

# Rural FQHC – Hospital Relationships: The Experience from Aroostook County, ME



REGION “A” MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
OF STATE OFFICES OF RURAL HEALTH

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# Brief background on each organization



## ■ Cary Medical Center

- 74-bed general acute care hospital, includes 9 ICFMR beds
- Has served Caribou and surrounding areas for 85+ years
- Largest employer in Caribou
- Initiated the formation of Pines Health Services
- A not-for-profit community hospital that operates as a department of the City of Caribou
- Emergency department sees ~20,000 patients annually
- All Pines providers are members of Cary's Active Medical Staff

# Brief background on each organization



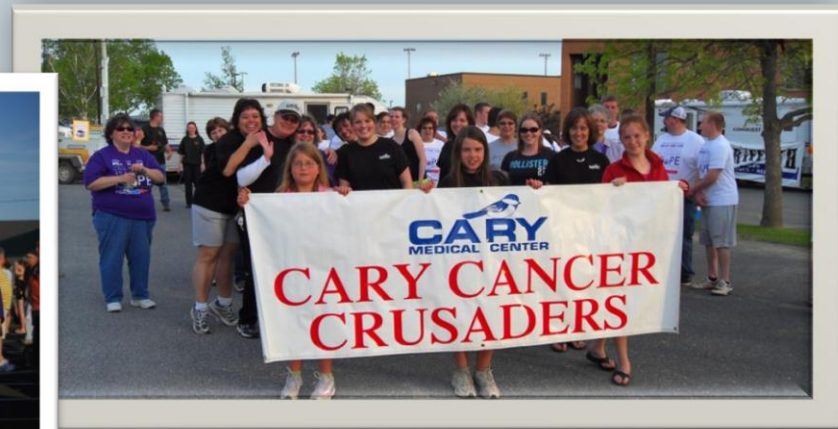
## ■ Pines Health Services

- Formed in 1981 to provide pharmacy services in Limestone
- Became a 501(c)3 organization in 2005 and was designated as a Federally Qualified Health Center in September 2007
- Primary care services are provided from 5 geographically dispersed health centers, plus specialty services in general surgery, urology, ophthalmology, occupational medicine, and hospitalist medicine
- Staff of ~ 30 physicians, 10 mid-level providers, and 90 nursing, clerical support, and administrative staff
- Serves ~ 14,500 unique patients,  $\geq$  65,000 encounters annually

# Brief background on each organization



- Both organizations represent significant engines in the local economy
  - Cary with a large number of employees
  - Pines with significantly higher salaries per capita than the area's average wage



# Brief background on each organization



## Pines Health Services Locations



## Cary Medical Center Campus

# Why collaborate?



- A natural outgrowth of efforts to improve access and deliver needed services in the community
- We serve the same population and share the same geographic service area



# Why collaborate?

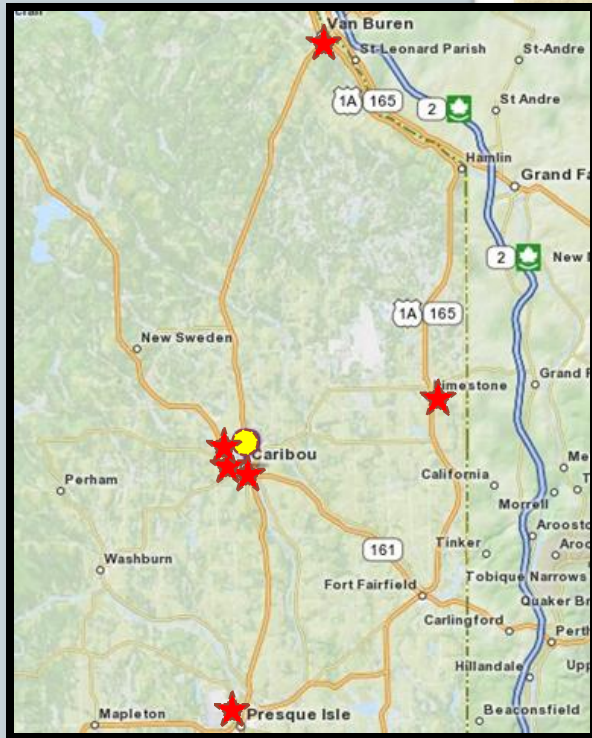


- Limited population
  - Aroostook County: 70,000
  - Service area: 32,000
  - Two cities of 8,000 each
- Limited physician supply
- Geographic isolation
  - Service area: roughly 1,300 square miles
- Limited supply of professional and technical employees

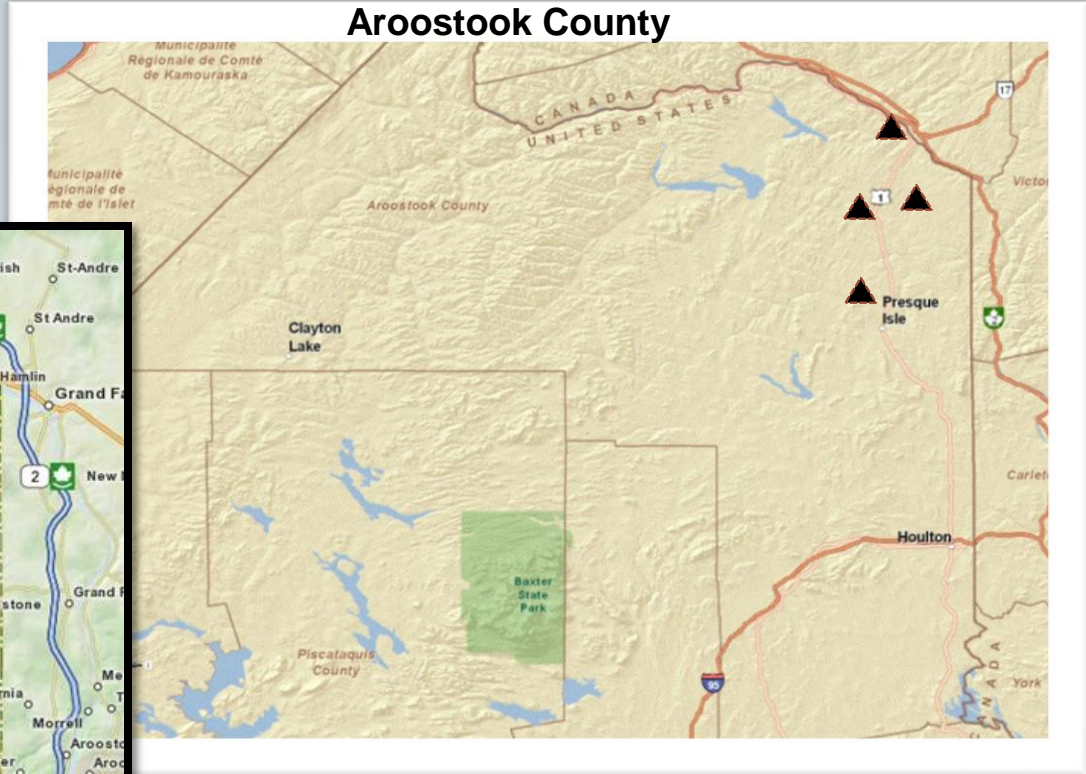
# Why collaborate?



Locations in Caribou,  
Presque Isle, Limestone, and  
Van Buren, ME



## Aroostook County



-  Cary Medical Center/Pines Surgical Services
-  Pines Health Services

# Why collaborate?



- Maintaining the strength of both organizations is critical to delivering health care services
- Maintaining a high degree of flexibility is equally critical



# How do we collaborate?



- Medical staff
- Provision of ancillary services
- Shared staffing
  - Maintenance, public relations, housekeeping, information services
- Strategic planning
  - Joint Board meeting for strategic plan reviews and updates
- Governance
  - Monthly Board member exchange
  - Quarterly joint Board Executive Committee meetings

# How do we collaborate?



- Lease clinical space from hospital
  - Loring, St. John Valley, Women's & Children's, Surgical Services
- Written and verbal CEO reports to Boards
- Physician recruitment
- EMR integration via interface and direct access by health care providers
  - Provision of care, continuity of care, meaningful use, reduce duplication of tests and procedures
- Group purchasing discounts
- Legislative affairs

# Where do we encounter potentially divisive elements?



- External environment related to finance and regulation
- Orthopedic surgery recruitment
- Relocation of Surgical Services (internal stakeholders)
- FQHC funding made available through the Recovery Act and Affordable Care Act



# Opportunities for future collaboration and strengthening our relationship



- Accountable Care Organizations
- Reductions in Emergency Department utilization (Cary) related to expanded evening and weekend access (Pines)
- Inpatient/Outpatient case management to reduce re-admissions



# Overarching themes



- Values, vision, and mission drive collaboration for governance and executive teams
- Commitment to remain in constant communication
- Identify new opportunities to leverage collaboration and strengths



# Overarching themes



- Issues of finance and control (“mine”, “yours”) get resolved by focus on “our community”
- It is all about serving our community
- Quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin during the Revolutionary War: “Either we hang together or we shall surely hang separately”



*Thank you for allowing us  
to share our model.*

