

Healing Happens Here: Hospitals Save Lives, Communities Thrive

By Jim Kaufman, President & CEO, West Virginia Hospital Association

Each year, National Hospital Week offers an opportunity to recognize the vital role hospitals play in our daily lives. From May 10–16, we celebrate a simple but powerful truth: healing happens here. In West Virginia, our hospitals do more than treat illness—they save lives and help communities thrive.

Hospitals are the backbone of communities across the Mountain State for one fundamental reason: they show up. No matter the hour, and no matter the need, hospitals are there. In a state defined by close-knit communities and rural landscapes, that reliability isn't just important—it's essential.

Whether it's a routine checkup at a local clinic, an emergency on a winding country road, or specialized treatment for a serious condition, hospitals across West Virginia are grounded in a mission of service. That mission is not reserved for moments of crisis; it is woven into everyday life, supporting West Virginians through every stage of their journey.

Access to care is where that commitment begins. Hospitals operate around the clock—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year—because health needs don't follow a schedule. Emergency departments stand ready to respond to accidents, natural disasters, and sudden illness. At the same time, hospitals provide rehabilitation services, and outreach clinics that extend care into rural and underserved areas.

Behind that constant readiness are 54,000 family and friends who are dedicated professionals—physicians, nurses, technicians, and staff. They bring not only clinical expertise, but also a deep sense of responsibility to the communities they serve because they live there too. Their work embodies the spirit of National Hospital Week: compassionate care delivered close to home.

Affordability, however, remains a growing concern. Families across West Virginia are feeling the strain of rising healthcare costs, and in many communities, making ends meet is already a challenge. Hospitals recognize that access without affordability is not enough. That's why they are working to improve efficiency, expand preventive care, and develop new ways to deliver services that reduce costs for patients. Our efforts are producing results as national studies show West Virginia ranks as the 10th lowest hospital expense per inpatient day. In other words, hospitals in West Virginia spend less per patient, per day than most states—making them relatively low-cost on a daily basis.

To build on these cost-saving efforts, hospitals are also investing in long-term solutions that keep patients healthier outside their walls. Programs that help manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and respiratory illness—conditions that affect many West Virginians—are making a real difference. By helping patients stay healthier at home, these efforts reduce unnecessary hospital visits and improve quality of life.

Innovation is also transforming how care is delivered. In a rural state where distance can be a barrier, telehealth services, remote monitoring, and digital tools are making it easier for patients to connect with providers without long drives over mountain roads. Advances in data-driven care and electronic health records are helping clinicians identify health issues earlier, reduce duplication, and coordinate treatment more effectively.

Even so, many of the forces driving healthcare costs are beyond hospitals' control. First, insurance premiums continue to climb, which accounts for costs beyond hospital care. The price of prescription drugs, medical equipment, and essential supplies continues to rise. Within hospitals, we have experienced significant increases in expenses for medications, technology, materials, and staff needed to provide care.

Addressing these challenges will require collaboration. Lasting solutions depend on all of us—state and federal leaders, insurers, pharmaceutical companies, healthcare providers, and patients—working together to make care more accessible and affordable.

Through it all, one thing remains unchanged: West Virginia's hospitals are here for their communities. They are there for life's most meaningful moments. They are there in times of uncertainty, offering care, comfort, and hope.

This National Hospital Week, we recognize and thank the people, places, and partnerships that make healing possible. Because when hospitals are strong, communities are stronger. Healing happens here—and when it does, West Virginia thrives.

Contact your local hospital to see what events and activities are planned in your area for National Hospital Week.

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