

## **HOLZER HEALTH SYSTEM - Gallipolis, Ohio**

### **Keeping Faith with Their Communities through the Power of Networks**

The country doctor who opened a single physician practice in 1910 along the banks of the Ohio River in rural Appalachia would hardly recognize the network it has grown into more than 100 years later.

Today, Holzer Health System is the employer of 2,300 medical professionals offering almost one million square feet of patient-serving space, providing primary care needs as well as general and surgical specialties.

It's commitment to supporting and serving rural residents and communities is stronger than ever and takes many forms. As Holzer grew larger over the years, the system's leadership has played key roles in political investments, road development, transportation expansion and the growth of area businesses in general.

Like so many other health systems in rural America, Holzer embraces its critical place in supporting the local economy, social resources and the community spirit that keeps towns, villages and the backbone of the country alive.

It has not been easy. As the coal-dependent jobs that sustained the region for decades slowly disappeared, poverty, opioid exploitation, mental health concerns, and poor health contributions such as high caloric intake, alcoholism, drug addiction and sedentary lifestyles began to take their place.

### **The Pandemic**

Adding to the difficulties and as it did in so many places, the once-in-a-century pandemic exacerbated existing problems of food insecurity, housing inadequacy, and deep depression.

Battling so many negative health factors at once would overwhelm most individual hospitals. But Holzer's status as a health system, and in particular its decision to join the Ohio State Health Network, left it much better equipped to deal with the challenges of the pandemic.

- Recognizing the economic importance of the jobs it provides, Holzer announced there would be no furloughs and that its workforce could count on their paychecks during the time of uncertainty.
- Holzer was among the first systems in the country to provide 24-hour turn-around on COVID-19 test results. It did so by working with supply partners to assist in the process for developing protocols for testing.

- Holzer joined a network of facilities around the state of Ohio to share resources such as ventilators, beds and other critical needs as patient census changed among various geographies.
- Leveraging the system as a vast resource solution, Holzer established a vaccine-only clinic to most efficiently serve the community needs with efficient and timely access with testing and vaccine distribution.

### **Role in the Community**

In addition to robust medical and economic support, Holzer's resources as a health system have allowed to help support community activities such as 4-H, public school academics, sports, and social events; youth sports and outdoor activities; and community goodwill projects.

And it hasn't stopped there. The health system also invests each year to serve the needs of the underserved and disadvantaged. Specifically, it has installed a formal corporate board committee around DEI tasked with investigating, developing and reporting positive options within these important areas for community members.

For decades, Holzer has tended to the health, social and economic needs of its patients and the communities it serves in countless ways. That commitment will continue into the future.

As Holzer's leadership has stated, "Having the scale and resources of a health system allows us to have access, invest, and expand our services in times of great need."