Center's (NGMC) Graduate Medical Education program is designed to train residents to be leaders in the medical field while receiving hands-on training in various medical specialties. In 2023, NGMC had 60 Internal Medicine residents, 36 Family Medicine residents, 30 General Surgery residents, 24 Emergency Medicine residents, 12 cardiovascular disease fellows, 12 Psychiatry residents, four Internal Medicine Primary Care Track residents, and two Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellows.

Two New Residencies Launch: The Primary Care Track, a subset of our Internal Medicine residency program, welcomed its inaugural class of four residents this year. This program prepares residents to become primary care internists practicing in the community, which continues to be a great need in our region and state. The Transitional Year residency program, a one-year program that serves as the clinical base year that precedes advanced residencies in anesthesiology, dermatology, radiology and other specialties, welcomed its inaugural class of 12 residents.

New Hospice & Palliative Medicine Fellowship Welcomes Inaugural Fellows: Through this one-year community-based training program, fellows receive intensive training in the care of seriously ill patients and their families as part of an interdisciplinary team. In FY23, two fellows joined the program.

First Pathway to Med School NGMC Resident: Dr. Jana Byrd is the first Pathway to Med School graduate to match with an NGMC residency program. Pathway to Med School is a four-week, intensive program in northeast Georgia provided by Foothills Area Health Education Center (AHEC) designed for undergraduate college students who are Georgia residents and plan to attend medical school to become a primary care physician in the state of Georgia. The program provides clinical shadowing, community-based research and instructional sessions and boasts a 97% medical school acceptance rate for its participants, including Dr. Byrd, who completed medical school at Mercer University and is now a first-year Internal Medicine resident at NGMC.

Hall County Honors Mentorship Program: In the Hall County Schools Honors Mentorship Program, high school juniors and seniors are matched with a professional in their specific field of healthcare interest as part of real-life career experience in an honors-level elective course. In FY23, 16 students participated in this program.

Nursing Student Education: Nursing student education at NGMC works to address the shortage of nurses in our community, improving access to care. NGMC coordinated clinical rotations for 2,184 nursing students at NGMC in FY23.

Project SEARCH: Project SEARCH, a program dedicated to workforce development that benefits the individual, community and workplace, provides employment and education opportunities for individuals with mild to moderate disabilities. Employers like NGMC who provide opportunities through Project Search are challenged to increase employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and to advocate on behalf of their employment to other organizations in their communities. In FY23, 12 students participated in this program.



Support of Charitable Clinics and Other Non-Profits

NGMC helps support local non-profits that connect people in need to resources such as food, transportation, and other important support services. Often referred to as social determinants of health, lack of access to these resources plays a detrimental role in overall health. In fact, research supports the idea that as much as 80% of a person’s wellbeing is tied to physical environment, economic factors, and health behaviors. Making improvements in these areas upstream can impact better health downstream, minimizing poor health, unnecessary suffering and higher costs of care.

In FY23, NGMC helped support 52 community non-profits in FY23 at a cost of over \$904,000, including:

Ainsley’s Angels of North Georgia	American Cancer Society
American Heart Association	American Red Cross
Amped Kids Foundation	Angel House of Georgia
Boy Scouts of America	Brenau University
Center Point	Children’s Center for Hope and Healing
Eagle Ranch	Elachee Nature Center
Edmondson-Telford Center for Children	Fishing with Everyday Heroes
Gainesville-Hall County Black History Society	Gainesville Jaycees
Gateway Domestic Violence Center	Georgia CORE
Georgia Mountain Food Bank	GFWC Gainesville Phoenix Women’s Club
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia	Habitat for Humanity
Help for Healthcare Professionals	Hispanic Alliance Georgia
Hugs for Harrison	Interactive Neighborhood for Kids
Jackson County Family Connection	Jarrard Burch Foundation
J’s Place	Junior League of Gainesville and Hall County
Keaton Franklin Coker Foundation Thumbs Up Mission	Leadership Georgia
My Sister’s Place	National PKU Alliance
Navigate Recovery Gwinnett, Lightway Addiction Recovery	North Georgia Works
Partnership for Drug Free Hall	Partnership for Gynecological Cancer
Quinlan Visual Arts Center	Rachel’s Gift
Rape Response	Rainbow Village
Reboot Jackson	Rotary Club of Buford
Rotary Club of South Hall	Sisu, Early Integrated Learning
Southeastern Brain Tumor Foundation	Special Olympics
Syfan Supports Rally	The Hub Gainesville City Schools



Unite Us

After years of research and due diligence in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) through United Way of Hall County, Unite Us went live at NGHS on May 30, 2023 in pilot format. Unite Us is a shared data platform that creates a coordinated care network with partners working together to connect people to a range of services such as housing, employment opportunities, food assistance and more. It's a social care network that allows for electronic referrals between non-profits and service organizations to connect individuals and families to the services they need in real time. At the end of FY23, 70 CBOs were on the platform. Research shows that issues like unemployment, food insecurity, poor housing, and social isolation play a detrimental role in overall health. By making improvements in these social determinants of health (SDOH) upstream, it will minimize poor health, unnecessary suffering, and higher costs.



Mental & Behavioral Health

Mental Health Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Training: NGMC supported suicide prevention training for the community in FY23. This training teaches how to ask the suicide question, persuade the person to stay alive and then refer the person to the appropriate support.

One Hall Mental and Behavioral Health Collaborative: NGMC is a collaborative partner with One Hall (through United Way) to improve mental and behavioral health in the community and reduce the stigma related to seeking help by raising awareness about the issue, as well as providing available resources and education. In FY23, Adam Raulerson and Monica Newton, D.O. dedicated staff time to serve on the One Hall MBH Committee. For more details about the work of this collaborative, see <https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/reachout/reports>.

PEER Support in the NICU: NGMC and the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse (GCSA) partner to provide CARES Peer Support Program, which connects people surviving overdoses to Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialists (CARES) at its EDs and NICUs. If a patient is identified to be in need of peer support, a CARES is paired with the individual. They provide support and connect the individual with resources while at the hospital. The CARES visits the individual ten days after discharge to provide continued support and recovery resources. In FY23, over 2,131 peers were served through this program with 6,844 successful follow-ups.



Access to Care

Braselton Surgery Center: In October 2023, the Braselton Surgery Center, NGHS' first ambulatory surgery center opened. This surgery center provides convenient access to ambulatory surgery and other specialty care to the Braselton community.

NGMC Gainesville's New Patient Tower Tops Out: In July 2023, NGHS celebrated the topping out of the new patient tower at NGMC Gainesville. Set to open in early 2025, the 927,000 square-foot new tower will house 150 additional inpatient beds, an expanded relocation of our emergency department, a new and expanded interventional cath lab, expanded surgical capacity, a new food-service area and additional parking.

NGMC Braselton Expansion Groundbreaking and Topping Out: In May 2023, NGHS broke ground on a new expansion at NGMC Braselton, which paves the way for several improvements including: additional inpatient beds, expanded emergency department, a new helipad, additional parking and expanded support space.



Health Education and Community Outreach

Agape Project of Georgia: NGMC partnered with Agape Project of Georgia to provide health outreach and education to individuals experiencing homelessness in Hall County. Hosted at the Budgetel Extended Stay Hotel, the event included partners such as Good News Clinics, the Longstreet Clinic, WeGo, and PeachCare for Kids. NGMC Financial Navigators provided counseling to 32 adults, connecting them with resources and programs to improve access to healthcare. Individuals that discussed their healthcare needs with a navigator received a \$10 WeGo gift card for medical trip visits and a \$25 grocery gift card.

Diabetes Education, Screenings and Support Groups: NGMC worked in the community to educate and screen community members for diabetes at no charge, creating opportunities for education about the risks of diabetes while checking blood sugar levels to determine which individuals needed further medical testing. Preventive education was also facilitated through pre-diabetic seminars and health fair participation. This support benefitted 244 community members in FY23.

NGMC also provided diabetes support groups for those in the community supporting people with or living with diabetes. These support groups offered a place for over 148 people to learn how to manage this disease, discuss challenges, share experiences and celebrate achievements with others.

Health Sciences Library and Resource Center: The Health Sciences Library and Resource Center at NGMC serves the health information needs of the Northeast Georgia community expanding to over 18 counties. Consumers, patients and their family members have access to credible resources relating to medical symptoms, conditions and treatments. The Resource Center encourages visitors to make healthy choices and become active, informed partners in their healthcare. During FY23, the library hosted book clubs to educate the community on advance care planning & welcomed 13,246 visitors: a 35% increase from last year.

The Health Sciences Library also partnered with St. John's Baptist Church in Gainesville to provide men's health information to church members, as well as to educate on how to utilize MedLine Plus, an online health resource for patients and families.

Hospice: Hospice of NGMC provided multiple bereavement support groups and education for those grieving a loss or caring for a loved one with an illness (such as dementia) and camps for children dealing with the loss of someone close to them. In FY23, Hospice of NGMC served 3,448 individuals.

Juneteenth: NGMC partnered with the Newtown Florist Club and the Gainesville-Hall County Black History Society to plan and implement the health care resource portion of the Juneteenth Celebration in Gainesville. NGMC and other community-based organizations participated in health panels, health education resource tables and free health screenings for over 500 attendees.

One Hall Advocates: United Way of Hall County's One Hall Advocates partnered with NGHS, Gainesville-Hall County Community Services, Newtown Florist Club and WomenSource to present a community screening of "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks." A discussion on women's health with panelists from NGHS (Dr. Samantha Grant, GME Family Medicine Resident; Ashley Simpson, NP, Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Georgia Heart Institute; Angie Caton, RN, NGMC Oncology Nurse) followed the screening of the film moderated by Phillippa Lewis Moss, NGMC's Board Chair and co-chair of our CHNA.

Paramedics Improving the Community's Health (PITCH): PITCH works to identify populations in the community that need assistance navigating the healthcare system appropriately and graduating them to a level of independence. Many individuals experience barriers to getting the healthcare and social care services they need. The PITCH program works with community non-profit partners who act as both a referral source and resource for participants. In FY23, PITCH served over 140 individuals, establishing 60 new PITCH program patients with primary care who initially reported no primary care.

Respecting Choices: Respecting Choices is an evidence-based model of advanced care planning that honors an individual's goals and values for current and future health care. This program is designed to create a culture of open discussion about end-of-life care in Northeast Georgia so that families are relieved of unnecessary stress and to avoid the use of expensive resources that patients don't value nor benefit from. This project is funded by the NGHS Foundation.

Safe Kids Northeast Georgia: Northeast Georgia Medical Center serves as lead agency for Safe Kids Northeast Georgia. The mission of Safe Kids is to reduce unintentional injuries and death in children 19 and under. In FY23, Safe Kids provided 100 programs and events with outreach across NGMC Gainesville and Braselton to an estimated 11,612 children, family members, teachers and caregivers. Through these programs, safety items were distributed to families in need.

Sepsis Community Outreach: NGMC provided sepsis awareness education at local health fairs and seminars in FY23, and also assisted other healthcare organizations in the region to develop sepsis navigation programs to ultimately increase the early recognition of sepsis to save lives.



Symposia

Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) and Symposium: NGMC and the Regional Trauma Advisory Committee to host the annual Northeast Georgia Regional Trauma Symposium, a two-day symposium that provides educational speakers on current topics of interest to physicians, advance practitioners, nurses, respiratory therapists, physical/occupational therapists, EMS professionals and other healthcare workers. As part of the State of Georgia's trauma system, the Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) develops and maintains the region's trauma system plan and monitors system compliance and improvement activities. NGMC partners with other EMS agencies, participating hospitals, local governments and the public as a part of this committee. In FY23, 598 healthcare professionals attended this symposium.

Regional Infection Prevention Symposium: The Northeast Georgia Regional Infection Prevention Symposium is a free conference offered to any healthcare provider by NGMC's Infection Prevention & Control department. Many of the small rural facilities throughout Georgia have limited to no access to infection prevention and control education. In FY23, this symposium provided education to 161 individuals.

Neuro Rehab Symposium: The Neuro Rehab Symposium is a one-day symposium featuring educational presentations on neurological rehabilitation after stroke. Designed specifically for therapists who care for patients and families, topics covered stroke-specific impairment priorities in each phase of stroke rehabilitation. In FY23, 280 healthcare professionals attended this symposium.

Georgia Heart & Vascular Symposium: The Georgia Heart & Vascular Symposium was a two-day conference bringing healthcare professionals and over 50 renowned experts together to share their experience and knowledge on cardiovascular medicine and treatment. The event included debates, discussions, exhibits, two live-streamed heart procedures and more for over 550 physicians, advanced practice practitioners, nurses, EMS and other clinical professionals.



Research

In FY23, NGMC offered patients the opportunity to participate in 50 clinical trials involving some of the most promising, breakthrough new medical therapies. Over 510 patients were enrolled in trials that provided patients with access to cutting edge treatments for cancer and heart disease. For more information, visit nghs.com/research.

Awards and Recognition

NGHS Represents in Washington, D.C.: Beau Proctor, RN, system manager of Cardiac Rehab, represented NGHS at the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation’s “Day on the Hill” in March 2023, advocating for better access to Cardiac Rehab for patients in Georgia to eliminate barriers to care.

Community Service

In FY23, 66 leaders from NGMC Gainesville and Braselton reported dedicating staff time towards a total of 222 leadership positions within various civic and professional organizations.

NGMC Barrow

Highlights of NGMC Barrow Community Benefit Activities:

NGMC Barrow values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. The organization demonstrates this through community partnerships and support.

NGMC Barrow supported the community in a variety of ways during FY23, from mental health awareness programs and suicide prevention, to facilitating youth apprenticeship programs. In addition, Barrow provided support to other local non-profit organizations that serve the community.



Charity Care

Like NGMC Gainesville, Braselton, Lumpkin and Habersham, NGMC Barrow’s charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within our service area, beginning with the free, medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income is 0 to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent may qualify for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital’s Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

In FY23, the estimated cost of indigent and charity care through NGMC Barrow was \$3.2 million based on 3,586 patient encounters. In addition, NGMC Barrow incurred bad debt expense during 2023 of approximately \$11.4 million as measured by charges. This represents approximately 21.8 percent of net patient revenue as reflected in the audited financial statements. A significant percentage of this amount is estimated to be the result of patients that are employed by unable to pay medical expenses and are therefore considered “medically indigent.”



Financial Navigation

NGMC Barrow employs financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured, be it through Medicaid, PeachCare, or other programs. NGMC's Financial Navigators focus on being advocates for uninsured and underinsured patients aiding them in finding viable means to access care. The team's focus is finding the best solutions for helping patients apply for Medicaid, disability, accessing the new healthcare exchanges, or processing charity, when appropriate.

Patient Navigation

NGMC Barrow employs patient navigators who provide guidance to cancer patients and they are seen as a “living resource directory” for patients. Services include: connecting patients with community resources, providing emotional support, helping patients understand their diagnosis, communicating with healthcare staff and providers, addressing logistical issues such as transportation and helping patients understand medical terms and treatment options. These efforts came at a total estimated cost of \$117,442 for 1,439 people for NGMC Barrow in FY23.



Indigent Patient Fund

At NGMC Barrow, financial assistance is provided for indigent patients to obtain urgently needed discharge medications and transportation. Individuals eligible for these funds are patients whose needs cannot be met through primary insurance, their funds, government programs, or other charitable services. The NGHS Foundation provided funding for this program at an estimated cost of \$37,974 across all NGMC campuses in FY23.



What Drives Community Health Improvement Activities

With significant input from the community, the hospital entities of Northeast Georgia Health System completed a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in partnership with District 2 Public Health, Stephens County Hospital, Habersham Medical Center and Good News Clinics in 2022. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community’s most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low incomes who are uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews, plus online surveys that garnered approximately 4,500 responses, well above expected response rates. The study identified the three health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization’s strategic direction: Mental & Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Behaviors. For more information about these priorities, go to www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources.



Workforce Development & Health Professions Education

NGMC Barrow continues to serve as a pipeline to attract and prepare qualified individuals and students interested in healthcare positions and works to train, educate and recruit students for careers in healthcare. NGMC Barrow spent over \$134,000 in FY23 in these areas:

Allied Health Student Education: In FY23, NGMC Barrow provided clinical rotations for 10 allied health students. The allied health student education program helps students learn valuable skills in a clinical environment and promotes careers in healthcare, improving the community's access to care.

Nursing Student Education: NGMC Barrow works to address the shortage of nurses in our community, improving access to care. NGMC coordinated clinical rotations for 22 nursing students at NGMC Barrow in FY23.

Youth Apprenticeship Program: The Youth Apprenticeship program provides an opportunity for high school students to come work in the hospital for one class period, which provides hands-on exposure to many different healthcare careers. 12 students participated with NGMC Barrow in FY23.



Support of Charitable Clinics and Other Non-Profits

NGMC helps support local non-profits that connect people in need to resources such as food, transportation, and other important support services. Often referred to as social determinants of health, lack of access to these resources play a detrimental role in overall health. In fact, research supports the idea that as much as 80% of a person's wellbeing is tied to physical environment, economic factors, and health behaviors. Making improvements in these areas upstream can impact better health downstream, minimizing poor health, unnecessary suffering and higher costs of care.

In FY23, NGMC Barrow helped support the following organizations at a cost of over \$265,000:

Adventure Bags	American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Out of the Darkness Walk
American Heart Association	Barrow Area Rotary Club
Barrow Ministry Village	Food Bank of Northeast Georgia
Friends of Advantage	Habitat for Humanity
Northeast Georgia Council of Boy Scouts of America	Region Ten EMS Director's Association
Rotary Club of Winder	Southeastern Brain Tumor Foundation
The Barrow Community Foundation	The Cancer Foundation
The Tree House	United Way of Northeast Georgia
Wimberly's Roots	Winder Fire Department
YMCA of Georgia's Piedmont	



Mental & Behavioral Health

In FY23, Director of Community Health Improvement Christy Moore and One Hall Co-Chair of Mental and Behavioral Health Monica Newton, D.O. met with local church representatives about their local suicide prevention efforts to introduce the One Hall structure and answer questions about how they might consider organizing efforts.

Access to Care



Bethlehem Medical Plaza: In December 2022, NGHS broke ground on the Medical Plaza located in Bethlehem. Expected to open in Spring 2024, the two-story, 34,000-square-foot building will include primary care, OB/GYN, sports medicine, orthopedic surgery and general surgery physician offices, an urgent care and on-site lab and digital x-ray services.



Health Education and Community Outreach

Center for Innovative Teaching Support: NGMC Barrow donated \$225,000 towards the Building Our Futures Project in Barrow County. The Building Our Futures Project is a public-private partnership between the Barrow Community Foundation, Barrow County Schools, local businesses, and community members to develop an 8-acre park and playground that will be centrally located near the Center for Innovative Teaching (CFIT) in Winder. It will provide space for recreation, education, and programs for Barrow County residents. The playground features unique and challenging play pieces as well as ADA-accessible features for children with disabilities. NGHS President and CEO, a native of Barrow County, serves as Campaign Leader Council Co-Chair.

Safe Kids Northeast Georgia: NGMC Barrow served as the lead agency for Safe Kids Northeast Georgia, reducing unintentional injuries and deaths in children 19 and under. In FY23, Safe Kids provided ten programs and educational events in the Barrow area, with outreach to an estimated 1,388 children and their family members, teachers, and caregivers. Through these programs, safety items were distributed to families who were in need of them. The NGHS Foundation supports Safe Kids overall at a cost of \$204,394.

Tar Wars: NGMC Barrow partnered with Barrow County Schools to implement “Tar Wars” for 2,061 fourth and fifth-grade students. “Tar Wars” is a tobacco-free education program developed by the American Academy of Family Physicians to teach kids about the dangers of tobacco use, the cost of tobacco products and the advertising techniques used by the tobacco industry to market their products to youth.

Partners in Education: As a Partner in Education with Barrow County Schools, NGMC Barrow provided a donation of medical supplies to stock all 19 Barrow County Schools’ nursing clinics.

Awards & Recognition

Paramedics of the Year: NGMC Barrow and Barrow EMS partner together to provide crucial emergency care to the Barrow County community. Prior to their partnership, Barrow County did not have emergency services within city limits, negatively impacting critical response time in emergency situations. James Ouelett and Robert Lee, paramedics from Barrow EMS, were recognized as the 2023 Barrow County Paramedics of the Year at the 29th Annual Region 10 EMS Awards Banquet.



Community Service

In FY23, seven leaders from NGMC Barrow dedicated staff time towards 29 leadership positions with various civic and professional organizations. NGMC Barrow Manager Sunita Singh served as both a member of the Executive Leadership Team of the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women Board and the Board Chair of the Northeast Georgia Council of Boy Scouts of America. NGMC Barrow Administrator John Neidenbach served with the Barrow Area Rotary Club and as a board member of the Barrow County Chamber of Commerce.

NGMC Lumpkin

Highlights of NGMC Lumpkin’s FY23 Community Benefit Activities:

NGMC Lumpkin values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. The organization demonstrates this by

providing financial and staff support to local nonprofit agencies, developing partnerships with schools, providing health professions education, and fostering partnerships with indigent clinics that serve the under-served population.

Charity Care



NGMC Lumpkin’s charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within our service area, beginning with free medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income was zero to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent qualified for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital’s Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

In FY23, the estimated cost of indigent and charity care through NGMC Lumpkin was approximately \$895,000 based on 1,194 patient encounters. In addition, NGMC incurred bad debt expense during 2023 of over \$7.2 million as measured by charges. This represents approximately 28.3 percent of net patient revenue as reflected in the audited financial statements. A significant percentage of this amount is estimated to be the result of patients that are employed by unable to pay medical expenses and are therefore considered “medically indigent.”

Indigent Patient Fund



At NGMC Lumpkin, financial assistance is provided for indigent patients to obtain urgently needed discharge medications and transportation. Individuals eligible for these funds are patients whose needs cannot be met through primary insurance, their funds, government programs, or other charitable services. The NGHS Foundation provided funding for this program at an estimated cost of \$37,974 across all NGMC campuses in FY23.

What Drives Community Health Improvement Activities



With significant input from the community, the hospital entities of Northeast Georgia Health System completed a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in partnership with District 2 Public Health, Stephens County Hospital, Habersham Medical Center and Good News Clinics in 2022, which continues to drive community health improvement activities today. The assessment focused mainly on the needs of the community’s most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low incomes who are uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews, plus online surveys that garnered approximately 4,500 responses, well above expected response rates. The study identified the three health priorities that fit hand-in-glove with the organization’s strategic direction: Mental & Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Behaviors. For more information about these priorities, go to www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources.

Workforce Development



NGMC Lumpkin continues to serve as a pipeline to attract and prepare qualified individuals and students interested in healthcare positions. NGMC Lumpkin works to train, educate and recruit students for careers in healthcare. NGMC Lumpkin spent over \$73,000 in FY23 in these areas:

Allied Health Student Education: In FY23, NGMC Lumpkin provided clinical rotations for 10 allied health students. The allied health student education program helps students learn valuable skills in a clinical environment and promotes careers in healthcare, improving the community's access to care. Educational affiliation agreements are maintained with each school/program, and NGMC Lumpkin ensures completion of all orientation and student health requirements prior to rotations.

Nursing Student Education: Nursing student education at NGMC Lumpkin works to address the shortage of nurses in our community, improving access to care. NGMC coordinated clinical rotations for seven nursing students which includes faculty and student orientation, educational affiliation agreement maintenance and completion of all health and legal requirements prior to first rotation.



Support of Charitable Clinics and Other Non-Profits

NGMC Lumpkin helps support local non-profits that connect people in need to resources such as food, transportation, and other important support services. Often referred to as social determinants of health, lack of access to these resources play a detrimental role in overall health. In fact, research supports the idea that as much as 80% of a person's wellbeing is tied to physical environment, economic factors, and health behaviors. Making improvements in these areas upstream can impact better health downstream, minimizing poor health, unnecessary suffering and higher costs of care.

NGMC Lumpkin provided over \$32,000 in support of community non-profits in FY23. Below are highlights:

Community Helping Place: In FY23, NGMC Lumpkin provided support for Community Helping Place, a non-profit in Lumpkin County that provides free medical and dental services, a food pantry, summer food programs for children, a baby and personal care pantry, emergency financial assistance and referral support services for the area's most vulnerable populations.

Good Shepherd of Dawson County: NGMC Lumpkin partners with the Good Shepherd Clinic to provide free and reduced cost healthcare, dental and mental health services to community members in Dawsonville, Georgia. NGMC also provides donated office space to the Good Shepherd Clinic.

Lumpkin County Family Connection: NGMC Lumpkin supported Lumpkin County Family Connection, a partnership of organizations working together to help meet the needs of children and families of the community, to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to give all children an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life.

ConnectAbility: NGMC Lumpkin provided a donation towards the programming of ConnectAbility, a non-profit in Lumpkin County that offers direct services & community-based programs to strengthen social networks and reduce social isolation for children and adults with disabilities and their families.

Lumpkin Fight Against Drugs, Alcohol and Violence: NGMC Lumpkin provided a donation to the Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office to develop and produce crime prevention, safety education & substance use education materials for Lumpkin County Schools as a part of the "Lumpkin Fight Against Drugs, Alcohol and Violence" program.

South Enotah Child Advocacy Center: NGMC Lumpkin provided funds towards South Enotah Child Advocacy Center’s services, including forensic interviews, advocacy, therapy and forensic medical examinations to child victims of abuse and neglect in Lumpkin County and White County.

Other organizations that NGMC Lumpkin helped support include:

- American Cancer Society
- Dahlonega Sunrise Rotary



Access to Care

Lumpkin County School-Based Health Clinic: In FY23, Tammy Soles, Director of Clinical Care & Staff Development, worked with Lumpkin County High School to develop a proposal for a state grant for renovations & staffing of a school-based health clinic.

Medical Plaza Dawsonville: In March 2023, NGHS broke ground on a new medical plaza office building in Dawsonville. This second building added to Medical Plaza Dawsonville will be home to a new, larger urgent care and numerous physician offices and is set to open in early 2024.

NGMC Lumpkin Drying-In: In 2023, NGMC Lumpkin celebrated another milestone with a special “drying-in” ceremony. The new NGMC Lumpkin is set to open in Spring 2024.



Health Education and Community Outreach

Community Education on Injury Prevention and Trauma: NGMC Lumpkin provided community education regarding falls, injury prevention and trauma to schools, support groups and healthcare professionals in the Lumpkin County community, as well as training for the Stop the Bleed campaign, a program designed to enable teachers, nurses, and staff to render immediate, potentially life-saving medical aid to injured students or co-workers while awaiting the arrival of professional responders.

Healthy Aging Dawson: NGMC Lumpkin provided community health education, with topics ranging from sepsis prevention to advance care planning, to over 32 attendees at the Healthy Aging Dawson health fair in FY23.

School-Based Grief Support Groups: NGMC’s Hospice provided school-based grief support groups to 18 elementary and middle school students in Lumpkin County in FY23.

School-Based Health Education: NGPG staff provided healthcare education courses to Lumpkin County High School students and Basic Life Support courses to Lanier Technical College students in FY23.

Community Service

In FY23, six leaders from NGMC Lumpkin reported spending dedicated staff time towards 17 leadership positions with various civic and professional organizations. NGMC Lumpkin Director Kay Hall served on the board of Community Helping Place and NGPG VP of Operations Bobby Norris served on the Board of Directors for the Good Shepherd Clinic of Dawson County.

NGMC Habersham

Highlights of NGMC Habersham's FY23 Community Benefit Activities:

Habersham Medical Center (HMC) officially became NGMC Habersham on July 1, 2023. NGHS acquired the struggling rural hospital to maintain access to local hospital care for rural parts of the North Georgia region.

NGMC Habersham values cooperative efforts with community organizations and other healthcare providers to improve the health status of area residents. The organization demonstrates this by providing financial and staff support to local nonprofit agencies, developing partnerships with schools on health education, and fostering a partnership with the local indigent clinic that serves the under-served population.



Charity Care

NGMC Habersham's charity care policy removed barriers for low-income populations within our service area, beginning with free medically necessary care for patients whose gross family income was zero to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) adjusted for family size. Patients from our service area whose FPL is from 151 to 300 percent qualified for an adjustment equivalent to the hospital's Medicare reimbursement rate plus an additional 40 percent discount to the Medicare reimbursement rate.

In FY23, the estimated cost of indigent and charity care through NGMC Habersham was approximately \$410,000 based on 268 patient encounters. In addition, NGMC Habersham reported no bad debt expense for the period as patient accounts derived after the acquisition date of the hospital by Northeast Georgia Health System did not allow for enough time to pass before declaring any accounts as bad debt expense for the period.



Financial Navigation

NGMC Habersham employs financial assistance counselors who help patients become insured, be it through Medicaid, PeachCare, or other programs. NGMC's Financial Navigators focus on being advocates for uninsured and underinsured patients, aiding them in finding viable means to access care. The team's focus is finding the best solutions for helping patients apply for Medicaid, disability, accessing the new healthcare exchanges, or processing charity, when appropriate.



Indigent Patient Fund

Financial assistance is provided for indigent patients to obtain urgently needed discharge medications and transportation. Individuals eligible for these funds are patients whose needs cannot be met through primary insurance, their funds, government programs, or other charitable services. The NGHS Foundation provided funding for this program at an estimated cost of \$37,974 across all NGMC campuses in FY23.



Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)

In 2022, NGMC partnered with Habersham Medical Center and other regional partners on the Northeast Georgia Regional Community Health Needs Assessment. This CHNA covered Habersham, Rabun, and Banks counties, in addition to other counties in the region and focused mainly on the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations, particularly those with low incomes who are

uninsured. Input from the community was gathered through focus groups and interviews. The study culminated in the identification of the three following health priorities: Mental and Behavioral Health, Access to Care, and Healthy Behaviors. For more information about these priorities, go to www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources.



Workforce Development

NGMC Habersham serves as a pipeline to attract and prepare qualified individuals and students interested in healthcare positions and works to train, educate and recruit students for careers in healthcare. NGMC Habersham spent over \$75,000 in FY23 in these areas:

Allied Health Student Education: NGMC Habersham provides clinical rotations for allied health students, helping students learn valuable skills in a clinical environment. From July 1 – September 30 in FY23, nine students benefitted from this program.

Nursing Student Education: Through clinical rotations at NGMC Habersham, nursing students learn valuable skills. For the July 1 – September 30 period in FY23, seven students benefitted from this program.



Support of Charitable Clinics and Other Non-Profits

NGMC Habersham helps support local non-profits that connect people in need to resources such as food, transportation, and other important support services. Often referred to as social determinants of health, lack of access to these resources play a detrimental role in overall health. In fact, research supports the idea that as much as 80% of a person's wellbeing is tied to physical environment, economic factors, and health behaviors. Making improvements in these areas upstream can impact better health downstream, minimizing poor health, unnecessary suffering and higher costs of care.

NGMC Habersham provided over \$10,000 in support of community non-profits in FY23. Below are highlights:

Hub of Habersham: NGMC made a donation toward the HUB of Habersham to help serve young people in the community through an in-school mentoring program focused on leadership and good decision making. Healthy Self Esteem is a focus of this work, which aligns with NGMC Habersham's focus on mental health.

North Georgia Technical College: NGMC Habersham donated towards the Rich Perkins Award for Excellence in Technical Instruction, honoring healthcare workers who have made contributions to technical education through innovation and leadership. Vanessa Lone, medical assisting instructor at NGTC, was the honoree in FY23.

Habersham County Relay for Life: In FY23, NGMC Habersham was a sponsor of The American Cancer Society's Relay for Life event in Habersham County, benefitting cancer research and community education.

Water Safety: In FY23, NGMC Habersham partnered with Habersham County Parks & Recreation through Safe Kids to provide water safety training to children & parents.

Soque River Watershed Association: NGMC Habersham provided a donation towards the Soque River Watershed Association to help support efforts towards water testing, research and education on the importance of clean water related to human health.

Grace Gate Clinic: Staff from Financial Navigation and Community Health Improvement met with leadership at Grace Gate Clinic to ensure navigation processes are working and open the door to future partnership.

United Way of Habersham County: Partnership meetings occurred between NGMC and United Way of Habersham County in FY23.



Access to Care

Urgent Care Opened in Toccoa: In FY23, NGHS opened its ninth urgent care location in Toccoa, providing care for minor illnesses and injuries.

Community Service

Kevin Matson, VP of Regional Hospitals, served on the Habersham County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors & Finance Committee, Leadership Habersham, Habersham County Rotary, Economic Development Committee, and the United Way of Habersham committee for funding decisions.

Special Notes About Community Benefit Reporting

NGMC used the precepts outlined in “A Guide for Planning and Reporting Community Benefit,” provided by the Catholic Health Association of the United States and Vizient for its Community Benefit reporting within the organization’s IRS 990 Schedule H. The guide’s purpose is to help not-for-profit mission-driven healthcare organizations develop, enhance and report on their community benefit programs.

Community Benefit Definition: *The program or activity must address a demonstrated community need and seek to address at least one of the following:*

- *Improving access*
- *Enhancing population health*
- *Advancing generalizable knowledge*
- *Relieving the government burden on improving health*

The program or activity must:

- *Primarily benefit the community rather than the organization*
- *Result in measurable expense to the organization*

If the program or activity is provided primarily for marketing purposes, standard practice, expected of all hospitals (such as activities required for accreditation, licensure, or to participate in Medicare) or is primarily for employees (not including interns, residents, and fellows) and/or affiliated physicians, it is not community benefit.

Charity Care Cost is an estimated cost and does not include bad debt. Additional information has been included in the Schedule O to give the broadest view of community impact of NGHS hospitals.

For more information, contact the Community Health Improvement Department at 770-219-8085.