



Brattleboro Retreat

Summary of Strategic Initiatives

Every year, the Retreat helps nearly 4,000 adults and 700 children (numbers that have been rising every year) through a multitude of programs, services, and facilities, offering a comprehensive continuum of care across the lifespan. The impact of the Retreat's services upon its patients and their families is often dramatic and life-saving, and there are fewer and fewer organizations offering such a complete array of resources in behavioral healthcare. At the same time, the number of patients coping with mental health and substance abuse issues continues to rise throughout the region and the nation, and new methods of treating these patients are constantly being developed and refined. The Retreat has striven successfully to augment and modernize its programs and facilities to ensure that its patients benefit from the latest developments in treatment. In 2009, the Retreat saw a 12.8% increase in inpatient admissions, the largest increase in several years.

In 2009, the Brattleboro Retreat entered year three of a three year strategic plan. The first year, 2007, focused on "Blocking and Tackling," ensuring that all key processes were functioning optimally. Highlights from 2007 included a focus on safety and regulatory compliance, the redesign and renovation of the admissions area and implementation of the Juran Model of quality improvement.

In the second year, 2008, the Retreat completed a comprehensive re-branding program, continued its focus on safety, completed renovations of three inpatient areas: the adolescent inpatient, general adult psychiatric and co-occurring disorders programs and launched a philanthropic effort. Throughout the renovations, the Retreat focused on assuring that our environment of care provides the dignity, safety and beauty that our legacy requires. These renovations provide a more pleasant environment for staff and patients, an environment that supports patient care.

Renovations continued in 2009, the third year of the strategic plan, with the relocation of the child inpatient program. The new unit features more flexible group spaces, a central nursing station, sensory rooms and a family visiting room. The Retreat has a unique role as the only mental health hospital for children and adolescents in the state of Vermont. This renovation created a state of the art program for Vermont children ages 4 – 12 who require hospitalization. It reflects the Retreat's commitment to children and to ensuring access to state of the art mental health treatment for Vermont children.

Philanthropic efforts also continued in 2009, generating a 300% increase in giving. The 175th anniversary gala in September, 2009 was a particularly successful event. This success is crucial to the Retreat's long term efforts and helps to ensure the financial strength of the hospital.

The Retreat opened two new programs in 2009. These programs are key components of the Retreat's strategic plan. The first, an inpatient program for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), opened in July. This 16 bed unit provides LGBT individuals the opportunity to receive the care they need in an affirming, inclusive environment, free from prejudice. This unit was opened after extensive market research and surveys demonstrated that people who identify as LGBT often feel uncomfortable or misunderstood in general psychiatric units. Programming on the LGBT unit allows them to freely explore gender and sexual identity issues as they manage their mental health and addiction treatment needs.

The second program, for Uniformed Service Workers, opened in August. This program provides trauma and substance abuse care for police, fire, EMS, correctional officers, veterans and others who are traumatized in the line of duty. The Retreat identified both through market research and because of our own experience with the people who were seeking care at the hospital, a need for specialized treatment of the uniformed service population. This is a group of people who are often not comfortable and don't feel understood in a general milieu but rather prefer to be with people who have had similar experiences. They may also need specific trauma treatment tailored to their experiences.

Emergency service workers are at risk for developing post-traumatic stress reactions and other psychiatric symptoms (i.e., depression), as unanticipated side effects of their employment as uniformed service workers. For example, Clohessy and Ehlers (1999) found that 21% of paramedics and ambulance technicians met criteria for PTSD regarding their exposure to traumatic events from the simple performance of their routine job functions. Other research has shown high rates of trauma, substance abuse, depression, family problems and suicidality in other emergency service professions such as fire, police and corrections. People who serve in the military, and particularly in combat, are similarly at risk. With the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, increasing numbers of veterans are seeking mental health treatment.

In addition to having to struggle with the pernicious effects of continual exposure to traumatic events, uniformed service workers are often constrained by the "professional culture" they work within from seeking treatment for PTSD or other trauma related problems. Often, uniformed service workers will not seek treatment as an unintended side effect of the norms and expectations associated with their line of work. A dedicated program also made sense from this perspective.

In 2009, the Retreat also partnered with Healthcare and Rehabilitative Services (HCRS) to develop a 6 bed staff secure program in Brattleboro for individuals who do not require a hospital setting but who do need intensive clinical interventions in order to re-integrate into their home communities. This program, named Meadowview, is part of the Futures Project and opened in December, 2009. The partnership combines the best of community

mental health services and the strengths of the Retreat's psychiatric, nursing and medical care to benefit all Vermonters.

Summary of Process for Openness and Public Participation

The Brattleboro Retreat keeps the community informed with regular appearances and/or membership with the Brattleboro Selectboard, Building a Better Brattleboro, Brattleboro Development and Credit Corporation, Brattleboro Chamber of Commerce, the Windham County Legislative Delegation, and ongoing collaboration with other community organizations including Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Healthcare and Rehabilitation Services, Rescue Inc., the Police Department, and area schools. In addition to its regular treatment and professional education services, the Brattleboro Retreat offers numerous programs to the community free of charge, including the Wellness in Windham County series, co-sponsored with Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, Brattleboro Area Hospice & Brooks Memorial Library, and various lectures, films, forums, and special educational events open to the community. The feedback of patients, their families, and community members is of great importance to the Brattleboro Retreat.

The Retreat also partnered with United Way of Windham County, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, the Alliance for Building Community and the local Agency of Human Services to jointly conduct a community needs assessment. This assessment was completed in 2009. The Needs assessment included mental health and addiction treatment needs in the area, which are the services the Retreat provides. The assessment included a random phone survey, focus groups designed to be inclusive of different populations and key stakeholder interviews. A comprehensive review of existing data was also undertaken. This assessment provides useful community information for the Retreat, our partners and other agencies. The Retreat utilizes this information in an ongoing way and will incorporate it into our 2010 – 2013 strategic planning process. Complete copies of the Community Needs assessment can be found at: <http://unitedwaywindham.org>.

Strategic Plan and Financial Information

The Brattleboro Retreat spends approximately \$1 million per year on capital improvements. The depreciation schedule generally amounts to \$1.3 million. As a private not-for-profit organization, copies of the strategic plan are not publicly available. Questions regarding any strategic planning issue or opportunities for public input may be addressed to Julia Sorensen, MBA, MSW, Director of Marketing and Communications.

For more information, please contact:

Julia Sorensen, MBA, MSW
Director of Marketing and Communication
Brattleboro Retreat
Anna Marsh Lane
P.O. Box 803
Brattleboro, VT 05302
(802) 258-3719