

Opinion: Barton Health offers a helping hand

By Dick Derby

Barton Health, along with its affiliated healthcare facilities, treated more than 165,000 patients in 2010. With a population of 21,403 in the city of South Lake Tahoe and 181,058 residents in El Dorado County, Barton continues to serve the community and visitors alike. While, businesses in and around the lake accommodate “locals” by providing free services and discounts, Barton has done the same for years with free or low cost prevention screenings, wellness seminars and through our financial assistance program called Helping Hands.

Helping Hands was designed to assist South Lake Tahoe area residents. In the past few years, many families and individuals have suffered from the ongoing recession, endured lay-offs, both big and small business owners have closed their doors, lost insurance, have high insurance deductibles or work two jobs to provide for their families. At Barton, we are attempting to relieve some of the financial burden of medical bills with our Helping Hands Program.



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The Helping Hands Program provides financial assistance to local area residents who do not qualify for programs such as Access for Infants and Mothers, County Medical Services

Program, Medi-Cal, Medicare, Nevada Medicaid, Douglas County Social Services or the Victim of Crime Program.

A major misconception is that financial help is only for those in the lower income brackets, but most of Tahoe's middle class is eligible for some level of discount. The program works on a sliding scale of annual income and family unit size. Even patients with insurance may be eligible for a lower rate. For more information on Barton's Helping Hands Program policy, go online to find a copy our financial assistance policy.

Examples of those who may eligible for a discount:

Number of people in household	Annual household income	Eligible discount
Family of 4	\$89,400	25%
Retired Couple	\$51,485	50%
Single mother with 2 children	\$55,590	75%
Family of 4 w/ high insurance deductible	\$55,875	100%

In addition to the Helping Hands program, Barton offers primary care and specialty physician services at the Barton Community Clinic using a similar sliding scale based on annual income and family unit size. This allows Barton to continue the tradition of offering preventative care, family planning and services for the ill or elderly at little or no cost to qualifying patients.

Barton Health is a nonprofit healthcare system, and as a part of our mission, we strive to deliver safe, high quality healthcare to our community through accessible health programs, including wellness lab draws, health fairs, lectures and discounts on our services for those who qualify. We provided more than \$4.2 million in charity care in 2010, which

was as a result of providing low-cost options through our Helping Hands Program. Barton Memorial Hospital is here for our community and staffed 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, for emergency care.

As the largest employer in the city of South Lake Tahoe, we are proud to employ more than 900 employees. At Barton we work together to provide consistently exceptional care to our employees, visitors and the community at large. As a nonprofit hospital, Barton provides emergency medical services to our visitors and community members without regard of their ability to pay, in addition to offering the Helping Hands Program mentioned above. Our physicians, nurses and staff specialize in pediatrics, women and men's health, emergency care, rehabilitation, orthopedics, general and specialty surgery, and serve the youngest patients in our Family Birthing Center to the oldest patients in our Skilled Nursing Facility. Prevention and education programs are developed and maintained to benefit the public and we provide leading-edge technology, necessary medical equipment, recruitment of the best and brightest physicians in the nation, and cover general operational costs such as food service, housekeeping, facility maintenance and improvement.

Barton Memorial Hospital's healthcare fees are less than a majority of California hospitals. As a rural facility, with the only emergency department and birthing center in the area – amongst many other critical medical services, we are here to serve our community. As businesses and government programs continue to struggle through these tough economic times, my hope is that individuals and families alike take advantage of our Helping Hands Program. We are here to continue to provide the best medical services and fulfill patients' needs right in their own backyard.

To find out more about Barton's Helping Hands Program, go online, call (530) 543.5908 or email patientaccts@bartonhealth.org.

Dick Derby is vice president of finance at Barton Health. He is also the past president of the South Lake Tahoe Rotary Club, a board member of California Hospital Insurance and is a member of the Health Care Financial Management Association.