



## Advocates **improve patient outcomes.**

MedStar Washington Hospital Center Community Health Advocates Mia Afowerk and Stephanye White are on the front lines of improving the health of the communities we serve. They see their purpose as a simple one—to help our patients with needs that extend beyond the hospital doors.

They are part of the Community Health Advocate program, which addresses the impact of social determinants of health (SDOH) on patients' well-being. SDOH are non-medical issues related to where patients live and work that may impact their health outcomes, such as unstable housing, poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, and poor educational opportunities.

"I have always been guided by a strong desire and passion to be a steward of my community," says White. Afowerk adds, "After seeing my mother suffer because she didn't understand how to access resources, I knew I wanted to serve as a bridge between the community, healthcare, and social services systems."

Afowerk and White both live in the areas they serve, further boosting trust in them and their connection between the community and hospital.

The process is simple. Before hospital discharge, patients who may benefit from support are identified by the Case Management team. This prompts a visit from a Community Health Advocate and a social needs screening. Once opportunities for assistance are identified, Afowerk and White help link their neighbors to health care and social services, including food access, transportation, housing, and utility assistance.

## Letter from the president.

Far too many of our patients face non-medical challenges that impact their health outcomes once they leave the hospital. This calls for creative approaches to advance the well-being of the populations we serve.

I am encouraged by the work of our community health advocate program. Despite the impact of COVID-19, they have helped hundreds of patients navigate barriers to better health. And while the pandemic caused us to change how we deliver community health programming, the team quickly adapted and created new ways to provide this important information.

While COVID-19 changed many things in 2020, it did not alter our commitment to taking care of our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory J. Argyros, MD". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gregory J. Argyros, MD  
Senior Vice President,  
MedStar Health

President,  
MedStar Washington Hospital Center

They also help patients to understand and follow discharge instructions and learn how to manage their illness with the goal of improving the overall health of the community.

It's paying off. From February, when the program launched, to June 2020, more than 300 patients were served by the program.

## Adapting health education during COVID-19.

The emergence of COVID-19 called for work meetings, church, and family gatherings to move online. Community health-related programming at MedStar Washington quickly followed suit.

Two of the hospital's signature programs were moved to virtual formats: Living Well with Chronic Disease and the Ask a Doc series.

The Living Well with Chronic Disease program, a partnership with DC Health, provides free workshops to manage health conditions such as cancer, depression or anxiety, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and more. The Ask a Doc is an initiative for hospital physicians and allied health professionals to share valuable health information with individuals who live in Washington, D.C. Wards 5, 7, and 8.

"The Ask a Doc initiative is going extremely well, with as many as 30 participants for some presentation," says Felicia Hugee, community health outreach manager of MedStar Washington.

Hugee notes that removing the element of travel both for the providers and the community members has been positive, allowing community partners Washington Senior Wellness Center and the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, Inc. to grow the number of participants.

"I believe we will keep the online version as an option for the future given its acceptance," added Hugee.



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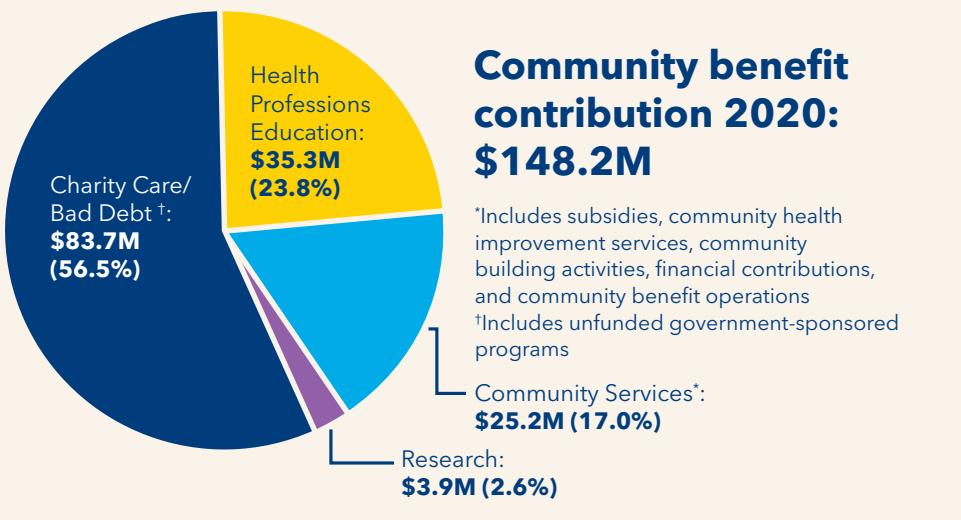
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**It's how we treat people.**