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With Health Quest, a big change at Sharon Hospital

Congratulations are in order for a community institution, one of the most important resources available to all who live in the Tri-state region: Sharon Hospital. It has come full circle, converting once again to nonprofit status, and joining with Health Quest out of Lagrangeville, N.Y., as of Aug. 1.

The thing about institutions is they can sometimes be taken for granted, as if they will always be there no matter what challenges outside forces throw at them. For Sharon Hospital, if its administration had not been creative and flexible in its approach to some of those challenges over the years, it might well not be here.

First, in 2002, the hospital converted from a nonprofit entity to a for-profit one, the only one in the state of Connecticut at that time and for many years following. The hospital's purchase then by Essent Healthcare of Nashville, Tenn., was a lifesaving action, as its finances and parts of its facility were in serious need of repair.

Then, while there were some good years in between, by recent years challenges had again arisen. But, as reported in this newspaper by Executive Editor Cynthia Hochswender last week, with the help of the Foundation for Community Health, the hospital administration was up to the challenges it now faced, and change has once more given Sharon Hospital new life.

The process this time seemed simpler from the outside looking in than the conversion to for-profit did 15 years ago. Yet there was still the need for public hearings and the release of much information about the planned changes and the services that would be available to the hospital's population base once it became affiliated with Health Quest. That meant a lot of work for the Sharon Hospital administration to prepare a Certificate of Need for the state of Connecticut and to explain to area residents the rationale behind the need for change.

Kudos to all who made it happen, including Foundation for Community Health CEO Nancy Heaton and its board of directors, and Sharon Hospital CEO Peter Cordeau and CFO Christian Bergeron (who worked hard to make the change, but then knew it would mean he would end up leaving the job once it was completed. He left Sharon Hospital as of Aug. 11.) There will continue to be obstacles to overcome from many different directions before the change can be considered a success, but there are many working to make it so.

Let them know at Sharon Hospital what your experience is there, both the positive and the negative, so they can find ways to address their shortcomings as well as bolster their strengths to serve their

communities better in the long term. They are certainly committed to trying to do that, or they wouldn't have gone through all the work to affiliate with Health Quest.

Salisbury and Sharon:

Don't forget about your garbage

But really, how can any of us forget about our need for recycling and leaving our trash somewhere that will efficiently and professionally mitigate it for us? For those who live in Salisbury and Sharon, now is the time to attend the next Planning and Zoning meeting at the Salisbury Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 21, and express your thoughts on the new transfer station during public comment as well as listen to those who have been working on this municipal project for years.

Charlottesville

The white nationalist demonstrations in Virginia Aug. 12 have been fomenting for at least eight years, after Barack Obama's election convinced neo-Nazi white supremacists in the United States that their ideas and way of life were being attacked. The Southern Poverty Law Center has tracked the increase of such hate groups over the following years, and Donald Trump's rise to power has given these groups the confidence to exert their power on the national stage.

Their un-American views should be answered at every turn with vigorous and unbending opposition, not only in the streets as they were in Charlottesville, but also through all political and social means, if this nation is to survive as it should.

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