

# Strengthen the Core



## Intro By Michelle Joy

Throughout 2021, we remained committed to strengthening the services we offer to our community while also strengthening our excellent team. We successfully built on the strong foundation of caring and service already present at Carson TahoeHealth. A number of new services were added in 2021, along with several physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, techs, and many other caregivers. We are proud of our entire team and all that they accomplished. The pandemic has been a challenge, to be sure, yet it has brought us together and bolstered our commitment to improving the health and well-being of the community we serve.

## Out of Dust Came Hope & Progress

If 2020 was the year of adaptation and resiliency, 2021 was the year of hope and progress. With that progress, came an abundance of construction dust and hard hats. A project that had been in the works since 2017—before the pandemic, before a national staffing shortage, and before grueling Tahoe fires—finally reached its completion. After much planning, two years of construction and fine-tuning, and a blessing from Peggy Locke, CTH Chaplain, the Carson Tahoe Walkway between Carson Tahoe Health's Regional Medical Center and Sierra Surgery building opened on October 4, 2021.



The enclosed structure spans Eagle Valley Creek, offering spectacular views of the surrounding flora and fauna through its expansive windows while providing patients, staff, and visitors convenient access between the two buildings. With two levels, the multi-purpose walkway can be used by both visitors and guests on the upper level and by staff and emergency medical services to transport patients on the lower level.

In addition to reducing transportation barriers, the connector also now houses the 9,800 sq. ft. Carson Tahoe Laboratory. "We outgrew the existing lab," said Michelle Joy, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. "The additional space allows breathing room, allowing lab staff to process around 2,100 orders per day." Carson Tahoe's lab services touch the lives of approximately 600 patients per day, performing over 3.1 million tests annually.

As we continued to battle the difficulties of the pandemic, construction never stopped. We stayed vigilant in our planning efforts and saw the vision through. The blueprints of the project were a symbol of hope, as opening day of the connector was a symbol of our progress.

## Carson Tahoe Health's Achievements



The hard work and effort made in improving patient care by Carson Tahoe Health was recognized in 2021 through a number of notable achievements, both on a local and national scale. Carson Tahoe Health achieved the Pathway to Excellence® designation, our Cancer Center was re-accredited as a quality program from the Commission on Cancer (a part of the American College of Surgeons), we received Primary Stroke Center designation, and we even took home “Best Place to Receive Medical Treatment” from the Best of Carson City Awards.

Carson Tahoe Health joined just three percent of hospitals in the nation to have received Pathway to Excellence® designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The Pathway designation is a global credential highlighting an organization’s commitment to creating a healthy work environment where nurses feel empowered and valued. CTH nurses —from the urgent care and medical group clinics to the Regional Medical Center and surgery rooms —are an integral part of the healthcare team.

Also in 2021, Carson Tahoe Cancer Center was recertified with full accreditation as a Quality Program by The American College of Surgeons, Commission on Cancer (CoC). The CoC recognizes cancer care programs internationally for their commitment to providing comprehensive, high quality, and multidisciplinary, patient-centered care. The Cancer Center worked vigorously the past three years to help meet these rigorous standards.

Carson Tahoe earned the prestigious designation Primary Stroke Center Certification by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CIHQ). We received this certification by developing care protocols, enhancing the efficiency of care, and, most importantly, achieving better patient outcomes. Utilizing tools within the American Heart Association’s Get With The Guidelines –Stroke Overview, we were able to benchmark the quality of care the patients at Carson Tahoe were receiving against other hospitals in Nevada and the nation. Through adhering to the requirements of CIHQ, the American Heart/American Stroke Association, and the Brain Attack Coalition, our staff requirements and patient education now both align entirely with the CIHQ Stroke Program, as well as Carson Tahoe’s mission to enhance the health and well-being of the communities we serve.



### Investing In Our Staff During Challenging Times

Last year taught us a lot about adversity and (like the pandemic required of us) how to remain “fluid and dynamic.” It also taught us about the importance of remaining strong and facing the challenges still ahead. When we thought we had reached the peak of the pandemic and were heading back to normal, the Omicron variant hit, and Carson Tahoe Health saw a record impact on our internal and external community. We dealt with caregiver burnout, mental exhaustion, turnover, and staff challenges. We needed to shift the work environment and focus on our employees. We asked the questions, “What do they need right now?” and “How can we make it better for them?” We focused on two areas that we knew needed improving: compensation and mental health.

Carson Tahoe Health made a commitment in 2021 that included a multi-million dollar investment in our most valuable asset—our employees. We re-evaluated the job market and spent many months of the year restructuring our employees' compensation through increased wages. As a result, we made great strides to position ourselves as having one of the most competitive compensation and benefits packages in Northern Nevada. We're proud that we were able to do that for our employees.

In addition, thanks to our philanthropic community partners, we were able to offer subscriptions to the *Calm* app and now have over 500 employees subscribed and engaged with the application. *Calm* offers curated content to assist with sleep, meditation, breathing, stretching, and more. "The feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive from staff, with more active subscribers each week," says Michelle Miller, Vice President and Chief People Resources Officer. "This is a step in the right direction for providing a holistic approach to caring for our caregivers' minds and bodies."

While we all know the phrase, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," it is much easier said than done. We knew last year—and we know now—that retaining great employees and rewarding staff for showing up through what may be one of the most challenging times of their career was crucial. In a period of history where the trend has been to turn inward and isolate, we knew that we had to expand and extend our efforts to energize our team and show them that they were cared for and that their sacrifices did not go unnoticed.