Our Patients. Our Care. Our Team. Our Community.

Altru HEALTH SYSTEM 2019 Report to the Community
PRESIDENT’S Message
What do you believe in?

It’s a question every organization must ask itself. What guides your business decisions and drives your interactions? What unites your employees and defines the soul of your organization? Who are you, and what do you stand for?

What do you believe in?

At Altru, it’s not just one thing, but four – four key areas that form a set of values we live by every day.


Looking back at 2019, we certainly faced our fair share of challenges, as did many in the healthcare industry. But despite these challenges, I’m immensely proud of all the ways in which Altru lived up to our values, both inside our walls and beyond.

I’m proud of how we continued to put the needs and expectations of OUR PATIENTS first. With people using healthcare differently – shifting more toward outpatient services, for example – we began taking bold steps to stay ahead of these changes. One of 2019’s biggest and most exciting steps was the groundbreaking of our new hospital. Our patients and community need and deserve this new facility, and despite the current construction pause, we remain deeply committed to completing it.

Naturally, our patients and OUR CARE go hand in hand. In 2019 we continued to focus on driving safety, quality and high reliability throughout all levels of care. Maximizing the use of our lean management method, which uses quality and reducing waste as its guideposts, we were able to meet our annual Zero Harm goal of decreasing patient readmissions. We also were honored with a number of recognitions and achievements in 2019 that speak to the exceptional care we provide, from being named the number one hospital in North Dakota in 2019 by U.S. News and World Report to our Level II Trauma Center recertification, and more.

Of course, this commitment to our patients and delivering world-class care wouldn’t be possible without OUR TEAM. To work at Altru means to work as one team to provide the best patient experience and to treat each other with respect, honesty and loyalty. Being a team player has perhaps never been more important to the healthcare industry as it is now, and our employees are delivering on that every day in a variety of expected and unexpected ways. I’m constantly impressed by their deep dedication to our patients and our organization.

Which brings me to OUR COMMUNITY. Altru’s roots here run deep and strong. We are, by definition, a community hospital – and we will always keep that responsibility close at heart. We were proud to once again partner with others in 2019 on efforts to improve the health of our region, and we continue to be humbled by the generosity of the members of this community. Together, we made a difference in the lives of countless patients and families throughout the year.

As we move away from 2019 and further into 2020, there’s no doubt that we’ll continue experiencing new challenges – not least of all those caused by the unprecedented situation the world is currently facing. But I know Altru, and I know this community – and I’m confident that we’ll once again come together to meet the challenges, adapt to the changes and continue providing the care and support our community deserves for many years to come.

With wishes of good health to all,

STEVEN WEISER, MD
President, Altru Health System
At Altru Health System, everything we do circles back to our patients. Because our patients aren’t just patients – they’re our next-door neighbors, our best friends and our family members. From some of the best moments to some of the scariest, we’re honored to be a part of their lives, and we’ll continue to provide exceptional care to all of our patients across our region for generations to come.

**Triple the Love: Katie and Jay’s NICU Story**
Katie and Jay Gowan were both overjoyed and shocked when they found out that Katie was carrying natural spontaneous triplets. Since multiples often spend time in the NICU after birth, they began meeting with Dr. Durga Panda, one of Altru’s NICU physicians. At 31 weeks and 2 days, Myer, Beck and Luca were born. The babies spent two days in the NICU before the new parents were able to hold them. More than 50 days in the NICU later, they were finally ready to go home – and Katie and Jay were well-prepared thanks to the support from Altru’s team, who even provided scrapbooks documenting each baby’s NICU stay.

Today, the triplets are happy, healthy, almost-one-year-olds, and the people Katie and Jay met in the hospital have turned into lifelong friends and family.

**Facing Breast Cancer Before 38: Kayla’s Story**
After deciding to take advantage of Altru’s free clinical breast exams, 37-year-old Kayla Spilde received some unexpected news: she had breast cancer. Kayla and her husband met with Dr. Stefan Johnson and Dr. Kevin Muiderman to discuss options, deciding to schedule a double mastectomy with immediate reconstruction within the next month. The surgery was a success, and after attending follow-up appointments through April, it became clear that chemotherapy wouldn’t be needed. Today, Kayla is cancer free, living life to the fullest and thankful for the early detection, immediate attention and ongoing care provided by Altru.

**One Lucky Guy: Doug’s Story**
From birth through several surgeries, Doug Norby has had a long history with healthcare in Grand Forks. However, 2019 proved to be the most challenging year yet, starting with a prostate cancer diagnosis and radiation treatments at Altru Cancer Center. Then, six weeks later, Doug had a stroke. It was a particularly scary moment for Doug’s wife, Sandy, but she said they felt calm and safe as soon as Doug was in the care of Altru’s emergency team. Thanks to their care, he was sitting up and joking with his family by that evening. Doug is incredibly thankful for the Altru physicians and staff who have taken care of him through life-saving surgeries, cancer treatment and now emergency stroke care.
Altru’s Sunshine Hospitality Home celebrated its one-year anniversary in 2019. The home provides lodging, needed supplies, and a place of comfort, compassion and convenience for patients and families traveling for healthcare needs. Through the generosity of our community, Altru Health Foundation raised $47,334.15 for Sunshine Hospitality Home in 2019, helping us enhance the experience for current and future guests.
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We’re proud to have been named the number one hospital in North Dakota in 2019 by U.S. News and World Report, a recognition that acknowledges our deep commitment to providing safe, quality care. From delivering the best possible patient experience, to staying on the cutting edge through research and innovation, we’re constantly striving to improve the care we provide.

In addition to our doctors, nurses and staff members, our volunteers also make a big difference at Altru. Whether they’re making doctors’ and nurses’ jobs a little easier or simply putting a smile on a patient’s face, they play a significant role in Altru’s ability to deliver exceptional care.

Lindsey Ilenda, Sunshine Hospitality Home Volunteer
Lindsey Ilenda learned first hand the value of a place like Sunshine Hospitality Home after needing to find lodging for herself during her own open-heart surgery. After recovering from surgery, she began volunteering at the home in November of 2018. Being a volunteer allows her to use her background in hospitality and customer service, as well as her own experience, to show patients they’re not alone during these difficult times. Being able to volunteer also has been a reminder to her of how far she’s come in her own journey as a patient.

Nick Johnson, Critical Care Unit Volunteer
As a pre-med student, Nick Johnson has contributed over 100 volunteer hours to different departments at Altru. Even when not working directly with patients, volunteers like Nick make a difference by completing tasks that allow nurses, techs and others to focus on clinical care. As a child cancer survivor and former bartender, Nick is great at empathizing with patients and staff. He says he’s been inspired by how patient-centered Altru’s staff and providers are — so much so that Nick has become an Altru employee, working as a registration specialist in the Emergency Room.

Ron Venjohn, Ambassador and Extraordinary Minister Volunteer
You might think that Ron Venjohn would want to take it easy after retiring from a 30+ year career with the National Guard. Instead, Ron is spending his retirement volunteering as an ambassador and extraordinary minister at Altru. He volunteers because he feels everything he’s been given is a gift from God, and he wants to share what he can with others. As an ambassador, Ron walks patients to their appointments and procedures, providing them with help and conversation along the way. He feels that patients most appreciate that someone from their community is willing to give their time to help them have the best patient experience possible.

276 volunteers contributed 15,156 hours of time (7.3 FTE, valued at $385,424 in the independent sector) to 34 service areas at 13 different Altru facilities.
We’re honored that our ongoing pursuit of excellence was recognized with the following achievements in 2019:

» Named #1 hospital in North Dakota and in the Red River Valley by U.S. News & World Report
» Awarded the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s Get with The Guidelines® Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award
» Earned The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval® for Hospital and Home Care Accreditation
» Received Level II Trauma Center Verification from the American College of Surgeons
» Earned a Three-Year CARF Accreditation for Altru’s Rehabilitation Hospital, marking 50 years of CARF accreditation
» Launched Altru Care Flight and began neonatal transport services
» Earned 2019 CHIME HealthCare’s Most Wired Recognition

Innovating Our Care

Innovation and research allow us to keep Altru on the cutting edge of care, and we couldn’t do that without the generous funding Altru Health Foundation receives to support these efforts. The dollars directed here help us pioneer groundbreaking approaches to treating illness and disease, ensure state-of-the-art technology is available to the residents of our region, and attract the best physicians and researchers in the field.

» Altru cardiologist Dr. Rabeea Aboufakher took innovation and generosity a step further in 2019 by helping set up the first cardiac cath lab in his hometown in Syria, making lifesaving procedures available for anyone experiencing a heart attack.

» Now more than ever, telehealth is a vital way we’re delivering care to patients throughout our region. In 2019, we provided nearly 13,000 patient encounters using telemedicine and continue to stay on top of the latest technology to bring healthcare close to home.
At Altru, our people are our greatest assets. Whether working directly with patients or supporting the organization from behind the scenes, each one of our 3,800 health professionals and support staff plays an important role in bringing our mission to life. Committed to operating as one team and treating each other with honesty, loyalty and respect, they work together to provide an exceptional patient experience and positively impact the communities we serve.

Creating Personal Moments: Sheila Piper
Central Sterile is a department that’s relatively behind the scenes at Altru, but it’s employees like Sheila Piper who help make it an integral part of our system. Sheila is someone who makes the extra effort to connect with employees, patients and customers, and has been seen greeting nearly 14 different people by name during one walk down the hall. Her colleagues say that she lifts up the department, fellow leaders and Altru overall with her spirit, compassion and dedication to serve. Sheila commented that she just loves being at Altru, and that she believes in the organization’s mission and who we want to be, and that makes all the difference.

Showing the Little Things Matter: Patrick Deziel
As Patrick Deziel, a plant/facilities supervisor, was picking up litter in the parking lot one morning, he offered to walk a new Altru visitor to his destination. When the visitor commended him for picking up litter, Patrick explained that he wouldn’t want a patient to see the litter and question the quality of care we provide. Patrick’s pride in his work and Altru left a profound impact on the visitor, who, unbeknownst to Patrick, turned out to be a Joint Commission surveyor. Patrick’s story perfectly demonstrates our Integrity behavior standard by doing the right thing even when no one is watching. His story also underscores how every employee, regardless of title or role, plays an important part in delivering on our vision to provide world-class care to our patients.

Putting Patients First: Fran Cooley
If anyone is a prime example of putting patients first, it’s respiratory therapist Fran Cooley. Fran is the ultimate patient advocate, always going above and beyond to deliver the best experience, and her patients are always excited to see her. She upholds this commitment to care outside of Altru, too: while at a restaurant in Detroit, Fran saved the life of a woman who was choking. For Fran, it’s all a part of what she loves to do, which is serve her patients. She also loves the teamwork that goes into her job and watching everyone come together to make the patients happy.
Scholarships and Workforce Development

Ensuring that our employees continue to grow professionally is imperative to delivering world-class care. By investing funds in a variety of scholarship opportunities, internship and residency support, and professional development, we make sure our team can stay on top of industry trends, needs and advancements – now and in the future.

- Each year, the Dave & Karen Molmen Scholarship Fund for children of Altru employees awards $1,000 to ten high school or college scholars. Karen and Dave Molmen, Altru’s former CEO, have generously supported this program for the past five years as a way of sharing their love for learning while honoring the hard work of these students and their parents. (Editor’s note: Dave is serving as Altru’s Interim CEO, effective July 21, 2020.)

- Last May, 19 nurses were honored with scholarships gifted by Altru Alliance, Altru Health Foundation, the Mary Tyrrell Scholarship and the Kathy Alvested Scholarship, among other prestigious awards celebrating the world-class care our nurses provide.

As a Canadian citizen, I can only wish that our medical system could become as efficient, caring and compassionate as what I have experienced while I was being treated at your facility.

I was so impressed with Dr. Roller. I felt heard, cared for and I was taken seriously during this frustrating time of trying to figure out my medical issues.

Dr. Chan is an outstanding doctor...he takes excellent care of our family, and we recommend him to everyone. He is patient and listens to his patients carefully. I have never met a more thorough doctor, and that is why we love him...he is the reason we receive our care at Altru.

Dr. Z has treated me like her grandma. She probably saved my life - calling my daughter at home to urge me into the hospital a while ago...and since then has cared for me with so much care and patience. Truly blessed to have her in my life.
At Altru, being a part of this community means continually looking for ways to extend our mission of *Improving Health, Enriching Life* to all the areas we serve. Our Community Health Assessment is one tool we can use to help determine where we should focus our efforts. In 2019, Altru partnered with Grand Forks Public Health to conduct the assessment, which identified substance use, mental health and obesity as three of the six priority areas. The full report is used by healthcare providers, public health officials and others to strategically establish areas of focus and commit resources that will make a difference in the health of our community. To review the 2019 Community Health Assessment, visit the Community Health page of altru.org.

**Reducing Substance Use through Safe Disposal**
To highlight the importance of properly disposing of over-the-counter and prescription medications, Altru hosted five Medication Take Back Events in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks in 2019, in addition to helping with other regional events. These community drive-up and drop-off events provide an easy way for people to make sure their unused medications don’t pose a poison danger to children or get used by someone in the wrong way. Each Altru Medication Take Back event collects an average of 245 pounds of medication.

**Promoting Mental Health through Awareness**
Altru’s Together we Educate About the Realities of Suicide (TEARS) is an awareness and prevention group founded by cardiology manager Sandy Kovar, who lost her son to suicide. The group provides support to individuals and families impacted by suicide as well as important prevention education. Every September, TEARS hosts the Walk to Remember/Support to raise funds for prevention resources and provide a forum for family and friends to remember their loved ones. The 2019 walk raised more than $14,000 and continued to increase awareness for this important area of mental health.

**Decreasing Obesity through Biking**
Biking can be a great way to create a healthier lifestyle. In 2019, Altru was a lead sponsor for Grand Rides, a bike share program that began in August. This program allows community members to rent bikes via an app at docking stations throughout the city of Grand Forks. In 2019, there were 55 bikes with docking stations at 13 locations. Implementing a bike share program was an important step to help create an environment that promotes activity within the community.
Community Events

Altru Health Foundation is proud to host or support premier community events that encourage people to support the health of our region. But we’re even more proud to be a part of a community that gives so generously to help one another. From Spin for Kids and Run For Your Buns, to our annual Gala and Golf Tournament, these events raised over $800,000 in 2019.

» The 2019 Cancer Center Golf Tournament raised over $82,000 to support our Filling the Gap and Caring for Kids programs, which help lessen the financial burden of cancer patients and children with chronic illness through transportation assistance, overnight accommodations and other benefits not typically covered by insurance.

» Altru’s Gala 2019 raised more than $421,000 - the most ever - to support Altru’s Cardiology department. The generosity shown here help will increase heart and vascular screenings, provide new cardiac care diagnostic equipment and support new technology to educate patients about heart-healthy living.
Total Community Benefit

$30.7 MILLION

Altru devotes all of its resources to improving health in the communities we serve. From charity care and education programs to research and in-kind donations, we are focused on ways to support and give back to the patients in our region in a variety of ways. Below is a look at our Total Community Benefit in 2019.

Costs of Providing Charity Care
Altru provides temporary financial assistance to as many patients as possible that reside in our service area and have a demonstrated financial need. We also offer extensive financial counseling with our Healthcare Eligibility Resource Options (HERO) Program to help identify additional relief from outside sources.

$4.9 MILLION

Medicaid Surcharge
For every $1 of patient revenue earned, it costs the organization 41 cents to provide care. Altru is proud to partner with North Dakota and Minnesota Medicaid programs, which help pay for health services for qualifying families with children, or residents who are pregnant, elderly or disabled.

$22.9 MILLION

Community Health Improvement Services
Altru extends its mission of Improving Health, Enriching Life throughout the community by providing information on current health issues as well as a variety of health fairs and education programs. Joint collaborations with our community health partners have a long history of success, with a focus on identifying strategies, developing intervention and committing resources to improving community health.

$1.2 MILLION
Research
Through Altru’s Research Center, our experienced and knowledgeable researchers are able to conduct clinical trials, studies and other innovations that will benefit the patients of our communities. These studies allow us to stay on top of the latest approaches to care, provide access to medications and treatments that aren’t generally available yet, and focus on issues specific to our region.

Cash and In-Kind Contributions
Altru is committed to growing our community health partners through cash and in-kind contributions. In 2019, we made contributions to Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC), the City of Grand Forks Detox Treatment Center, medical education scholarships, and many other partners that support the improvement of our region’s overall health.