Did Jon Jrow? Annual Repo





Tom Frank

President/CEO

WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT/CEO

Morale is improving, the North Country culture is returning, a full-time cardiologist and a few new primary care physicians are on board, financials are stabilizing and are turning around, as we continue to take care of our patients, our community, and each other.

Anyone who follows Vermont healthcare news knows this past year has been an especially challenging one. To give you a little history, in 2022 the VT Legislature passed Act 167, calling on the Green Mountain Care Board to initiate a process to reduce inefficiencies, lower costs, reduce inequities, increase services and improve outcomes throughout the state's healthcare system. This resulted in a consultant study, and a report with recommendations for hospital transformation. Unfortunately, the recommendations proved to describe the exact opposite of the intent of Act 167.

Our staff as well as the local community have really come together to fight for North Country. Many have attended on-line and in person community forums, made phone calls and written letters to the media and State of Vermont government to defend what an important asset this hospital is. And, with the many conversations I have been involved in, I think the State has started to listen.

I am proud of the many accomplishments during 2024, among them a \$3.5M renovated Emergency Department, receiving the prestigious Pediatric Readiness Award, managing the supply and demand of intravenous fluids during a nationwide shortage, receiving the Gold Vermont Governor's Award for Excellence in Worksite Wellness, establishing the Daisy Award for nurses here at North Country, and so much more.

Many thanks to our Board of Trustees, Medical Staff, Employees, and Volunteers, who help make North Country Hospital the gem of the Northeast Kingdom.

Here Yesterday, Here Today, Here Tomorrow!

2024 by the numbers



*FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total Patient Service Revenue	102,253,502
Other Revenue	5,433,458
Total Revenue	107,686,960
Total Expenses	110,396,869
Operating Profit/(Loss)	(2,709,909)
Total Non Operating Revenue	8,446,740
Total Profit/(Loss)	5,736,831
* based on draft audited financials	

NCH decreased operating losses by \$6 million in 2024. We anticipate being profitable for the first time in three years in FY25.



NCH Auxiliary

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In December, NCH Auxiliary President Carole Dowd facilitated a group of members to decorate and provide "giving trees" in the lobbies throughout the hospital campus. Auxiliary members, volunteers, staff, and community members have donated hats, scarves, mittens and more for patients to help themselves when in need of a cold weather item.

Through their fundraising, the group has been able to fulfill some departmental wish list items, including new Mammogram gowns for the Radiology department, and patient white boards in both Maternal/Child and Emergency departments.





32,000 Diagnostic Imaging Studies

36,000 Primary Care Visits 602,000 Laboratory Tests

Meet our new providers

In 2024, North Country Hospital proudly welcomed several new providers to its team, further strengthening its commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare to the Northeast Kingdom community. These talented professionals bring expertise across various specialties, ensuring expanded access to primary care and specialized services for patients. Their arrival reflects the hospital's ongoing dedication to addressing the evolving needs of the region and enhancing the overall patient experience. With these new additions, North Country Hospital continues to build a robust healthcare network to serve the community with excellence and compassion.



Jacqueline Alverez, MD Primary Care Newport



Josiah Young, DO Primary Care Barton/Orleans



Michael Hayes, MD North Country Cardiology



Andrew Sebastyan, MD Primary Care Barton/Orleans



Wesley Nutter, PA Primary Care Newport



Amy Gabbert, NP North Country Pediatrics



Tristan Roy, PA Hospitalist

North Country Hospital Laboratory



About 7% of the world's population carries a heterozygous hemoglobin variant that can affect their HbA1c test results. To ensure accurate testing, the American Diabetes Association recommends separating hemoglobin fractions during HbA1c testing.

At the North Country Hospital Laboratory, we are one of only two clinical labs in Vermont using capillary electrophoresis for high-resolution separation of hemoglobin fractions. This advanced technology helps detect abnormal hemoglobin variants and identify elevated HbA2 levels, which may indicate conditions like Beta-Thalassemia. Additionally, its high resolution allows us to identify homozygous hemoglobin variants, such as those seen in sickle cell disease, ensuring HbA1c is not reported when HbA is absent.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics states that Strep A throat infections (pharyngitis) cannot be diagnosed based on symptoms alone. Traditionally, a rapid Strep A antigen test has been used, but its sensitivity is limited, with a 5-20% chance of false negatives. For patients under 18, a follow-up throat culture has been required to confirm negative results, as untreated Strep A can lead to complications like scarlet fever or rheumatic fever. However, cultures can take up to two days, prompting some providers to prescribe antibiotics as a precaution. In June 2022, North Country Hospital's Laboratory adopted a highly sensitive molecular testing method using isothermal DNA amplification (PCR). This technology delivers accurate Strep A results in just 2-6 minutes, eliminating the need for cultures. **We are the only lab in our region—and among a few in the state offering this advanced molecular testing.** For comparison, our reference lab, UVMMC, didn't implement this technology until September 2023.

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North Country Hospital's Laboratory is one of only three labs in the state using advanced MALDI-TOF technology to identify microbes. MALDI-TOF, short for "matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization time of flight," is a type of mass spectrometry. It works by using a laser to ionize and vaporize samples, allowing the instrument to analyze them. Combined with a specialized database, this technology can quickly and accurately identify bacteria, yeast, and fungi.

MALDI-TOF is as accurate as or better than traditional automated methods for identifying common microbes. It's also faster and more cost-effective. By using MALDI-TOF, the NCH lab can identify microorganisms in half the time of standard methods. This speed helps doctors prescribe the right antibiotics sooner, leading to better patient outcomes.

North Country Hospital Radiology



At North Country Hospital, innovation and patient care go hand in hand. Since 2019 the Radiology Department has been offering Automated Breast Ultrasound (ABUS) scanning technology, positioning the hospital as the only facility in Vermont to offer this advanced diagnostic tool other than UVM Medical Center. ABUS is a groundbreaking addition to our imaging services, enhancing early detection of breast cancer and providing unparalleled care for our patients.

As one of only two ABUS Invenia technology providers in Vermont, North Country Hospital is proud to lead the charge in improving women's health. Our Radiology Department's dedication to innovation ensures that our patients receive the best care available, right here at home.

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Pediatric sonographers specialize in performing ultrasounds on children, helping to diagnose the causes of pain in areas such as the abdomen, pelvis, or scrotum. These diagnostic images are essential for delivering effective pediatric healthcare.

Given their critical role in children's health and wellness, pediatric sonographers must be highly trained professionals. They need to be detail-oriented, skilled communicators, and proficient with advanced technology—qualities that require a top-tier education.

In Vermont, there are only eight Pediatric Certified Ultrasound Technologists. We are the only other Vermont hospital with a pediatric sonographer outside of the UVM Children's Hospital Network. North Country Hospital also has the unique accreditation by the American College of Radiology in Pediatrics."







Zabi Hayati, MD



Vermont EMS for Children

proudly recognizes
North Country Hospital





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and in





































North Country Hospital Emergency



This year, North Country Hospital marked an exciting milestone in advancing patient care with the launch of a comprehensive Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) initiative. Spearheaded by Dr. Jorge Otero - Emergency Department Physician, a passionate advocate for innovation in rural healthcare, this program has equipped physicians, advanced practice providers (APPs), and nurses with the skills and tools to enhance diagnostic accuracy and streamline treatment for patients across the region.

POCUS technology is revolutionizing healthcare delivery, offering real-time imaging capabilities that can be used directly at the bedside. Unlike traditional imaging methods that require patients to travel or wait for results, POCUS allows providers to make immediate assessments in emergency, outpatient, or inpatient settings. For rural areas like the Northeast Kingdom, where timely access to diagnostic services can be a challenge, POCUS is a game-changer. POCUS has also helped greatly in screening patients for cardiac disease and improving the quality and accuracy in cardiac care.

Dr. Otero's leadership in bringing POCUS to NCH has been instrumental. Recognizing the potential to improve outcomes and reduce delays, he worked tirelessly to integrate the technology into the hospital's clinical workflows. Beyond procuring state-of-the-art ultrasound devices, Dr. Otero spearheaded an extensive training program to ensure that the medical team could confidently harness the benefits of POCUS.

Already, the impact of the POCUS initiative is evident. Providers are using ultrasound to quickly identify conditions such as cardiac abnormalities, lung issues, and internal bleeding. In the emergency department, it has enhanced trauma assessments and improved triage times. On inpatient floors, it



has aided in guiding procedures like IV placement with greater precision and reduced discomfort for patients.

This initiative aligns with NCH's mission to leverage innovation for community health. As Dr. Otero and the team continue to refine the program, they are also exploring opportunities to expand its reach, including providing training to first responders and community clinics.

Together, NCH is not just keeping up with medical advances—it's setting a new standard for care in rural healthcare systems.

Jorge Otero MD, MSc, RDMS - Dr. Otero is a board-certified Emergency Physician with board certification in Emergency Medicine and Internal Medicine from Yale University and a Master's in Health Administration—Public and Health Policy at the New York University Wagner School of Public Service.

Jorge is the Associate Director of the Department of Emergency Medicine and Emergency Ultrasound Director here at North Country Hospital and is faculty at the Yale School of Medicine. He is an instructor for the ultrasound courses at the Division of Cardiology at the Yale School of Medicine. Dr Otero is an expert and worldwide speaker in clinically focused ultrasound in trauma, emergency medicine, critical care, airway management, and lung ultrasonography, amongst others. He is also an innovator in designing health policy, especially in improving healthcare delivery systems using cost-effective technologies such as ultrasound.

A glance back...



After an extraordinary 45-year career as a radiologist, Dr. Perlin is retiring, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and excellence in patient care. Known for his compassionate approach and diagnostic expertise, Dr. Perlin has been a cornerstone of the hospital's medical community, earning the trust and gratitude of countless patients and

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colleagues over the decades. His commitment to advancing radiology and mentoring younger staff has made a lasting impact. As he begins this new chapter, the entire North Country Hospital family celebrates his remarkable service and wishes him a well-deserved, fulfilling retirement.



Act 167 in Vermont, which addresses hospital transparency and community needs, has posed recent challenges for healthcare providers like North Country Hospital, requiring them to address services along with increasing regulatory demands. Despite these hurdles, North Country Hospital remains steadfast in its mission to serve the Northeast Kingdom. With a commitment to patient-centered care, the hospital has been "here yesterday, here today, and here tomorrow," continuing to adapt and provide critical services to the region, ensuring that the community's health needs are met now and for generations to come.



In response to the ongoing nationwide shortage of intravenous (IV) solutions, North Country Hospital has taken proactive steps by forming a dedicated IV Task Force. This interdisciplinary team, comprised of healthcare providers, pharmacists, nurses, and supply chain experts, is tasked with ensuring the hospital's ability to maintain high-quality patient care despite the supply challenges. The nationwide IV shortage stems from the massive destruction of a production facility in North Carolina during hurricane Helene. These shortages pose significant challenges for hospitals, as IV fluids are critical in delivering medications, maintaining hydration, and supporting a wide range of medical treatments.



North Country Hospital achieved a significant milestone in 2024 by becoming the first hospital in the state to receive the Pediatric Readiness Award for its emergency department. This prestigious recognition highlights the hospital's commitment to providing exceptional care for children in emergency situations. By meeting rigorous standards and implementing

best practices for pediatric readiness, North Country Hospital has set a new benchmark for child-focused emergency care in Vermont, ensuring the region's youngest patients receive the highest quality of treatment.



This past summer North Country Hospital completed a significant renovation of its Emergency Department, enhancing its capacity and patient care capabilities. The previous ambulance bay was converted to four exam rooms, plus a decontamination shower, all designed to improve efficiency, reduce wait times, and provide a more comfortable experience for patients and their families. These rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art medical technology and are part of a broader effort to modernize the facility while addressing the growing healthcare needs of the community. This upgrade will enhance our efficiency in providing critical care and ensure a smoother experience for our patients and first responders.



Many thanks to our generous donors who have continued to embrace philanthropy and provide support over this past year, and who also share our deep commitment to North Country Hospital.

In 2024, a new scholarship fund for radiology students was established in memory of Mary Jean Grime, and a fund was established that will benefit nursing education by the family of James Kavanagh.

Contributions this past year have been designated for our Emergency Department expansion, the future purchase of Mammography equipment, our Patient Care Initiatives program, the Oncology fund, the Palliative Care fund, as well as unrestricted gifts.

The following is a listing of individuals, businesses, foundations and trusts, as well as civic organizations that have made cash or in-kind contributions January 1 – December 31, 2024. For additional information on giving, please contact the Foundation office at 802-334-4186.

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