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Petaluma Health Care District provides unique model

Unlike other districts, PHCD doesn't rely on parcel taxes

The Petaluma Health Care District (PHCD) is one of 78 health care districts in California.

The core mission of health care districts remains to ensure health and health care services are provided to the communities that created them.

Financially, PHCD operates a little differently than most as it does not rely on parcel taxes, which most do, for financial support. The district's assets total \$11 million, and revenue comes from the hospital lease payment from the operator, direct services, and investments.

"We're unique in that we own Petaluma Valley Hospital (PVH), and lease out operations, which allows us to focus on community health programs," said Ramona Faith, district CEO. "The district has really elevated its role and impact on community health by creating a model that brings together all sectors of the community to address greatest health needs in southern Sonoma County."

St. Joseph Health (SJH) has run the hospital since 1997, and was in negotiations with PHCD to renew the contract when it was announced in October that the two could not reach an agreement.

SJH will operate Petaluma Valley Hospital through Sept. 1, 2017, and the district is committed to working with SJH to ensure a smooth transition of operations, Faith said.

"The district remains focused on finding an operator that can assist PVH in managing the challenges of a smaller community hospital and one with the long term vision to utilize the best strategies for managing PVH and providing quality emergency and acute care services locally," she said. "We have every intention of identifying a new operator that will offer the existing services and potentially expanding services. The Petaluma Health Care District Board has set a Jan. 31, 2017 deadline for interested parties to submit full proposals for consideration."

In the past few years, the district has established itself as a major presence in regional health care efforts. It partners with and engages community organizations. It was recognized in 2015 as Health Care District of the Year by the Association of California healthcare Districts for its community work, and recently received a Jefferson Award, a national recognition system to highlight public service.

Faith said the district is successful because of the way she structured the Community Health Initiative of the Petaluma Area (CHIPA) with a cross-section of community members.

"With key people that impact health in some way, we use them to identify the greatest need, develop strategies, find funding, and take action," she said.

CHIPA members also serve as an advisory committee to the district board, which gives the group support and additional resources that other communities might not have.

"That's what makes a difference," Faith said. "We invest in our hospital with needed medical equipment and core hospital services, and we invest in community health. The district serves as the back bone organization for key community health initiatives that improve the health of southern Sonoma county residents, such as CHIPA and HeartSafe Community."

HeartSafe Community is an initiative led by the district in partnership with local fire departments, EMS, businesses, hospitals, schools and nonprofits to strengthen our community's response to cardiac emergencies through CPR training, strategic automated external defibrillator installation, maintenance and registration, and heart health education.

PHCD has also funded Mothers Care for the past five years, an evidenced based pre- and post-natal and mood disorder screening program for mothers who receive care at Petaluma Valley Hospital.

The district also provides administrative and grant writing support to the Petaluma Sober Circle Pilot Program, a community collaborative spearheaded by the Petaluma Police Department and funded by SJH, Kaiser and Partnership Health Plan to support the chronically inebriated homeless population in southern Sonoma county by linking them to the resources they need to get on the path to sobriety.

"It is our hope that the program may serve as a catalyst to the implementation of a countywide program," Faith said.