Message to the Community – Tom Manion, President and CEO, New London Hospital, July 10, 2020

Recovery is a lot about education. I think with New London hospital, you'll see that we are probably one of the cleanest places you can be in this community right now. We constantly clean all of the touchable services in this organization. We are assessing how we're performing in terms of access and getting people back in. We're at a point now where our volumes are starting to return to normal in certain areas. We still have some places where we need some more work. Our ambulatory clinics, for example, are not back to where they were. We need to get some of those locations you know, a better resource so that we can see those patients. And the great news is we are doing some other things like telemedicine, where we can see some people from home who are too sick or it just wouldn't be safe for them to come in or just frankly, to be out in the community anywhere. So we have a lot of options that work we're focused on right now, but really when we talk about recovery, it's about getting people back in to get the care that they need.

ARE ALL SERVICES OPEN?

All services are back up and running. Yes. So we do have again, some services and doing some telemedicine where it's appropriate. But for the most part, we actually never closed any of our services. Everything was actually open the entire time. When with the exception of the OR where we did have to close to make sure that we were going to get all of our testing and protocols in place. The great news now is that we have those very, very well established. We have all of our PPE that we need to make sure that we can keep you safe, keep all the other patients safe and keep our employees safe.

WHAT HAS THE IMPACT BEEN FOR NLH?

Impact has been certainly one, a bit of stress, right? You want to make sure that you're doing everything to protect your employees and people you know, COVID can be something that's a little nebulous and unknown. You here, you look at turn on the news and you see things that are scary images. But the great news for our communities that we haven't had a whole lot of cases here in the New London area that all said, we still took all the proper precautions. We closed down our, or we scaled back a lot of our services, some things to tell medicine and other things where we just had to refocus, you know, how, how we bring people back safely. And you know, that that certainly had a financial impact. We over the course of this without the stimulus funds, I want to say we’re, we're about $8 million behind budget. You know, that's, that's pretty significant for a hospital. Our size was stimulus. We're closer to $2 million behind budget and that's still sizable. You know, we have a lot of things coming up in the year ahead. We're in the middle of planning for Epic. We had to delay our Epic go live.

WHAT DOES EPIC MEAN FOR PATIENTS?

Epic. Epic is going to be a great thing for our community members, especially if you are a patient who has had to see someone at one of our affiliates, including Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. So if you like many other patients here have seen, let's say a pulmonologist at, at Dartmouth, you, when we go on Epic, those notes, those medicines, everything, immunizations allergies, all of it, it's going to be listed in one record. And so when you have to constantly sign those release of information forms to send things back and forth it, it takes away all those little steps in between, and it makes it more fluid for the caregiver, for the providers to look in the record and see that everything's there. The other great thing
let's say heaven forbid you have to go to MD Anderson in Texas for cancer care. They're an Epic shop. The interoperability with Epic allows for providers to be able to pull that data into our instance of Epic and have all that information right there too. So it's not a PDF copy that someone's searching for. It's just right in your record, easy to find and track with all your other information. So there's a lot of benefits. You're going to have your mobile app. You're going to have other things that you want to do. We can schedule appointments, cancel appointments, ask questions, things like that all through a very easy to use on your app, on your phone. And it was just a lot of other things. So I think for people, when, when they see that we go on Epic, there's going to be a lot of opportunity to better communicate and a lot of opportunity to provide better care.

HOW ARE YOU PREPARING FOR THE FALL AS IT PERTAINS TO SCHOOL AND THE FLU?
Yeah, that's a great question. So, so for the fall first of all, I've actually been in, for example, with president Stubner, or we've been talking emailing regularly. So we have a lot of things that we're trying to work and collaborate and coordinate how we can you know, make sure students come back safely that we get them tested. We're going to do all the things within our power to do that. And so that's an ongoing conversation that we're having right now when it comes to, you know, lessons learned from, from COVID, right? So we've developed a lot of things from a drive up testing to some you know, very safe aside separated rooms where we can bring people in to make sure that if they need a higher level of screening, we can do those things. When it comes to flu. There are probably some lessons learned that we can look to put into place here. So we're still vetting this out, but we were able to drive up testing. Maybe we'll be able to do drive up back vaccinations too or something of that. We're not fully ready to unleash that yet, but we're looking into it. And I think we're going to be able to provide people that kind of care in a way that's safe and meets their needs. I think it's really important. Everyone gets their flu shot. The flu hasn't gone away. I think masks have been a phenomenal part of helping us tamp down the flu and social distancing and hand hygiene. I think this past this past flu season ended about three months earlier than we expected it to because everyone started masking up in social distancing in March. So going into this year, I think we'll see another positive impact from people washing their hands, social distancing, and keeping their masks on. So I think it's going to be, you know, we're going to have the flu. It's not going to go away, but I think if we continue to use a lot of the lessons that we've all learned from COVID hopefully it won't be as severe of a flu season.

HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY HELP NLH?
So I've been here about a hundred days so far. It has just been terrific to see how well the community members have already helped from people reaching out people helping us with our programs, our annual fund. Our COVID relief fund. And I think that the best way that every person can help out is to make sure they're coming back to take, get themselves taken care of. I think one of the worst things that our community members could do for themselves and for us is to delay the care that they need. If you aren't sure if you need to get that care, just give your primary care provider a call. It's at least starting that conversation. And maybe there's a safer way we can get you the care that you need, but by delaying it or not seeking it that's hurting both you and us. And so for our community members, the biggest asset that I have is that they make sure they continue engaging with the healthcare system and coming into take care of themselves for their healthcare needs.