

—Slug:.....COMM-0873.opin.view.bmh_blofson-mclarney
—Contributor.....Tony Blofson and Elizabeth McLarney (Brattleboro Memorial Hospital)
—Contributor email.....rpattison@bmhvt.org
—For section.....Voices/Viewpoint
—Format.....Opinions
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43885

Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Saving the birthing center means saving Brattleboro
2 Memorial Hospital

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 The hospital has committed to keeping the Birthing
4 Center open while community leaders, legislators, healthcare
5 partners, and hospital leadership work together to explore every
6 viable option.

####END SUBHED####

7 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

8 FEW ISSUES HAVE united our community more than the
9 desire to preserve the Birthing Center at Brattleboro Memorial
10 Hospital (BMH).

11 Parents have shared stories about welcoming their
12 children into the world at BMH. Healthcare professionals have
13 spoken passionately about the importance of local maternity
14 care. Legislators, business leaders, and community organizations
15 have stepped forward, determined to find a path forward.

16 That support matters. It also points to an important truth:
17 if we want to save the Birthing Center, we must also save the
18 hospital that makes it possible.

19 * * *

20 THE BIRTHING CENTER is not a standalone facility. It
21 depends on the strength of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, a
22 community hospital that provides emergency care, surgery,
23 cancer treatment, primary care, rehabilitation, behavioral health
24 services, and other essential healthcare services for thousands of
25 people across southeastern Vermont and neighboring New
26 Hampshire and Massachusetts.

27 The difficult decision to pursue closure of obstetric
28 services was not made because hospital leaders believe maternity
29 care is unimportant. Quite the opposite. It was made because the
30 financial losses associated with providing those services have
31 become unsustainable.

32 Last year, BMH lost approximately \$3.8 million
33 providing obstetric care. This year, those losses are projected to
34 grow to \$4.8 million.

35 Combined with declining reimbursement, rising labor
36 costs, workforce shortages, and recent changes in healthcare
37 policy that have reduced hospital revenue, the financial
38 challenges have reached a critical point.

39 These are not problems unique to Brattleboro. Rural
40 hospitals across Vermont and the country are struggling to
41 provide services that communities desperately need but that
42 current reimbursement systems simply do not adequately
43 support.

44 * * *

45 THE ENCOURAGING NEWS is that this story is not over.

46 The hospital has committed to keeping the Birthing
47 Center open while community leaders, legislators, healthcare
48 partners, and hospital leadership work together to explore every
49 viable option. Those conversations are already underway, and the
50 willingness of so many people to come together demonstrates
51 just how much this hospital means to our region.

52 But preserving maternity care will require more than
53 goodwill.

54 It will require meaningful changes to healthcare
55 reimbursement. It will require advocacy in Montpelier and
56 Washington. It will require philanthropy and community
57 investment. It will require businesses, civic organizations, and
58 residents to recognize that a strong local hospital is essential not
59 only for healthcare but also for the economic vitality of our
60 region.

61 * * *

62 EVERY SERVICE AT Brattleboro Memorial Hospital is
63 connected. A financially healthy hospital is better able to recruit
64 clinicians, invest in technology, maintain emergency services,
65 and preserve specialized programs like obstetrics. Strengthening
66 the hospital strengthens every patient who depends on it.

67 The conversation cannot be limited to how we save the
68 Birthing Center. It needs to include how we ensure Brattleboro
69 Memorial Hospital remains a strong, sustainable community
70 hospital for future generations.

71 If we succeed in that mission, we give ourselves the best
72 chance to preserve local maternity care as well.

73 Saving the Birthing Center and supporting Brattleboro
74 Memorial Hospital are not separate goals. They are one and the
75 same.

76 Now is the time for our community to stand behind both.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

77 **DR. TONY BLOFSON** and **DR. ELIZABETH MCLARNEY**
78 are acting co-CEOs of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.
####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####
79 0
####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####
80
####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####
81
####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####
82
####END LOGLINE####