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Community Impact Update

Department of Community Health & Well-Being



Meeting our Community's Needs

At Baptist Health, we understand that to truly improve our community's health and well-being, we need to look beyond our hospital walls. Every three years, Baptist Health collaborates with other local nonprofit health systems to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). This in-depth evaluation allows us to determine the biggest areas of need and how to best focus our efforts to make real improvements in the lives of Northeast Floridians.

Following the 2022 CHNA, we identified four priorities:

- Access to care
- Mental and behavioral health
- Maternal and child health
- Social determinants of health

Over the past three years, we've taken concrete steps to address each of these needs. Read on to see the progress we're making, together.

Fresh Produce Provides Hope for Seniors

Pie in the Sky nourishes physical and emotional needs in St. Johns County.



The heartbreaking calls **Pie in the Sky** founder Malea Guiriba receives daily from low-income

seniors and help from generous volunteers is what has kept her going for 16 years.

One 98-year-old shared she only had a half jar of pickles and old can of tuna to eat.

A couple in their 70s were in the hospital with COVID-19 and returned home to spoiled food. They only had crackers and a can of soup. Pie in the Sky had food to them within the hour.

A 72-year-old, who has no transportation, was hungry, lost human connection and hope. A volunteer delivered a bag of food filling her refrigerator and cupboards.

“She had hope again,” said Guiriba, chief executive officer. “You can’t put a price on that.”

From its warehouse in St. Augustine, the nonprofit delivers fresh, healthy, and nutritious produce at no cost to about 780 low-income, seniors throughout St. Johns County. Seniors get a delivery every other week. Through generous donations, Pie in the Sky purchases the freshest local produce and adds other food items donated by an array of other organizations.



"It can happen to any of us"

Food insecurity was identified as a need through the Community Health Needs Assessment, which is conducted by Baptist Health along with other local nonprofit health systems.

Guiriba said the need for food among seniors is on the rise as prices continue to increase as well as the cost of living.

"One catastrophic illness or home repair and the next thing you know, you have no food in your house. It can happen to any of us," Guiriba said.

She's grateful to area organizations like Baptist Health, who not only donate monetarily, but volunteer.

So far in 2025, Pie in the Sky has added 151 new seniors to its deliveries. This is a significant increase from 2024 when only 67 new seniors were added during the entire year.

"We are only halfway through the year, so that is a little bit terrifying," Guiriba said. "But thanks to the generosity of organizations like Baptist Health, we will meet the needs. Our goal is to never say no to a hungry senior. These seniors are often called the 'hidden hungry.' Folks who come to us typically only do so when they have exhausted all other options. "

Little pie shop started it all

Guiriba started Pie in the Sky in 2009 at what was then a little pie shop on Main Street in Hastings, west of St. Augustine. Money from selling pies helped the underserved with a variety of needs. The program has evolved from assisting farmworkers to a network of volunteers now delivering food to homebound seniors, who are not only hungry, but dealing with loneliness and chronic illnesses from lack of healthy food.

"What we are doing is proactively keeping people out of the hospital," Guiriba said. "The food is the medicine. It's tackling the problem before it starts."

Baptist Health, including team members from Baptist Medical Center South, have helped with a variety of events and needs over the years.



“Volunteering with Pie in the Sky has been a rewarding experience and has been a tool for engaging the Baptist South Team in the care of the community beyond the walls of the hospital,” said Kyle Dorsey, hospital president for Baptist Medical Center South. “At Baptist South, we have a Social Determinant of Health goal to reduce food insecurity in our community. While patients are in the hospital, we are screening them for food insecurity and connecting them to resources, like Pie in the Sky when there is a need.”

Baptist Health has also equipped Pie in the Sky with additional resources, including a cargo van and funding for produce to expand their reach, Dorsey said.

Kimberly Peppers, director of Clinical Quality for Baptist South and Clay campuses, said Baptist South committed this fiscal year to positively impacting food insecurity within both the in-patient population and community.

“Pie in the Sky is an essential partner with helping us achieve this goal,” Peppers said. “We’re nearing the completion of our first phase, which focused on making sure all of our inpatients have access to necessary resources upon discharge.”

Guiriba said she is so fortunate to be surrounded by and held up by a community that cares and wants to connect with seniors.

“We place deep value on everything—every hour generously volunteered and every penny thoughtfully donated,” she said.

A Meaningful Place in The Motherhood Space

Baptist Health's intensive day program helps expecting and new moms up to two years postpartum experiencing mental health challenges.



As a health system that cares for people from the moment they enter the world throughout every stage of life, we know that wellness starts on day one. Our goal is zero preventable infant and child deaths, achieved through focusing on safe sleep, breastfeeding support, nutrition and other infant safety strategies. It's equally important to support new and expecting moms as they adjust to this new stage of life.

In fall of 2023, Baptist Health opened a new intensive day program, **The Motherhood Space**, for expecting and new moms up to two years postpartum who are experiencing maternal mental health challenges, such as depression or anxiety. Since then, 142 women have gone through the program.

One of them was AnnaMarie Knight, a first-time mom to baby Judah.

"I feel like I can be a better mom, woman, spouse, friend, everything, because of the time that I spent in The Motherhood Space," she said.

Moms who participate in The Motherhood Space have access to a private lactation space, a massage chair and relaxation area, a guest pass to the YMCA during program participation, transportation services for those in need, and scholarships available for those who qualify.

Knight first sought help for anxiety and depression in 2018 and refused to let the conditions hold her back from her dream of starting a family. Throughout her pregnancy, she worked with her therapist to prepare for the transition to motherhood and the potential perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD) that may follow.

During the first few weeks after Judah's birth, Knight experienced what she thought were the typical "baby blues" and post-delivery hormone changes. But around week eight, she knew it was more.

"I was definitely struggling emotionally, and it didn't really go away," Knight remembered. "I was having a lot of intrusive and scary thoughts. Because of my history with anxiety and depression, I realized what was going on and I knew I needed support."

Knight turned to her doula, who recommended [The Motherhood Space](#).

"The Motherhood Space was designed with moms in mind," said [Jill Garrett, PsyD](#), a [Baptist Behavioral Health](#) psychologist who specializes in maternal mental health and founding psychologist and program director of The Motherhood Space. "Led by psychologists who specialize in working with moms who are pregnant and postpartum – and who happen to be moms themselves! – the program is designed to support the adjustment to motherhood with group programming that is social and engaging, wellness inspired, and care that works."

Knight started the three-day-a-week program when her son was just over 4 months old. On her first day, she immediately connected with another new mom, with whom she remains close. In addition to group therapy, program participants do activities like art therapy, walking and yoga.

"I really feel like the time I spent there was crucial for my well-being and my child's well-being. It was 'life-giving,'" Knight said.

"When you're going through the postpartum period, it's so important to know that you're not alone and you have this community of other people who are going through the same thing," Knight added. "I'm so grateful to the entire Motherhood Space team for guiding and helping me through this journey."

Dr. Garrett added, "My message to women who are pregnant or recently gave birth is to recognize your insight as a strength. If you're not feeling well, know that you're not alone. There are things you can do to feel better, and we're here to help."

A Powerful Community of Empathic Teens

Starting Point Behavioral Health positively impacts Nassau County students.



After training 163 students in Teen Mental Health First Aid at a single high school in Fernandina Beach, **Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare**, a certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic in Nassau County, quickly realized the benefits of offering the nationally recognized curriculum county wide.

Today, every 10th grade student in the Nassau County School District can take the course as part of their regular classwork, thanks to grants from Baptist Health and the Community Foundation of Northeast Florida.

“Each school year, between 850 and 1,000 Nassau County students are enrolled in the training,” said Justin Bradshaw, project director of Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare.

Unlike Adult Mental Health First Aid, which trains adults to support other adults, or Youth Mental Health First Aid, which prepares adults to assist young people, Teen Mental Health First Aid empowers teens to provide initial support to their friends and foster a culture of peer support and help-seeking behavior.

How it works

The eight-session course, which is designed specifically for high school students ages 15-18, is held on a weekly basis at all four Nassau County high schools and students can opt out of the training if they don’t feel comfortable taking it.

“The classes are 45 minutes long and taught by Starting Point staff,” Bradshaw said. “We’ve found that 90-95% of students are opting into the program.”

Checking their mental health pulse

Students receive a workbook that includes activities, games and topics like social media, stigmatizing language and myths surrounding mental health topics.

At the end of every class, students fill out an exit ticket, which is basically a pulse check of their mental wellness. The tickets alert the instructors to any follow-up questions the students may have or if a student needs to be checked on by a school social worker.

“We also measure the students’ knowledge about mental health and substance abuse at the beginning and the end of the program,” Bradshaw said. “This training helps everyone in the schools realize and recognize the mental health challenges in the students they

see in their classrooms every day.”

Recently, a Nassau County parent shared that ever since her child took the course, she’s noticed a real change in the teen’s empathy for others and in her circle of friends.

“They’re really looking out for each other more,” the parent said.

Peer-to-peer support

Kimberly McGee, a suicide prevention manager at Starting Point, said she has seen the impact that peer support – or lack thereof – can have on teens.

“Not only do they now recognize the importance of peer support, but they also understand what meaningful support looks like when they need it most,” she said. “It’s incredibly rewarding to empower students with the knowledge and skills to support one another effectively.”

Prior to launching Teen Mental Health First Aid in the classroom, Starting Point instructors trained 90% of Nassau County school district staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid, which became a state requirement in 2023, as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act.



“We’ve also trained school staff in Clay County, and they have expressed interest in bringing Teen Mental Health First Aid to their 10th grade students,” Bradshaw said.

“We all want the best for our kids and our community,” said Laureen Pagel, CEO at Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare. “Mental health is one of the pieces to the puzzle that is often overlooked.”

From Frequent Flyer to Fully Engaged

JaxCareConnect links patients without insurance to a primary care provider.



Since its inception in March 2021, **JaxCareConnect** has helped hundreds of uninsured Duval County residents establish a primary care provider and navigate other community services.

In 2023 alone, the nonprofit, which was developed with financial contributions from Baptist Health, The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, and Riverside Hospital Foundation, made nearly 800 referrals to community partners whose services relate to the Social Determinants of Health.

JaxCareConnect receives numerous referrals from area hospitals, many of which are flagged as frequent flyers to the emergency department.

Maria (name changed for privacy) was a prime example.

When she was first referred to JaxCareConnect, Maria was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma, a common but serious type of kidney cancer. She had also lost her Medicaid coverage, and with no insurance was struggling to access the oncology and mental health care she urgently needed.

On top of her health concerns, Maria was grieving the loss of a family member.

Determined to help, the JaxCareConnect team guided Maria through multiple options, referring her to Muslim American Social Services (MASS), a free clinic for immediate primary care, while also assisting her in reapplying for other programs, including Medicaid and Social Security Disability.

Despite her best efforts, Maria faced setbacks. After forgoing much-needed lab tests, she wound up hospitalized. After her discharge, she decided to place her pressing health care concerns on the back burner.

Fortunately, JaxCareConnect was there with open arms when Maria was ready to re-enter the program. The agency helped her reestablish her primary care and explore her insurance options, including setting up an appointment to speak with an Affordable Care Act navigator.

Ultimately, with perseverance and guidance from the JaxCareConnect team, Maria secured health coverage through her navigator. Now insured and actively engaged in her care, she has regained control of her health journey.

“When we last spoke, she was relieved, optimistic and incredibly grateful,” said Jenny

O'Donnell, JaxCareConnect's program director.

"Maria's story is a testament to the power of persistence and support. Even when the path is uncertain, the right resources and compassionate guidance can make all the difference. We're honored to have been part of her journey to care and stability."



As the only locally governed, mission-driven, not-for-profit health system in Northeast Florida, Baptist Health dedicates substantial resources to social responsibility and community health. And our team members also contribute their time and talent – giving back to our community and making a true difference in the lives of our neighbors in need.

If you would like to learn more, [click here](#).



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