

HEALTH CARE

HopeHealth grows with merger, \$1M gift, new CEO

By Noah Hoffenberg
nhoffenberg@barnstablepatriot.com

Hyannis-based HopeHealth is expanding and changing with the needs of a growing elder population, announcing a merger Thursday with a similar Rhode Island organization to form the largest hospice and palliative care group in the Northeast.



Rehm

The announcement comes on the heels of HopeHealth receiving a \$1 million charitable gift, which will be used to start a program to support caregivers who are aiding loved ones suffering from dementia or terminal illness. HopeHealth for more than 30 years has been offering medical care, care management and support services throughout the eastern part of the commonwealth.

David W. Rehm, HopeHealth's CEO and president, told the Patriot on Thursday that the merger is also timed with his retirement, after which the CEO of Home Care & Hospice of New England, Diana Franchitto, will assume responsibility for the newly formed nonprofit company, which will be called HopeHealth.

Home Care & Hospice of New England is the parent of Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island and Visiting Nurse Home Care. The

SEE CEO, A8

Rhode Island subsidiary is the second oldest hospice in the nation. Rehm is also the former CEO of the Rhode Island-based Home Care & Hospice, and has built a strong relationship with

Franchitto.

"We began talking a while ago and there were a lot of benefits to us working together, and it made sense to merge our organizations," said Rehm. Franchitto will split her time between the Rhode Island and Cape locations, and will also set up a home here, as well. Much of her time early on will be spent in Hyannis, getting to know this side of the organization.

The process will take until the end of the year to complete, said Rehm, and that's when he'll retire.

HopeHealth's annual budget \$28 million will join with the Rhode Island group's budget for a total of \$75 million. Rehm said the 230 employees here on the Cape, and 450 from the Rhode Island organization, will not experience any layoffs or reductions.

Rehm said local programs will stay the same here on the Cape, but they'll also grow as future expansion plans become more likely.

They're especially needed on the Cape, where the population skews higher to retirees, the baby boomer demographic that could burst the American health care system should home health options disappear.

"We're one of the oldest counties in America ... and also our younger population is declining. That's where the professional caregiver source comes from," said Rehm. "The burden on family caregivers is only going to grow."

To that end, the recent \$1 million gift to the nonprofit health care agency from the Elizabeth M. Arnold Stevens Trust, announced Oct. 8., will be used to establish The Elizabeth M. Arnold Stevens Alzheimer's & Hospice Care-giver Endowed Fund. This is HopeHealth's largest single gift and will become its first

endowment.

Elizabeth M. Arnold Stevens, herself a caregiver in two former marriages, was a resident of Harwich until her death in April. She was a regular donor to HopeHealth, but typically far smaller amounts, said Rehm.

"We had no idea that this might be coming our way," said Rehm. He said the Elizabeth M. Arnold Stevens trustees made the decision based on her interests. "It was a perfect fit, and they gave the entire million to us."

About a quarter of the Cape's population qualifies as retirement age, the largest such demographic in the state, according to Barnstable County statistics, outpacing the rest of the country by about double. The Executive Office of Elder Affairs estimates that in 2010, the total number of hours of unpaid Alzheimer's care in the Bay State was in excess of 360,000,000 hours, with an economic value of more than \$4 billion.

On Cape Cod, HopeHealth officials have said that about 10,000 of the Cape's 216,000 residents have some form of dementia, with Alzheimer's being the most common.

Rehm said it's really family caregivers that are critical for Alzheimer's and dementia care. He said the health care system would collapse without them.

"They've begun to quantify the impact in Washington, and the impact is enormous, and it's sort of a hidden fact that our health care system wouldn't function without family caregivers," said Rehm.

The new HopeHealth will have three nonprofit subsidiaries, two in the Ocean State and one in the Bay State. Home Care & Hospice of Rhode Island will change its name to Hope Hospice & Palliative Care of Rhode Island and its sister group Visiting Nurse Home Care will be



Visiting Nurse of HopeHealth.

The subsidiaries will retain
their local boards of directors.

For more information, call
800-642-2423 or visiting
hopehealthco.org.