Volunteers playing big role at short-staffed hospitals

BY ANGELA GONZALES
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Hospital volunteerism is alive and well in the Valley, providing a much-needed workforce for short-staffed, cash-strapped medical centers.

It can be a symbiotic relationship, as many people who’ve lost their jobs turn to volunteerism to get a foot in the door.

Kairin Whiteside, director of volunteer services for Mayo Clinic in Arizona, said traditional Mayo volunteers are retired, but more middle-age volunteers have been showing up on her doorstep.

“A lot of those are people out of work who are looking to do something with their time and add to their resume,” she said.

The clinic had 724 volunteers in 2011, up a bit from 710 in 2010.

“We have an incredible group of people who volunteer at Mayo Clinic,” she said. “We look at our volunteers as a strategic function. We look at them as essential in helping us increase our ability to achieve our objectives.”

The John C. Lincoln Health Network, which has two hospitals in north Phoenix, added 11 volunteers last year and 10 so far this year, said Linda Llewellyn, director of network volunteer services.

“During the past two years, we have had more people coming to volunteer during their time of unemployment,” she said.
PIZZA: Take-and-bake concept going up against local, national competitors

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$225,000 and $350,000 to open a franchise. Papa Murphy’s already has a strong presence in the Pacific Northwest and is targeting expansion in California, too. She said the company’s Arizona ambitions center around marketing to seniors and families. Most of Papa Murphy’s existing Arizona locations are in suburban areas of the Valley. One interesting aspect of Papa Murphy’s business model is that because the pizzas are sold uncooked, its outlets are able to accept food stamps as payment.

Papa Murphy’s growth plans and focus on Phoenix represent the latest volley in the Valley’s competitive pizza market. Rivals include national players such as Domino’s Pizza, Papa John’s Pizza, Pizza Hut and Little Caesars Pizza, as well as local businesses such as Barro’s Pizza and Sardella’s Pizza and Wings.

Papa John’s has sponsorship deals with the Arizona Diamondbacks and Arizona Cardinals. Other national chains say they like the Phoenix market but are tight-lipped about specific growth plans here as the regional and national economies creep back from a recession that locked down credit for some businesses and franchisees.

Domino’s has 77 Valley locations, 58 of which are owned by the Ann Arbor, Mich.-based company. Vice President Tim McIntyre said it costs between $150,000 and $300,000 to open a Domino’s franchise.

While McIntyre said Domino’s is open to growth here, the company doesn’t divulge specific market plans. Tight credit has been a challenge for franchise-based businesses; however, Arizona has franchise laws and rules that are less restrictive than some other states.

Domino’s also announced this month it was partnering with Chandler-based Local Motors for a design competition for a prototype pizza delivery vehicle. The contest comes with $50,000 worth of prizes. Local Motors is a design consortium that works with a community of designers to develop next-generation automobiles and engines.

Pizza Hut has 82 Phoenix area locations, all franchises, said spokesperson Doug Terfehr. It is part of Louisville, Ky.-based yum! Brands Inc., which also is the parent of KFC and Taco Bell.

“We have plans to continue to expand in the Phoenix area over the next year,” Terfehr said, though he declined to talk about specifics.

One family-owned local chain doesn’t plan on ceding its home turf. Barro’s Pizza has 31 locations in the area and plans to open two more before the end of the year.

“We’ve been in Arizona since 1980, so we’ve been fortunate over the years to grow a repeat customer base,” said Bruce Barro, who owns 13 of the family’s 31 shops.

The new locations will be near Interstate 17 and Loop 101 in Phoenix, and at 51st Avenue and Baseline Road in Laveen. Barro doesn’t have any expansion plans yet for 2013. He said newer players in the Phoenix pizza market might want to think twice with the economy still on the rebound.

“If we were opening new stores with an unfamiliar brand in Phoenix, I wouldn’t have the same confidence,” he said. “But having name recognition and people knowing our product has really helped with the dip in the economy.”

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Anne Monte, 92, volunteers Mondays at Mayo Clinic Scottsdale. She is one of thousands of hospital volunteers across the Valley.

VOLUNTEERS: Unemployed workers often donate time to build connections

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“Sometimes they are looking for a career change or are wanting to see more about the health care fields.”

There are no shortcuts to getting a paying job, she said.

“When people who are unemployed come to us, it is a great opportunity for us to develop new relationships,” she said. “But they still need to go through the normal part of the process. If they don’t have the qualifications, they aren’t going to get the job.”

The number of volunteers at JCL has remained steady over the past two years, with 1,962 people contributing 194,492 hours of service in 2011, compared with 1,806 contributing 198,705 hours in 2010, according to Llewellyn.

Phoenix Children’s Hospital has 683 people who donate their time at the hospital plus 4,472 who volunteer in the community, said Denise Wittstock, manager of volunteer services at PCH. Volunteers logged 84,410 hours in 2011, up from 66,912 in 2010.

The hospital is preparing to launch a program called the Family Care Cart. Rather than coffee or snacks, volunteers will sell items for families at PCH, from toys for kids to fuzzy socks. Wittstock said the items on the cart will be especially useful for patients and their families from out of town.

Wittstock said a variety of volunteer positions are available at PCH.

Maricopa Integrated Health System, which operates Maricopa Medical Center and more than a dozen community health centers throughout the county, has 101 volunteers but needs four times that number.

Last year, a small core of volunteers logged 12,192 hours. But down from 15,002 in 2010, said Liza Hyatt, director of volunteer and guest services at MIHS.

Having a consistent volunteer force “free up a lot of time and opportunities for the staff members to contribute back to the patient care in other meaningful ways,” she said.

BUILDING: Mayo, CTCA, Banner MD Anderson have expansions in works

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services is expected to add 820 jobs at Mayo Clinic over 10 years: 92 physicians and 728 allied health staff. The proton beam therapy program alone will add 130 staff, including 10 physicians and 12 physicists from now until the proton beam therapy program alone will add 130 staff, including 10 physicians and 12 physicists from now until the program opens in 2016.

The hospital is part of a 210-acre campus at 56th Street and Mayo Boulevard, near Loop 101. Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton has identified that area as a potential bio hub.

Before Mayo built its own hospital in 1998, it had a partnership with Scottsdale Healthcare under which Mayo physicians treated their patients at the hospital system’s facility.

Today, the organizations are in early talks to explore educational collaborations, said Dr. Wyatt Decker, CEO of Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

Scottsdale Healthcare spokesman Keith Jones said the hospital system always is open to discussing collaborative opportunities.

SCH has been working with the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Phoenix since 2005 and conducts Phase I clinical trials in partnership with TGen.

SCH has expanded its cancer services steadily since opening the Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center in 2001. It was the first comprehensive cancer center in the Valley at the time.

While there are no additional construction plans for the Piper Center, it added a bone marrow transplant program in February, offering both inpatient and outpatient services. The transplants are used primarily to treat patients with aggressive cancers, such as myeloma, leukemia and lymphoma.

Across town, Cancer Treatment Centers of America has big expansion plans for its Western Regional Medical Center, which opened in Goodyear in 2008.

CTCA grew from 301 employees to 436 between July 2011 and July 2012 and expects year-over-year employee growth of 10 percent over the next three years, said Tiffany Payette, spokeswoman for CTCA, which focuses on mind, body and spirit into cancer treatment.

CTCA also invested $8.6 million in construction last year. The largest project is a $7.5 million expansion that is doubling the size of a clinic, adding 2,000 square feet. That work is expected to be completed in December.

Plans are on the drawing board for an additional $2.7 million in construction projects that are expected to start within the next month, including the addition of 24 inpatient units at CTCA, doubling the total.

Banner MD Anderson Cancer Center, which opened in Mesa last September, also is going to expand. The 133,000-square-foot facility was built so that it could be expanded to three times its original size. Phase II will double it.

While there is no specific time frame for when the second phase will be built, hospital executives already are planning for it, said Susan Karesky, spokeswoman for Banner MD Anderson, which has 191 employees.

Banner MD Anderson has been adding several programs over the past year, and recently hired Dr. Diljeet Singh to establish an integrative center that will incorporate mind, body and spirit into cancer treatment.

Karesky said alternative practices need to be combined with the latest technologies and treatments for a comprehensive approach to cancer care.

“I’m not speaking of CTCA, but I have seen patients who are being seen by alternative practitioners here in the Valley who are not coordinating well with their oncologists,” she said. “That’s a problem sometimes. My goal is to bring it all together.”

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