The LHA Research and Education Foundation (LHAREF) raised $349,000 for the Louisiana Hospital Employee Assistance Fund to help provide some relief to hospital employees who suffered significant property loss to their residences during the August 2016 flooding. LHAREF, a 501(c)(3) organization, collected donations from hospitals, other associations, individuals and vendors nationwide through Oct. 31, 2016 and disseminated those funds to hospitals. The LHAREF established the fund, because so many organizations and individuals nationwide wanted to help our family of hospital employees through these trying times. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Quality
Hospital in Louisiana continue to make marked improvements in patient safety and quality care. In 2016, the LHAREF and Education Foundation (LHAREF) continued its partnership with the Health Research Education Trust (HRET) of the American Hospital Association Hospital Engagement Network (HEN) to support participating hospitals in further improving quality and patient safety in multiple topic areas. Whether working with other HENs and groups, or as one of the 88 hospitals working with the LHAREF HEN, member and non-member hospitals alike continue to advance key topics in the areas of quality and patient safety.

In September 2016, the LHAREF completed the one-year contract of the extremely successful Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Partnership for Patients HEN program. As of September 2016, 92 percent of applicable hospitals submitted at least 70 percent of the expected data into the program; in eight topic areas, hospitals in the LHAREF HEN collectively prevented 1,988 adverse patient-safety events with a potential savings of more than $17.7 million. During the year, the LHAREF offered trainings and resources to help member hospitals stay diligent in the task of improving care to our communities. The LHAREF:
• Hired staff dedicated to working side-by-side with hospitals to help them facilitate improvement efforts.
• Performed more than 100 hospital-site visits.
• Conducted 13 in-person, regionally-based workshops and rounds using national experts to address adverse-drug events, infections, falls, perioperative harm, readmissions and patient/family engagement.
• Hosted the annual Patient Safety & Quality Improvement (PSO) training and Advanced Training to facilitate patient safety improvements through better communication and team-based tools; and
• Improved patient and family involvement in care decisions and delivery.

In an effort to provide timely, relevant education programs, the LHAREF analyzes the results of the Education Needs Assessment that members complete several times a year and continually develops or modifies programs to meet the growing demand for education on leadership, regulatory changes, payment updates and industry best practices. In 2016, the LHAREF and its affiliates:
• Hosted workshops and other training opportunities to support readiness and response efforts within organizations on key topics, including active shooter response, preparing for emerging infectious diseases, and how to maximize access to FEMA’s public assistance program for reimbursement of disaster-related expenses; and
• Supported hospitals in flood-impacted areas throughout the state with evacuations, shelter-in-place operations, resource requests and mandatory reporting requirements.

Education
Offered 117 education programs, including 84 live programs and 47 webinars, with the participation of more than 2,653 healthcare CEOs, senior management, trustees and other health professionals.
• Hosted the LHA-Annual Winter Healthcare Leadership Symposium in February.
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• Had record attendance at LHA-Annual Meeting & Summer Conference in July with 348 attendees and offered an ACEH Category I session.
• Maintained LHARedux.com, an online learning program currently serving 20 Louisiana hospitals; and
• Offered more than 270 approved nursing CEUs as an approved provider in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

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Emergency Preparedness
The LHA Research and Education Foundation (LHAREF) emergency preparedness team continues its efforts to support effective planning and response support for hospitals preparing for all hazards emergency events. Guided by the capabilities defined in the HHS Hospital Preparedness Program and regulatory standards articulated by the Joint Commission and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the emergency preparedness team worked to refine existing response plans and resources, enhance data analytic capabilities and reinforce relationships with state agencies to better support hospital readiness.
• Distributed $1.4 million in Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grant funds to hospitals and EMS providers;
• Distributed $200,000 in HPP Ebola grant funds to Acadia Ambulance Service for Ebola and other emerging infectious disease planning and response to assist with transport of patients to Federal Regional Treatment Facilities;
• Worked with Federal Region VI partners in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico to develop and test inter-state planning and responses to events taking place in Louisiana;
• Helped state partners to refine Louisiana’s response plans for a post-landfall evacuation of hospitals and other medical institutions;
• Worked with inter-agency and inter-disciplinary planning teams and providers to develop, implement and share regional plans and procedures to supportFarrell-McDuffie at LHA's Legislative Reception.

Media and Communications
The Association focused more resources on social media this year, including advocating for legislative issues, participating in United Against the Flu, promoting health observances and sharing healthcare worker’s personal flood experiences. In addition, LHAREF leadership shared their expertise with state and national reporters regarding various healthcare issues.

During the Legislative “Season,” the LHA created a robust public relations campaign on the importance of hospitals in Louisiana and the consequences could have on the health of residents and the economy. The campaign included radio and television ads, a Facebook page, media videos, a website and infographics.

With the ever-changing healthcare environment, it is imperative that we disseminate timely, relevant information to our members. The LHA uses a variety of communication methods to reach our members and other stakeholders, including IMPACT Weekly/Session newsletters; LHA E-lerts to hospital leadership; LHA Daily Report; IMPACT Leadership Update newsletters; Rural Hospitals Circuit; Quality Bulletins; the Membership Directory; LHAREF website, www.MedHelp.org, and social media outreach through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (@LHAHREF).
HOSPAPC and Advocacy

Decisions made in the Louisiana Legislature significantly impact hospitals and healthcare in our state. To ensure a strong voice for hospitals, the LHA has worked to ensure our hospitals are strongly represented. The LHA’s legislative advocacy efforts are critical to the success of the state’s healthcare initiatives. HOSPAPC funds help educate, elect, and build relationships with policymakers who care about the continued viability of hospitals in Louisiana. Thank you to everyone who contributed to HOSPAPC Your commitment and dedication are vital to our industry and the hospitals. Hospitals have a strong voice when decisions are made that impact the delivery of healthcare.

Grassroots advocacy protects hospitals and the patients they serve throughout the entire healthcare system. To assist hospital leaders in being active and engaged in the political process, the LHA uses Legislative Action Alerts and PR Point Person E-Lerts to connect our members with elected officials on various legislative issues. Hospital leaders are the very foundation of effective advocacy as they communicate with their state legislators and share their concerns with policymakers. Grassroots advocacy is essential for you to have a meaningful voice in issues that impact hospitals, and this message is amplified when hospital staff also reach out to lawmakers.

Hospital Day at the Capitol

The LHA hosted Hospital Day at the Capitol on May 10, which gave us the opportunity to ensure the hospital industry was “top of mind” and present during the budget debate. Hospital leaders with the LHA’s Grassroots Advocacy Committee visited the state Capitol to educate lawmakers on how hospital leaders stand to gain or lose in the budget process. Thank you to the hospitals that participated in the Grassroots Advocacy Committee’s Hospital Day at the Capitol. Won’t you join the hospitals that are already participating in that day to share what “Hospita” means to their communities.

State Initiatives

Legislative Session: The 2016 Legislative “Session” consisted of two special sessions and one regular session of the Louisiana Legislature that opened more than 19 consecutive weeks, making it Louisiana’s longest continuous session in modern history. Throughout these legislative sessions, lawmakers considered more than 1,600 pieces of legislation, with the LHA actively tracking 262 bills and taking positions on 52 bills in the regular session alone. Like previous years, the 2016 Legislative Session was largely defined by Louisiana’s significant, ongoing state budget challenges. Specifically, the legislature began the first special session with the need to address a budget shortfall of more than $3 billion. The solution was found largely by further delaying debt service payments for the 2016 legislative session and by relying on one-time revenue from sales taxes. The second special session and regular session saw passage of Medicaid expansion, ongoing budget issues and the continued pursuit of quality improvement. The LHA will continue working with legislators on remaining budget challenges by promoting long-term, structural solutions, including those Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 51, which provides a financing mechanism for coverage expansion and an approximate 7 percent rate increase for most hospitals. SCR 51 passed the legislature because of a strong grassroots push from members, ongoing advocacy work from the LHA, and an advertising campaign prompting individuals to contact their lawmakers on the issue.

In addition to the budget issues, the LHA successfully:

- Sponsored and passed a telemedicine bill, HB 450 (Act 252) by Rep. Katrina Jackson (D-Monroe) amends prior state law to allow physicians to prescribe controlled substances through telemedicine technology when they are treating a patient at a licensed healthcare facility that also hosts a current registration with the DEA.
- Dealt two bills intended to implement co-pays in the Medicaid program. Eight separate bills were filed that would have implemented co-pays in the Medicaid program. Co-pays equal a rate cut, since there is a low probability of the hospital ever collecting from the Medicaid recipient.
- Dealt two bills intended to alter or remove the limitation of damages under the Medical Malpractice Act. SB 30 by Sen. Gall (R-Bossier City) would have expanded the definition of “healthcare provider” to include any individual or entity that provides healthcare to a patient. SB 106 by Sen. Gall (R-Bossier City) would have removed the limitation on damages in cases involving a “medical malpractice.” This bill met strong opposition and was defeated due to the opposition of any provider who negligently or knowingly grants privileges to, authorizes for or profits from another healthcare provider’s malpractice. This bill was defeated after the healthcare provider for all cases; SB 50 by Sen. Gall would have increased the cap on damages for all malpractice claims for catastrophic brain injuries to a minimum of $500,000 or $3 million plus interest and costs when either a medical review panel renders an unanimous opinion in favor of the claim or liability is determined unanimously by a jury; and
- Worked with lawmakers to enact the Family Caregiver Act. The LHA worked closely with the AARP on this bill to improve education provided to caregivers of patients who are being discharged from the hospital setting while seeking to limit any unnecessary administrative burden on hospitals.

Resources

Data is a key decision-making, and the LHA and its affiliated organizations provide valuable data to hospital staff, so that hospital leaders, policy makers, and the public can make thoughtful healthcare decisions. In 2016, the LHA and its affiliated organizations:

- Provided participating hospitals all-pay, claims-based administrative data through the Louisiana Health Information Network (LHIN);
- Maintained the Monthly Utilization Report Program, which provides timely data for planning, marketing, and other strategic uses;
- Used publicly-reported data to create the Louisiana Hospital Benchmarking Report; an annual analysis of competitive financial and operational indicators for hospitals within the state;
- Published The Hospital Association Guide to Hospital Pricing and Quality to help consumers manage their own healthcare needs, and
- Offered a free CEU course on the Affordable Care Act and a Healthcare idea and reporting program that provides member hospitals with financial and clinical information.

Federal Initiatives

The LHA works with Louisiana’s Congressional Delegation and the American Hospital Association to advocate on key federal issues. This year, the LHA:

- Urged the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide flexibility to hospital outpatient departments under the new-neutral payment provisions of the Bipartisan Budget Act;
- Requested relief from the rapid expansion of new mandatory service payments that could put the success of other initiatives at risk;
- Supported more flexibility for providers as CMS implemented payment reforms under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA);
- Recommended that CMS consider important modifications to its pay-for-performance programs;
- Asked Congress to address legal and regulatory barriers to care coordination;
- Supported CMS proposed to remove a payment reduction under the agency’s controversial two-midnight rule;
- Urged CMS to consider eliminating its “all or nothing approach” when recognizing providers as meaningful users of electronic health records;
- Recommended ways to improve communication between hospitals and patients through changes in HHS proposed notification requirements for Medicare patients receiving observation services;
- Secured congressional cosponsors for legislation to address unlawful penalties for Louisiana hospitals in the Medicare wage-index formula (H.R. 4206);
- Joined 21 state hospital associations in asking CMS to end a manipulation of the Medicare Average Value Index System created under section 3141 of the Affordable Care Act;
- Requested that CMS validate the methodology for its hospital star rating program to accurately portray hospital performance;
- Opposed SB 36 by Sen. Gatti (R–Bossier City) which would have expanded the scope of the Louisiana Medical Malpractice Act. SB 36 by Sen. Gall would have increased the cap on damages for all malpractice claims for catastrophic brain injuries to a minimum of $500,000 or $3 million plus interest and costs when either a medical review panel renders an unanimous opinion in favor of the claim or liability is determined unanimously by a jury; and
- Opposed proposed federal budget cuts to healthcare, including Critical Access Hospitals, Graduate Medical Education and loan debt payments to hospitals.

Member Groups, Committees, Task Forces and Councils

LHA members can engage with the LHA through a myriad of member groups, including the Legislative, Regulatory & Policy Council; Finance Committee; Quality Improvement Council; Physician Leadership Council; Compliance Compliance Committee; Hospital Staff Recognition Task Force; Louisiana Hospital Empowerment and Advocacy Network (LEARN) and the Coverage Expansion Task Force; Behavioral Health; LTACH; Human Resource and Rehabilitation Compliance Council; Managed Care Advocacy Group; Workers’ Compensation Advisory Group; the CFO Expert Panel; and professional societies. In 2016, the LHA:

- Hosted the Mid-South CEH conference in Nashville using rural Flex Grant funding;
- Hosted the LSNA Healthcare Leadership Academy in a competitive financial and operational indicators for hospitals within the state;
- Participated in the LTACH, behavioral health, rural and human resource advisory groups;
- Co-hosted the Mid-South CEH conference in Nashville using rural Flex Grant funding;
- Hosted conferences for the Louisiana Organization of Nurse Executives, the Louisiana Society of Hospital Attorneys, and the Louisiana Society for Hospital Public Relations and Marketing;
- Increased physician engagement by expanding the Physician Leadership Steering Committee; offering the 101 and 201 Series of the Physician Leadership Academy; in cooperation with AHRQ, creating a liaison to tips physician leaders across the state;
- Promoting education on the MACRA, and participating in the newly-created Louisiana Hospital Association Council on Preventing Safety-Impaired;
- Created a new task force on the Louisiana Hospital Association Quality, where LAVH will become LHA’s official member group for quality professionals.

Letter from Paul A. Salter, LHA President & CEO

Louisiana’s healthcare system experienced rapid change this year with the rollout of Medicaid expansion, ongoing budget issues and the continued pursuit of quality improvement. In 2016, our Board, members and staff worked diligently as an Association to protect access to reasonable services, maintain adequate healthcare resources and enhance the quality of care.

With our state’s longest continuing legislative session in modern history, including two special sessions and one regular session, the LHA staff, hospital leaders, and our grassroots hospital network engaged in issues ranging from budget cuts to rate increases to tax reform to clinical and regulatory changes. We were able to identify and support solutions that averted what would have been catastrophic budget cuts. However, we have a long road ahead. For 2017, we will have to work strategically with lawmakers on long-term solutions to ensure stability in our healthcare system.

Our Association prides itself on member involvement. We have tremendous participation by hospital leaders and employees throughout Louisiana, and because of this, we have cultivated a strong relationship with local and state leaders, ensuring a seat at the table when healthcare policy is discussed. I’d like to thank all our members, including those who participate on our boards and committees and in our societies and education programs. Our Association is strong because of you. I’d also like to recognize our new Lifetime Members: George French, Mark Marley, Jim Montgomery, Cindy Rogers and Steve Werkman, who helped guide the Association over the years.

Our Association showed its commitment to each other and our state through 2016, especially during the historic floods in August. Our hospitals rose to the challenge and worked tirelessly to ensure uninterrupted service to the community. I would also like to thank everyone for their generous support of the Louisiana Hospital Employees Assistance Fund, which was created to help hospital employees affected by the flood.

This year, we saw remarkable progress in quality improvement. Hospitals in the LHA Research & Education Foundation’s (LHAREF) Hospital Engagement Network 2.0 collectively prevented 1,988 patient-safety events with potential savings of more than $17.7 million. We also sponsored a one-month Lean Six Sigma GE Green Belt Certification program, with 72 individuals representing 19 organizations achieving Green Belt Certification. In addition, the LHAREF was awarded a two-year Hospital Improvement Innovation Network contract to further assist you in your journey to improve quality and patient safety. We have even more to offer you in 2017. Since the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) approved the Louisiana Alliance for Patient Safety (LAPS) as a federally-recognized Patient Safety Organization (PSO), which encourages clinicians and healthcare organizations to voluntarily report and share quality and patient safety information without fear of legal discovery in an effort to prevent future adverse patient-safety events.

Whatever 2017 may bring, I know that the LHA is here to help you with all your regulatory, legislative, education and service-oriented needs.

Sincerely,

President & CEO