For the second consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report has ranked St. Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates, Ill., and Alexian Brothers Medical Center (ABMC) in Elk Grove Village, Ill., among the top 10 Best Hospitals in the Chicago metropolitan area.

“We are honored to have earned this recognition again from U.S. News & World Report,” says Mark A. Frey, President and Chief Executive Officer of Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS). “It reflects the dedication and teamwork of our physicians, nurses, other medical professionals and associates, who are committed to consistently delivering advanced, high-quality care to the patients and communities we serve.”

St. Alexius ranks as the fifth best hospital, and ABMC ranks as the seventh best, among 119 Chicago metropolitan-area hospitals reviewed by U.S. News. The two hospitals hold the same positions in the magazine’s statewide rankings for Illinois.

The Best Hospitals rankings, now in their 25th year, recognize hospitals that excel in treating the most challenging patients. U.S. News evaluates hospitals in 16 adult specialties, ranking the nation’s top 50 hospitals in most of the specialties. The magazine also recognizes high-performing hospitals that provide care at nearly the level of their nationally ranked peers and represent valuable regional sources of quality care.

St. Alexius and ABMC rank among the nation’s top 50 hospitals in a total of four adult specialties, including Gastroenterology & GI Surgery (#22), Pulmonology (#48) and Urology (#50) at St. Alexius, and Pulmonology (#31) at ABMC. Just 3 percent of the nearly 5,000 hospitals that were analyzed for Best Hospitals 2014-15 earned national ranking in even one specialty.

High-performing adult specialties at St. Alexius include Cancer, Diabetes & Endocrinology, Ear, Nose & Throat, Geriatrics, Gynecology, Nephrology, Neurology & Neurosurgery and Orthopedics. Adult specialties designated as high-performing at ABMC include Cancer, Cardiology & Heart Surgery, Diabetes & Endocrinology, Ear, Nose & Throat, Gastroenterology & GI Surgery, Geriatrics, Gynecology, Nephrology, Neurology & Neurosurgery, Orthopedics and Urology.

“The data tell the story – a hospital that emerged from our analysis as one of the best has much to be proud of,” says U.S. News Health Rankings Editor.
ABHS seeks to expand pediatric services by partnering with Loyola University Health System

Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS) and Loyola University Health System (Loyola) are partnering to expand the breadth and reach of their pediatric service lines in the Chicago area.

Under an agreement announced Aug. 13, the two Catholic health systems’ children’s hospitals will join forces as affiliates, and ABHS and Loyola will recruit and share pediatric sub-specialists and will collaborate on other physician-sharing opportunities.

ABHS and Loyola also plan to work with community-based pediatricians on population health management opportunities and to expand access at each institution as well as in community-based ambulatory-care practices.

“This new affiliation will benefit patients by building on and expanding the clinical program strengths of each health system, making them more available to the communities we serve,” says Patricia Cassidy, ABHS Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer.

The affiliation will enable ABHS and Loyola to offer a comprehensive array of pediatric specialties and will increase access to pediatric sub-specialists, who often can be hard to find, Cassidy says.

“Access to high-quality pediatric clinical programs in a coordinated network of care is a vision both of our organizations share,” says Daniel Post, Senior Vice President, Clinical Programs, and Chief Business Development Officer at Loyola. “The Loyola and Alexian Brothers Pediatric Affiliation will provide patients and referring physicians improved access to these high-quality programs in their communities.”

ABHS and Loyola are establishing a joint governing body that will oversee their new affiliation. The joint governing body will determine financial and resource commitments and program objectives and will develop a decision-making structure.

Loyola is a nationally recognized leader in providing healthcare and in conducting ground-breaking research to treat heart disease, cancer, organ transplantation and neurological disorders. Loyola University Medical Center (LUMC) is the core of Loyola and one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers. The LUMC campus in Maywood, Ill., includes the Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center, the Ronald McDonald® Children’s Hospital of Loyola, Burn/Trauma Center, and Center for Heart & Vascular Medicine. Loyola also includes the Gottlieb Hospital campus in Melrose Park, Ill., Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine and the Loyola University Chicago Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing.

Loyola is part of Livonia, Mich.-based CHE Trinity Health, one of the nation’s largest multi-institutional Catholic health-care delivery systems. It serves people and communities in 20 states from coast to coast with 86 hospitals, 109 continuing-care facilities and an expansive network of home health and hospice programs.

“This new affiliation will benefit patients by building on and expanding the clinical program strengths of each health system, making them more available to the communities we serve.”
Dear Alexian Friends:

I did an interview recently with Cary D. Gutbezahl, M.D., Chief Executive Officer of Compass Clinical Consulting, for a blog post he later published about the importance of building the right team of people.

During the interview, I emphasized that if you want a sustainable organization and you want to provide great healthcare, you need to do what you’re supposed to do every single day. You can’t take shortcuts or compromise on quality, safety or ethics. Every day, you must strive to be the highest-quality, most-ethical organization that you can be.

...Alexian Brothers Health System has built a great team, including everyone from the physicians, nurses and other medical professionals who deliver care at patients’ bedsides to the volunteers who support our medical teams and other associates while also assisting our patients and their families.

Our team is accomplishing great things, as reflected in the latest Best Hospitals report from U.S. News & World Report, which ranks St. Alexius Medical Center and Alexian Brothers Medical Center (ABMC) among the top 10 Best Hospitals in the Chicago metropolitan area for the second consecutive year. (See article on pages 1 and 10.)

ABMC and St. Alexius also have earned accolades recently for heart care. Becker’s Hospital Review has named ABMC to the 2014-15 edition of the Becker’s list, “100 hospitals and health systems with great heart programs,” and Becker’s Infection Control & Clinical Quality has included ABMC and St. Alexius on the publication’s list of “48 hospitals with the lowest heart-failure mortality rates.” (See article on page 5.)

This edition of The Alexian Way also includes several shining examples of ABHS individuals putting into action the Alexian Brothers’ values and doing what needs to be done every single day to provide great healthcare. They’re doing it by delivering exceptional service to patients and their families in our facilities, teaming up with community partners to help disadvantaged children fight obesity and diabetes, taking care of colleagues in times of crisis, and reaching beyond our nation’s borders to care for the poor. (See articles on pages 8, 11, 9 and 7, respectively.)

Their attitude toward their work is summed up best by Lou Tanner, a 96-year-old ABHS volunteer whose kind and sincere approach to visitors and colleagues at the Roncoli Center personifies the Alexian Brothers’ values. “I’m there to keep the mission of the Alexian Brothers shining,” he says.

We’re fortunate that our ABHS team includes Lou and many others who not only bring excellent skill sets to the table, but also share a commitment to delivering great healthcare. Their personal mission and values align with those of our organization, and that bodes well for the people we serve – and for the future of our healthcare system.

With warmest regards,

Mark A. Frey
President and Chief Executive Officer
Alexian Brothers Health System
Lab initiative aims to benefit patients through enhanced care, cost savings

A quality improvement initiative aimed at ensuring that patients get the right laboratory tests at the right time is helping Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS) physicians use lab tests more appropriately while driving down testing costs.

Launched in the fall of 2012, the Value-Driven Laboratory project still is in its infancy but already has enhanced physicians’ understanding of specific tests and the results they produce, says Chad Hanson, ABHS Manager of Microbiology.

“We’re seeing the number of tests decline overall,” he says. “Physicians are being more selective in their test ordering. There is growing awareness of the issues we’re addressing.”

As the initiative expands, ABHS expects it will improve patient care and healthcare outcomes, Hanson says.

In the increasingly complex world of lab testing, there are literally thousands of tests that physicians might request as they evaluate a particular patient, according to Peter Bernhardt, M.D., Laboratory Medical Director at Alexian Brothers Medical Center (ABMC) in Elk Grove Village, Ill., and Ven Aduana, M.D., Laboratory Medical Director at St. Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates, Ill. They say it is difficult, if not impossible, for any individual physician to be proficient in all areas. Adds Hanson: “We need to aid physicians in appropriate test selection and interpretation of test results.”

The Value-Driven Laboratory project has involved a fundamental shift in the function of the ABHS Clinical Laboratory and its relationship with physicians. Rather than serving as a “box where you send specimens and samples and it spits out results,” the lab now is providing medical guidance and direction for physicians as they strive to make the best possible decisions for patients, Hanson says.

The lab is working closely with physicians on reviews and analyses of a growing number of lab tests. Together, they are developing testing algorithms, or step-by-step testing protocols, for specific medical issues, such as thyroid or coagulation problems. Evidence-based indications for specific tests provide the basis for each algorithm, helping physicians and the laboratory determine whether a test is appropriate in the first place and when additional testing is required.

The goal is to move beyond the traditional test-ordering model, in which physicians order a laundry list of tests and the laboratory processes all of them, to a model in which physicians ask the lab to begin testing for a certain condition, and the lab determines what tests are appropriate, based on the algorithm for the condition.

Some algorithms have been incorporated into ABHS’ AlexiCARE Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE) system. When a physician logs in to the system to ask the lab to begin testing for a condition associated with one of the algorithms, the CPOE system automatically asks the physician a series of questions about his or her patient’s symptoms and medical history. Depending on the physician’s responses, the system might tell the physician that such testing is not indicated. “We have found that this is very effective,” Hanson says.

Memos to the medical staff and posters in physician lounges and cafeterias also are being used to inform physicians about issues involving certain tests.

The initiative produced a total cost savings of $180,000 through elimination of unnecessary tests between July 2013 and June 2014, Hanson says. The biggest savings stemmed from a significant reduction in BNP (Brain Natriuretic Peptide) tests, which are blood tests used to differentiate heart failure from other causes of dyspnea, or shortness of breath. CPOE screening questions, as well as memos and posters educating physicians, were key factors in reducing the number of BNP tests, Hanson says.
ABMC, St. Alexius earn accolades for heart care

Becker’s Hospital Review has named Alexian Brothers Medical Center (ABMC) to the 2014-15 edition of the Becker’s list, “100 hospitals and health systems with great heart programs.”

Separately, Becker’s Infection Control & Clinical Quality has included ABMC and St. Alexius Medical Center on the publication’s list of “48 hospitals with the lowest heart-failure mortality rates.”

“Alexian Brothers Health System is dedicated to providing advanced cardiovascular care in a community hospital setting, and these citations from Becker’s reflect the high-level skills of our physicians, nurses and other medical professionals,” says Noel Araneta, Director of the Heart and Vascular Institute at ABMC. “They have an unwavering focus on delivering exceptional patient care, as well as a strong commitment to ongoing initiatives to enhance quality and ensure patient safety.”

The hospitals on the Becker’s Hospital Review list of “100 hospitals and health systems with great heart programs” lead the nation in cardiovascular and thoracic healthcare, according to Becker’s Hospital Review. Many have pioneered groundbreaking procedures, and all have received recognition for top-of-the-line patient care.

To develop the list, the Becker’s Hospital Review editorial team examined reports on hospital performance from several reputable ranking and award organizations, such as U.S. News & World Report, Truven Health Analytics and the BlueCross BlueShield Association. Hospitals on the list received several marks of distinction, according to Becker’s Hospital Review.

U.S. News recently recognized ABMC’s Cardiology & Heart Surgery program as one of 11 high-performing specialties at the hospital. U.S. News also ranked ABMC and St. Alexius Medical Center among the top 10 Best Hospitals in the Chicago metropolitan area for the second consecutive year.

BlueCross Blue Shield, meanwhile, has designated ABMC as a Blue Distinction Center+ for its expertise and efficiency in delivering cardiac care.

In addition to spotlighting these honors, Becker’s Hospital Review noted that ABMC has a women’s heart health program and a specialized heart valve program that comprehensively determines individuals’ suitability for aortic-valve interventions.

Hospitals cannot pay for inclusion on the Becker’s Hospital Review list, which presents organizations in alphabetical order and does not rank them.

Becker’s Infection Control & Clinical Quality used Hospital Compare data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to compile the list of “48 hospitals with the lowest heart-failure mortality rates.”

The list includes hospitals with a 30-day death rate for heart-failure patients of 8.4 or lower. For comparison, the national rate of 30-day mortality for heart failure is 11.7, according to Hospital Compare.
Alexian Brothers Senior Ministries becomes part of newly formed Ascension Health Senior Care

Ascension, the nation’s largest Catholic and non-profit health system, recently united the majority of its senior-focused programs, including Alexian Brothers Senior Ministries (ABSM), into a single national organization.

Known as Ascension Health Senior Care, the new organization ranks as the second-largest, not-for-profit, long-term care provider in the United States. The senior services ministry will function as an independent Ascension subsidiary, with 34 independent-living, assisted-living and skilled-nursing facilities, as well as three PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) programs. The facilities and programs previously operated as part of Ascension Health, Ascension’s healthcare delivery organization.

Combining the senior-focused programs into a separate organization will enable them to have better access to resources to enhance patient care, programs and services, Ascension leaders say. The programs also will be able to share best practices and processes, and to establish consistent standards.

“As we consider how best to provide person-centered care to those we serve, we see an opportunity to extend our already deep commitment to those who are aging and their families,” says Anthony R. Tersigni, Ascension President and Chief Executive Officer.

“By bringing together the services and programs that are serving seniors across our national health ministry, we will enhance care through shared best practices.”

Adds Robert J. Henkel, Ascension Executive Vice President, and Ascension Health President and Chief Executive Officer: “As the senior population in our country continues to grow, we know there will be increasing demand for the high-quality, person-centered care we provide. By uniting these services, we can take advantage of their combined expertise to ensure we are able to meet that demand.”

By belonging to a larger, nationally coordinated organization, Alexian Brothers Senior Ministries and the new organization’s other senior-focused programs will benefit from greater investment in facilities and equipment, better resource allocation, more efficient operations, and growth opportunities, Ascension leaders say. The creation of the new organization, which was announced July 30, will cause no change in the ability of current residents and program participants to access care and services.

One of Ascension Health Senior Care’s first initiatives will be to identify and implement best practices across all of its facilities. Unique, best-in-class programs already in place at some ministries will be spread nationwide to ensure that Ascension Health Senior Care is providing the highest-quality person-centered care and service.

“Our vision calls for providing holistic care and support to the seniors we serve,” says Mark Frey, Ascension Health Ministry Market Leader for Senior Services and President and Chief Executive Officer of Alexian Brothers Health System.

“It also calls for developing and implementing innovative care models that improve health outcomes, reduce costs, and improve the experience of seniors with their unique clinical and functional needs.”

Gary Mohn, interim Chief Operating Officer of ABSM since last December and formerly President and Chief Executive Officer of Alexian Village of Milwaukee (AVM), has been appointed to oversee the eastern region of Ascension Health Senior Care.

Ascension Health Senior Care Profile

Ascension Health Senior Care, Ascension’s newly formed senior services organization, ranks as the nation’s second-largest, not-for-profit, long-term care provider. It includes:

- 34 independent-living, assisted-living and skilled-nursing facilities;
- 5,568 senior-care/senior-living beds;
- three PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) programs totaling 725 enrollees.

“...to have better access to resources to enhance patient care, programs and services, Ascension leaders say. The programs also will be able to share best practices and processes, and to establish consistent standards.

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ABHS foot/ankle specialist braves risks of world’s murder capital to care for poor

Narenda Patel, D.P.M, has a simple answer when asked why he participates once a year in a medical mission to Honduras, a nation plagued by poverty, corruption and the world’s highest murder rate.

“It’s the gratitude,” says Patel, Chief of Podiatric Foot and Ankle Surgery at Alexian Brothers Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Ill.

Patel, who completed a weeklong trip to Honduras in early August, says the impoverished Hondurans whom he treats “want to make sure you know they are very happy with the fact you helped them.”

One patient whose leg Dr. Patel helped straighten during his first trip to Honduras in July 2012 is so grateful that he continually returns to the mission with small gifts of gratitude, such as wooden key rings hand-carved with the names of mission doctors.

“The amount of gratefulness these people have is amazing,” Dr. Patel says. “There is no amount of monetary reward that would equate to the amount of gratitude they give.”

Patel serves as a medical missionary with Our Great Shepherd’s Outreach Ministry, Inc., a nonprofit organization founded 16 years ago by David Cavallaro, D.P.M., of Oklahoma City. Dedicated to providing free foot/ankle trauma care and surgeries for poor Hondurans, the ministry conducts two mission trips each year to the Central American nation, where many people either can’t afford specialized foot/ankle care or must wait a long time to receive it. It’s common to see poor Hondurans with deformed feet and ankles and mobility problems caused by untreated fractures, Patel says. “We’re just there to do what needs to be done in one procedure that can get that person to some degree of normal life function,” he says.

The ministry collaborates with Jose Samara, M.D., Director of Leonardo Martinez Hospital in San Pedro Sula, a city in the northwest corner of Honduras that is known as the murder capital of the world. Gang violence fueled by drug trafficking has driven the city’s annual homicide rate to 169 per 100,000 people, the highest of any city on Earth. Patel and other mission volunteers rely on the hospital’s medical students and residents to guide them safely through the city.

Sumara makes the hospital’s four operating rooms, nursing staff and anesthesiologist available to Cavallaro and a revolving cast of other surgeons, including Patel and three other U.S. doctors. “All we need to do is bring in supplies and our expertise,” Patel says. “Whoever comes to the clinic, we will see them.”

During their latest mission, Patel, Cavallaro and two other volunteer surgeons saw 100 patients and performed 28 surgeries. They ranged from a simple toe procedure “to re-breaking a leg and straightening it out,” Patel says.

Mo Patel, a certified surgical technologist who serves as Dr. Patel’s surgical assistant, has accompanied him on his three mission trips to Honduras and plays a “very important role,” Dr. Patel says.

The medical team also benefited this past summer from a donation of equipment and supplies from Stryker. Stephanie Sulentic, a Stryker sales representative, and Adlei DaSilva, Director, AGD Medical Distribution, played integral roles on the latest mission trip, Dr. Patel says.

The trip included “a bit of a scare” when gunmen killed five people in a dinner-time attack at a restaurant where the mission team had been planning to eat before changing its plans and going elsewhere at the last minute, Dr. Patel says. “We got lucky,” he says.

Despite such risks, Dr. Patel plans to return with the mission to San Pedro Sula every July. “Who else is going to help these people?” he asks.
Volunteer makes ‘world of difference’ by personifying Alexian Brothers’ values

At 96, Lou Tanner knows how to deal with people. “It’s my greatest asset,” says Tanner, a volunteer who greets and directs visitors on Thursday mornings at the Roncoli Center on the campus of Alexian Brothers Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Ill.

Tanner, who augmented his interpersonal skills through Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters training, brings an upbeat, caring attitude to his volunteer role. The Roncoli Center houses a senior resource center in addition to human resources associates, and many visitors are seniors with health-related concerns. “I greet them and try to make them happy if I can,” says Tanner, who also delivers mail to associates and helps with filing, collating and computer work.

Denise Butera, Administrative Director of Volunteer Services for the Acute-Care Ministries of Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS), says Tanner is “an excellent volunteer” willing to handle anything. He “just wants to make other people feel better,” she says. “It’s very inspiring to see how someone of his age, who probably has gone through an awful lot, is so positive and how there is still so much he wants to give and can give.”

Tanner became an ABHS volunteer in April 2012, after the death of his wife of 68 years, Blanche, in February 2011. He says he grieved for months before deciding, “This is making me nuts. I’m not the type of guy who likes to sit around and do nothing. I’ve got to do something.”

He contacted ABHS, sailed through the volunteer application process and was assigned to the Roncoli Center, where he has become an ambassador for the Alexian Brothers’ values. “He’s right on target with the values, just by being that smiling face when people come in,” Butera says. “He’s making a world of difference and having a big impact on people by living those values every single day.”

“I’m there to keep the mission of the Alexian Brothers shining,” says Tanner, who drives himself to and from the Roncoli Center and continues to live independently. “I treat my job like I’m being paid for it.”

He has become so recognizable that when people see him at the Roncoli Center, they often say, “It must be Thursday.” “I guess I ought to change my name to Thursday,” he says jokingly. People, he adds, are amazed he remembers their names. Explaining his memory skills, he says, “God’s given me a good brain. That’s one of my talents.” Another is dispensing life wisdom. Associates seek his advice on a variety of matters, including romance. “I should put up a shingle: ‘Advice for the lovelorn,’ ” he says.

Tanner also has advice for fellow seniors: “Don’t be a couch potato. That’s what’s going to kill you.” He strongly recommends volunteering, which he calls “one of the greatest things there is.”

“I love that job so much,” he says. “Those people there treat me like family…. They make me feel so good. That’s what’s keeping me alive.”

Butera acknowledges that Tanner is “getting a lot out of it,” but she adds, “We’re getting so much more by what he gives.”

The gregarious widower and World War II veteran says he learned the importance of treating people kindly and sincerely while working as a production manager for Paddock Publications, an ad salesman for the Chicago Tribune and a telemarketer for Weber Marking Systems, Inc.

A key lesson was “you can learn the product, but if you can’t handle people, you better forget about it, because that’s what it’s all about,” Tanner says. “It can take years to get an account, and only a second to lose it.”

Volunteer Lou Tanner shares a laugh with social worker Sarah Gootworth at the Roncoli Center. “I’m there to keep the mission of the Alexian Brothers shining,” Tanner says. “I treat my job like I’m being paid for it.”
PACE associates open arms to assist colleagues affected by Ferguson crisis

For more than a week after a police officer fatally shot 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., chaos reigned at night around the Canfield Green Apartment complex, where the shooting occurred. Rioting. Looting. Fires. Gunshots. Tear gas. Ambulances. Helicopters. And ultimately, National Guard tanks rumbling through the streets of Ferguson, located about eight miles northwest of downtown St. Louis.

“It was scary,” says Alisha Hinkle, a Canfield Green resident and a van driver with the Alexian Brothers Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) in south St. Louis. “Danger was out at night.”

The chaotic situation disrupted the lives of Hinkle and other local residents, with police limiting access to the area and schools delaying the start of classes to avoid putting children in harm’s way. Amid the fear and uncertainty of the situation, sleeping was problematic at best.

“My kids were afraid,” says Angelia Greene, a PACE certified nursing assistant who lives with her three children, ages 8, 10 and 20, in a house less than a half mile from Canfield Green. “I would put them on the couch with me, and we would sleep in the living room, because they were afraid, and I was just protecting them. . . . I couldn’t get any rest, because once they started with all the tear gas, you could hear it like it was a bomb.”

Two other PACE-St. Louis associates – Regina Anthony and Sheneice Sanders, both certified nursing assistants – also live in Ferguson and were directly affected by the crisis, says Beverly Williams, Chief Executive Officer of PACE-St. Louis. The four associates continued working despite the crisis, making special arrangements to ensure their families’ safety, while also contending with longer commutes because of road closures and detours.

Hinkle, who has three adult children and two grandchildren, says she was overwhelmed and drained by the chaotic situation and her inability to come and go as usual. “I was praying a lot that nothing would happen to me and my family,” she says. “It was stressful coming to work . . . and knowing that when I got off, I had to deal with all of that.”

Recognizing the hardships faced by the four associates, their colleagues rallied around them. Brother Warren Longo, C.F.A., and Rev. Mark Shelton, a PACE chaplain, provided one-on-one counseling and conducted a special prayer service at which PACE associates and participants prayed for peace, calm and justice.

The Alexian Spirit Committee at PACE-St. Louis launched a fund-raising drive to provide support, collecting more than $1,000 in cash from PACE and Ascension Health Senior Care associates. The contributions helped the committee provide a five-night respite for the four associates and their families at an extended-stay hotel. The time away allowed them to decompress and get some much-needed sleep.

“I got so much rest,” Greene says. “It was quiet…. It had a swimming pool and everything. The children really enjoyed it.” Adds Hinkle: “That was really nice of them to do that…. I didn’t want to leave (the hotel). There was no noise.”

The Spirit Committee also presented the four associates with movie tickets and “comfort care” gift boxes, filled with items such as games, puzzles and snacks donated by colleagues.

“It means a whole lot,” Hinkle says of the support she received. Everybody opened their arms for me…. I felt as though they were with me and I wasn’t by myself. That was comforting.”

Adds Greene: “Everyone was just so caring…. I would like to thank everyone who took the time just to think about us.”
St. Alexius Medical Center, ABMC again rank among top 10 Best Hospitals in Chicago area

continued from page 1

Avery Comarow. “A Best Hospital has demonstrated its expertise in treating the most challenging patients.”

After U.S. News published its latest Best Hospitals rankings, Frey sent letters to ABHS physicians and associates, thanking them for their important roles in helping St. Alexius and ABMC rank among the best in the Chicago area.

Physicians at the two hospitals “exemplify the teamwork that is critical to providing advanced, high-quality care on a consistent basis,” Frey said in his letter to physicians. “In addition to collaborating with our other medical professionals to deliver outstanding patient care, our physicians play a key role in our ongoing quality and safety initiatives, sharing their knowledge and experience as we implement and refine evidence-based best practices. These initiatives have had a huge impact at St. Alexius and ABMC, helping the hospitals rank among Chicago’s best.”

Frey also lauded associates for their teamwork and their commitment to ABHS’ quality and safety initiatives. In his letter to associates, he said: “All of our associates at St. Alexius and ABMC – from admissions to nursing, from diagnostic imaging to food service, from information technology to housekeeping – work together and in cooperation with our corporate associates and our Ascension Health colleagues to achieve an overarching goal: Providing the very best in advanced, high-quality care for our patients.”

Frey also cited the leadership of ABHS board members as a huge factor in the achievements of St. Alexius and ABMC. In a letter thanking board members, he said: “Your expertise, insights and guidance have shaped our system’s strategic direction, keeping our hospitals focused sharply on quality, safety and Catholic healthcare values, and helping ABHS manage our resources effectively amid rapid changes in the healthcare marketplace.”

U.S. News publishes Best Hospitals to help guide patients who need a high level of care because they face particularly difficult surgery, a challenging condition or extra risk because of age or multiple health problems. Objective measures such as patient survival and safety data, adequacy of nurse staffing levels and other data largely determine the rankings in most specialties.

The specialty rankings and data were produced for U.S. News by RTI International, a leading research organization based in Research Triangle Park, N.C. Using the same data, U.S. News produced the state and metro rankings.

Smartphones to play key role in new effort to help children adopt healthy lifestyles

Supported by a $145,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS) is working with a technology company and community partners to develop a smartphone-based program to help 200 low-income children develop healthy lifestyles and avoid diabetes and other chronic diseases.

The yearlong program, which will be known as VAL’S PALS, is expected to launch in January 2015. (VAL’S is an acronym for Verizon, Alexian and Links Technology Solutions, Inc., the Schaumburg, Ill., technology company that is developing a customized smartphone application, or “app,” for the program.) The children who will be participating in the program are weight-management patients at the ABHS Pediatric Endocrinology Clinic in Elk Grove Village, Ill. They range in age from 10 to 17 and are at high risk of developing diabetes.

“They are struggling medically and physically and a lot of them emotionally and financially, so they were an excellent population to reach out to,” says Kim Nowak, Outpatient Dietitian for Pediatric and Adolescent Weight Management at the clinic. “It will provide a great incentive for them to make some positive changes in their lives.”

Each VAL’S PALS participant will receive a complimentary Verizon smartphone and data plan. The smartphones will feature the customized app, which will allow participants to track their exercise, other activities and what they eat and drink daily. The app will show their progress toward individual goals based on monthly “healthy habit” objectives, such as limiting screen (TV, computer) time or eating more fruits and vegetables, Nowak says. The app will also include a competitive element, allowing the children to accumulate points and compete against other participants. “There will be a leader board,” says John Klein, Links Senior Solutions Manager, who is overseeing the development of the app. “The only way to compete effectively is to be a healthier person.”

Klein is leading a Links team that has been working closely with Nowak, her staff and community partners, such as school districts, park districts and YMCAs, to develop the app. Their mutual goal, he says, is “to promote fitness, get kids to eat healthier and utilize technology to make that more fun and thus engage kids more.”

The app will include a web portal through which Nowak and her team can communicate with participants and manage and track their personal data, such as their height, weight and body mass index. Links is using leading-edge encryption methods to protect patient confidentiality and comply with HIPAA regulations, Klein says.

The app also will include a web portal through which community partners can alert participants about customized activities designed to help them achieve their goals. The activities will focus on fitness, good nutrition and other aspects of a healthy lifestyle. These customized activities within the patients’ own communities set the app apart from other activity-type apps.

Every six weeks, community partners also will host VAL’S PALS “meet-ups,” at which participants can take part in fun activities and visit with Nowak and her staff to discuss their progress and have their weights and other measurements taken.

“We are thrilled and extremely grateful that Verizon Foundation has entered into this new partnership to take on childhood obesity—one of our most serious epidemics,” says Kevin Rath, Executive Director of Alexian Brothers Women and Children’s Hospital in Hoffman Estates, Ill.

ABHS is among “a select group” of Verizon Foundation grant recipients, says Andrea Meyer, a Verizon spokeswoman. VAL’S PALS “maps perfectly” with the Verizon Foundation’s philanthropic focus on healthcare for women, children and seniors, she says, adding, “We will be excited to see the results.”

John Klein (left) and Kim Nowak show Kevin Rath the customized smartphone application, or “app,” that will power a Verizon-funded program designed to help 200 low-income children develop healthy lifestyles and avoid diabetes and other chronic diseases.
Bruce Wolfe, a longtime member of the Alexian Brothers Health System Board (ABHS) of Governors, has been named Chairperson of the Board. A retired Morton International, Inc. financial executive, he has advised ABHS for many years. In 1996, he accepted an invitation from ABHS to serve on the Board’s Investment Subcommittee. He later joined the Board’s Finance Committee. About eight years ago, he became the committee’s chairman and was appointed as a member of the Board.

He worked in finance at Morton International for 23 years, including 10 years as Treasurer, before his retirement in 1999.

Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A., Provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers, has been appointed to the Alexian Brothers Health System Board of Governors. He fills the board seat of the late Brother Jim Classon, C.F.A., who passed away last March 1.