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Community Connections: Fall 1995

Boston University Medical Center, Department of Marketing/Public Affairs

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Boston University
The Boston HealthNet:
Community-driven, consumer-based health

With the goal of providing seamless, quality healthcare for a wide range of local consumers, eight community health centers have joined with Boston University Medical Center Hospital (BUMCH), Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) and Boston City Hospital (BCH) to form The Boston HealthNet. This unique, consumer-driven health partnership will provide expanded, improved and more efficient community services and carry on BCH's vital mission of serving Boston's poor, uninsured and medically underserved population. Covering half the city with 200,000 clients served by the eight health centers, The Boston HealthNet is the largest such affiliation in Boston, and is a national model for consumer-driven urban healthcare. Among the several components that make The Boston HealthNet a unique partnership are: a shared information system is planned that will increase communication among HealthNet members and eliminate duplication of tests and paperwork for health.

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Landmark signing brings BUMCH/BCH merger closer to reality

On July 5, after months of deliberation, the Boston City Council passed the Boston Public Health Act of 1995, which was signed by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino the following week. This home rule petition creates a Public Health Commission, replacing the Boston Department of Health and Hospitals. Also, the bill allows the City and Boston University Medical Center Hospital to begin formal negotiations towards the merger of the Hospital, Boston City Hospital and Boston Specialty and Rehabilitation Hospital. Following the signing, the State Legislature's Health Care Committee voted on July 25 to approve the merger, which cleared the way for a full legislative vote. The House and Senate are expected to vote on the legislation before the fall. According to Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, the passage of this legislation will achieve three important goals: First, he says, it allows Boston to adapt to changes in the

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Alcohol study focuses on saving young lives
Clinton urges "zero tolerance"

Results of a study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) show that if low blood alcohol levels under 0.05 are considered the standard for legal drinking, the risk of fatal drink driving would be reduced by 31% in states where such laws are in effect. The study also found that there would be a significant reduction in the number of automobile accidents involving alcohol-related drivers. The study further suggests that the implementation of such laws would lead to a decrease in the number of alcohol-related deaths. The study was based on data from the National Intoxication Alcometry Study (NIS), which collected data from police officers and hospital emergency rooms.

Clinton urged Congress to pass a "zero tolerance" law, which would make it illegal for drivers to have any detectable alcohol in their systems. Clinton said, "We must take action immediately to protect our young people from the dangers of alcohol abuse."

Quality patient care is driving force behind merger

When people ask what the merger is about, my answer is very simple. It’s about improving the quality of care for our patients. We believe that by combining our two hospitals, we can provide a higher level of care to our patients. We will be able to offer a wider range of services and treatments, and we will be able to do this more efficiently and effectively.

In some neighborhoods, the rates of disease are alarmingly high compared to the rest of Boston. To deal with these data, many hospitals are merging with compatible providers and creating systems of managed care that keep hospital utilization and costs down. Cost-effective systems are better able to compete for insurance contracts and survive in the marketplace. Public health officials are concerned about the impact of these changes on the health of our communities.

There is no question that the merger is a positive step for our communities. It will allow us to provide better care to our patients and it will help us to reduce costs and improve the quality of care. We are committed to making this merger a success and to ensuring that our patients receive the best possible care.

Free prostate cancer screenings

Valerie Daniels has been appointed director of community relations at Boston University Medical Center Hospital. Prior to her appointment, Valerie Daniels spent 10 years at WCVB-TV Channel 5, where she was both producer and reporter for CityLine, a weekly half-hour news magazine. Valerie Daniels has received numerous honors and awards, including a Black Achievers Award from the Greater Boston YWCA, and she was named "One of Thirty Young Leaders of America Under 30" by Ebony magazine. In her new role, Valerie Daniels will be the Hospital's community liaison and she will create programs to address the health needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.

New Community relations director appointed

Valerie Daniels has been appointed director of community relations at Boston University Medical Center Hospital. Prior to her appointment, Valerie Daniels spent 10 years at WCVB-TV Channel 5, where she was both producer and reporter for CityLine, a weekly half-hour news magazine. Valerie Daniels has received numerous honors and awards, including a Black Achievers Award from the Greater Boston YWCA, and she was named "One of Thirty Young Leaders of America Under 30" by Ebony magazine. In her new role, Valerie Daniels will be the Hospital's community liaison and she will create programs to address the health needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.
Parents of young children take note: There are some basic steps you can take to help your kids get off to a good start in the school year.

"The most important thing parents can do is make sure their children are healthy," says Barry Zuckerman, MD, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine and chief of pediatrics at Boston City Hospital. "Children need certain immunizations to protect them against viruses, and they need to eat nutritious food and get a good night's sleep. They also need to have good hearing and vision for the classroom, so it's important to make sure they have a regular check-up," he says.

If you do not have a doctor for your child, call The Boston HealthNet at 1-800/841-4325 to find out about a physician you can see at the hospital or a community health center near you.

After good health, good sleep is probably the most important factor for a school-bound child, says Zuckerman, because tired children can't concentrate in school. Try to get your kids used to a good sleep schedule before the school year begins. Sometimes children stay up too late because they're watching TV. Consider turning off the TV and getting your child into bed early for reading before the light goes out—it can be a fun way for the child to unwind and get ready for sleep.

As a parent, you can also make a big difference in the way your child feels about going to school. "A parent's opinion matters a lot to a child," says Zuckerman. "If a parent is enthusiastic about school, the child will look forward to classes. If a child is afraid, a parent should talk with the child about his concerns."

Zuckerman also urges parents to keep in touch with their children's teachers. If you have concerns about how your child is feeling or behaving in school, call or see the teacher about it. Together, you may solve the problem.

Getting your child to read at home is an important way to help her become a bright, alert student who is interested in learning. "Parents who take the time to read with their children are really doing them a big favor," says Zuckerman. "Reading can stimulate a child's mind, and make a significant difference in her academic success in school."

"Parents who take the time to read with their children are really doing them a big favor," says Barry Zuckerman, MD, pictured with a child at Boston City Hospital.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING HEALTH TIPS FOR YOUR CHILDREN:

- **Check-ups**
  - Make sure children get check-ups at ages 5, 6, 10 and every year after through age 21.
  - The beginning of the school year is a good time for a check up.

- **Immunization shots**
  - Make sure your child has the following vaccinations, mandated by the state:
    - Oral polio booster: the fourth and last booster shot in this series should be given at ages 4 to 6 years old.
  - MMR immunization: the second dose should be given to children ages 4 to 6 years old.
  - DTP booster shot: children ages 4 to 6 years old should receive the fifth shot in this series.

- **Nutrition**
  - Prepare a healthy breakfast of cereal, toast, milk and juice.
  - Pack healthy lunches and snacks with fresh fruit, or carrot sticks and other raw veggies instead of sugary sweets.

- **Exercise**
  - Get your couch potato out in the fresh air and sunshine after school. Remember, play is also important to a child's development and can help a child sleep better.

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healthcare industry. Second, it protects the jobs of thousands of healthcare workers. Third, and most importantly, Menino says, the Boston Public Health Act of 1996 "helps preserve the mission of BCH—to provide first-rate healthcare regardless of one's ability to pay. That is the principle upon which BCH was founded—and the spirit to which it must adhere."

Once the House and Senate pass legislation, officials will be able to negotiate a formal merger agreement, which will be ratified by the Boston City Council. The City Council ratification will officially merge the three hospitals into one private, non-profit institution. The target date for the merger is July 1, 1996.

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We look forward to doing great things together." The formation of The Boston HealthNet is a strong endorsement of the merger between the Hospital and BCH. "We could not become partners with hospitals that are not committed to serving everyone in the communities, regardless of their financial status," says Boston HealthNet President William Walczak, executive director of the Codman Square Health Center. "Together, that is what Boston University Medical Center Hospital and Boston City Hospital are doing."

For more information about the services offered through The Boston HealthNet, call 1-800/841-4325.