

October 25, 2022

Note to: HCCBG Advisory Committee  
From: Suzanne Booth  
Subject: Mountain Care 'Meet and Greet' Visit  
Tuesday October 11, 2022

MountainCare:  
Elizabeth Williams, Executive Director  
Tiffani Goss, Program Manager  
Marsha Niederman, Finance Coordinator

HCCBG Advisory Committee:  
Susan Schiemer  
Suzanne Booth  
Billie Breeden

MountainCare provides Adult Day Care, Adult Day Health Care, Mountain Explorers (field trips), Caregiver Support Groups and limited Transportation services to elders and their caregivers. Before COVID, it provided limited overnight respite services, and tentatively plans to resume provision of these services next year. MountainCare operates two facilities, one in each of Buncombe and Henderson Counties; a Transylvania County location closed in January due to lack of funds.

MountainCare's Adult Day Services were once part of the Mission Health System's CarePartners affiliate. Following its purchase of the Mission system in 2019, Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) spun off "unprofitable" services into independent organizations, of which the current incarnation of MountainCare as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is one. Effectively overnight and with little effective assistance from HCA, MountainCare became equivalent to a start-up. As such, it needed to build administration functions (e.g., finance, human resources, information technology) from the ground up and pay overhead previously covered by Mission / CarePartners (e.g., rent, salaries). As an example of the potential community impact imposed by HCA's hasty action, while the WNC Bridge Foundation provided a grant to cover the approximately \$30-thousand in monthly rent for the CarePartner's location through 2023, the likelihood that MountainCare finds an alternative source of rent support or an affordable replacement space is unclear at this time. Consequently, there is a risk that the Buncombe County location will be forced to close. (Spectrum News reported on this April 28, 2022; please find the link here: <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2022/04/28/elderly-care-center-running-out-of-funding>.)

Currently, MountainCare is licensed to serve a maximum of 82 clients with operating costs estimated at about \$120 per client per day. As approximately 65% of clients require financial assistance to participate in its programs, the private pay revenue stream is insufficient to cover costs; other sources of funding (e.g., grants, donations) are essential. Thus far, MountainCare's charitable fundraising efforts have been limited to letters targeting the caregivers of former clients. The financial security of the organization would be greatly enhanced by significant gifts from one or more wealthy benefactors.

It should be noted that, following the close of Day Stay in January, MountainCare's Adult Day Health Program remains the only program in the county able to provide access to the skilled nursing services, medication administration and personal care assistance required by more fragile elders with multiple co-morbidities. While MountainCare shares the challenges faced by all social service agencies (e.g., limited revenue and funding sources, transient workforce (salary constraints), economically stressed client base, COVID interruptions), its ability to support the most vulnerable of the elderly and delay nursing home admissions may be in jeopardy.