

“Building a Healthy Community”



Guest column by Mark Ciota, M.D., CEO
Mayo Clinic Health System – Albert Lea and Austin

Running a medical center is an important responsibility that has direct impact in a community. It is a responsibility that we take seriously as we focus on our patients, our employees and our community. Since 1996, Mayo has invested more than \$34 million on the Albert Lea campus, and we continue to invest today to ensure the facility is updated and ready to serve future generations. Mayo Clinic operations in Freeborn County generate more than \$180 million in economic activity and indirectly support 500 jobs in the community, in addition to the 1,000 people we directly employ, making us the largest employer in Albert Lea and Freeborn County. This impact will only grow as we continue to invest in the technologies, facilities and people to deliver the best care to our patients right here in Albert Lea.

In addition to the clinic and hospital, Mayo Clinic recently invested \$2.1 million to build a new ambulance building and training facility in Albert Lea to support high-quality, prompt emergency services and transport for local residents. The new facility allows for the addition of eight new full-time positions. The facility is also used for training and continuing education for Gold Cross staff across southern Minnesota. For patients, we offer a number of unique services that patients travel to Albert Lea to receive, such as dialysis, hyperbaric wound care, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Health Reach, and, later this fall, the new Psychiatric Services Unit to address inpatient mental health care. All these services have a positive impact in the community. Visitors from out of town, for example, patronize local restaurants and hotels while they are here visiting patients or attending training, adding to the economic vitality of the community.

Our investment extends to our employees. In a highly competitive recruiting environment, Mayo Clinic Health System works aggressively to attract the best providers to serve the needs of our patients. We recently announced a number of new hires, some of whom have chosen to make Albert Lea their home. We are also increasing the number of Family Medicine residencies we offer, since we know some of those residents will join our Albert Lea/Austin practice after graduation. We remain committed to hiring additional providers to serve the needs of this community.

The talent pipeline in our community is also important, as the clinic and hospitals rely on specially trained staff in many departments. Mayo Clinic Health System is an active partner with Riverland Community College to support ongoing education and training for adult learners. We also sponsor numerous scholarships to local high school students interested in pursuing higher education in health care. We hope that some of these students will be part of our workforce of the future.

Perhaps you have met some of our staff at Wind Down Wednesdays or the Freeborn County Fair. We know that a healthy community is a strong community, and our providers and employees volunteer their time and talents to a wide range of activities in the community – from providing information on healthy living to serving on local boards and initiatives like The Blue Zones Project to participating in a variety of fundraising efforts.

Mayo Clinic Health System makes these investments in technologies, facilities and people because we are a part of this community. The impact as an employer and driver of economic activity is important, but our care for our friends, neighbors, family and community members – our patients - is what makes our work worthwhile.