

## **Advancing the Health and Well-Being of Older Adults and Caregivers in our Community**

Ann Marie Cook's passion for older adults and the issues that envelop them began 22 years ago when she joined Lifespan as a department director. From there she moved into the Chief Operating Officer role, and in 2004 she was appointed President/CEO.

Known throughout the nonprofit and health care communities for her honesty, integrity and expertise, Ann Marie has spent the last 20 years forging partnerships that lead to service enhancements while always keeping what is best for older adults and caregivers as her primary focus.

Among her many accomplishments, Ann Marie is most proud of the tremendous expansion of Lifespan in multiple areas – from taking elder abuse prevention statewide, to developing a Alzheimer's Caregiver Institute, to making significant progress in integrating services with health care.

In 2004, Lifespan secured a federal grant to convene a first in the nation statewide Elder Abuse Summit. Ninety-six experts in aging and abuse gathered in Albany to create a Statewide Elder Abuse Action Agenda. Lifespan formed the New York State Coalition on Elder Abuse to help implement that Agenda and to increase awareness of elder mistreatment in NY. Ann Marie leads the Coalition as co-chair and has been a tireless advocate for elder abuse services funding in New York State. As a result of her advocacy, in 2017, Lifespan implemented an Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team model for elder abuse cases that was piloted in the Finger Lakes and Manhattan to other areas of NYS. In 2014, Ann Marie led discussions with five area nursing homes to provide a new temporary housing alternative for victims who must be relocated from an abusive situation, but are too frail or incapacitated to go to traditional housing or domestic violence shelters. The new option provides an expedited nursing home placement which allows victims to receive healthcare and social work services in a protected setting while the abuse is investigated and a safe discharge plan is developed.

In 2006, Ann Marie worked with the University of Rochester's Psychiatry Department to include Lifespan's geriatric care management as a partner in a National Institute of Mental Health grant. The "SHARE Alliance" continues to this day and links Lifespan care managers with UR Psychiatry to provide a more seamless system of care for older adults with depression and/or other mental health problems.

Ann Marie's ongoing, collaborative work with health care systems and the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency (FLHSA) led to Lifespan receiving a \$3.6 million award from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2012. This award tested a hospital-to-home care transition model to reduce hospital readmissions for high risk Medicare Fee-for-Service beneficiaries. During the five-year contract, Lifespan, the five area hospitals, Visiting Nurse Service and Lifetime Care, partnered to embed the Coleman Care Transitions Intervention® model in the patient discharge process. Over the five-year period, patients who received one or both interventions were 25% less likely to have a 30-day readmission.

Working with Community Place and Rochester Area Community Foundation, Ann Marie helped to implement the caregiver respite service which recruits, screens and trains volunteers to provide respite for caregivers of older adults who cannot be left alone. This fills a gap in respite options for caregivers who provide 80% of all long-term care in New York. .

Ann Marie approached the New York State Department of Health about an innovative way to better integrate community-based aging services with health care. Using data provided by the Robert Wood Johnson's "Health Care's Blind Side," Ann Marie envisioned a system of non-siloed care. The Community Care Connections project received NYS Department of Health funding in 2015 to pilot integrating the services of a community-based aging service provider as an authentic member of the evolving health care delivery system to help older adults remain in their own homes, decrease hospital admissions/readmissions, ED visits and reduce caregiver burden. Today, Lifespan's social workers are embedded in several physician offices who work collaboratively with doctors and nurse care managers.

Ann Marie has served on numerous committees and task forces focused on improving the lives of older adults. In addition to her professional work with Lifespan, she is a diligent and effective leader and volunteer in the community. She is an active member of the University of Rochester Medical Center

Community Advisory Committee for Community Health, a board member of Highland Hospital, LiveOn NY of NYC, Council of Agency Executives, and Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO). She also works on the Rochester Anti-Poverty Initiative, as well as on Senator Gillibrand's Working Group on the Aging and the New York State Advisory Committee on Aging. In 2005 she was a delegate from New York to the White House Conference on Aging.

Ann Marie Cook has demonstrated decades of sustained and effective service for countless elders, their caregivers, physicians and medical providers across the area and New York State. Her leadership has contributed to Rochester being one of the best places to be a geriatrician or a geriatric patient. "Older adults can have a great quality of life," says Ann Marie. "I am constantly looking for the nooks and crannies where we can do a better job because when it works, it works beautifully. You can see the difference in people's lives. That's all we want."