

Award: Elsie Field Health Care Provider Award
Recipient: Carle Foundation
Presenter: Claudia Lennhoff

Good evening, again.

I would like to ask the Lynne Barnes from Carle to join me on stage for this next award presentation.

I am so deeply proud and filled with gratitude to be able to present the Elsie Field Health Care Provider Award to Carle Foundation tonight for their massive expansion of access to care for low-income individuals and families.

The Elsie Field Health Care Provider Award is a special recognition awarded to a health care provider on the basis of outstanding service and dedication to providing Champaign County residents with the best possible health care services regardless of their ability to pay.

CCHCC's Board of Directors unanimously selected Carle for your dedication and service to meeting the health care needs of low-income residents in our community.

As many of you know, Health Care Consumers has been working with Carle for almost ten years now, to improve access to care and financial assistance for low-income individuals. Over the years, Carle Foundation Hospital has made major improvements and advances in its financial assistance program, which allowed low-income individuals with or without health insurance, to get discounts of up to 100% on their hospital bills. But outpatient primary and specialty care still remained out of reach for too many.

Then, about four years ago, Carle Foundation let the community know that they were planning a merger of the non-profit Carle Foundation Hospital and the for-profit Carle Clinic, to become one non-profit entity. Carle Foundation's CEO, Dr. James Leonard, promised the community that the newly merged non-profit Carle would make the hospital's financial assistance program available for all medically-necessary services at Carle, including physician and diagnostic services.

Low-income community members can now do what they were not able to do four and five years ago – they can apply for Carle financial assistance, get up to a 100% discount, and schedule appointments and care with Carle physicians for primary care, specialty care, diagnostic tests, physical therapy, and a whole range of medically necessary health care services. Our low-income community members now literally have access to hundreds of physicians to whom they previously did not have access.

We at Health Care Consumers see the difference that this makes every single day. We routinely help individuals and families apply for financial assistance at Carle and help them schedule the primary care and other appointments that they need. In the process, if they had outstanding debt, we see that debt wiped away, giving these patients a new start, and a new pathway to health.

Carle's comprehensive financial assistance program has done for many what health insurance is supposed to do – it has become a passport to care.

There are many Carle patients in the room with us right now, who I know can give testimony to this, and who have received excellent treatment that was previously not available to them. For some, their lives have been saved, their health has been transformed, and they have ongoing access to the care they need without crushing medical debt and legal repercussions from debt collection.

Carle's financial assistance policy and application is forward-thinking, user-friendly, and generous. It is good for a year at time, and covers old debt. Carle even sends out reminders three months in advance so that people can reapply without a lapse in their assistance.

Beyond the health care providers who deliver the care to our community members, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the staff who work on the patient accounts and financial assistance program. We collaborate with them routinely to process people's applications, and they are diligent and kind in carrying out their work.

Carle has distinguished itself as a fine and caring, and innovative health care provider, willing to provide care to those who need the care, regardless of income or insurance status. What a difference you have made in the lives of our community members in the last three years.

We are so proud and grateful to recognize Carle this evening with the Elsie Field Health Care Provider Award.

Lynne Barnes, Vice President of Carle Hospital Operations and HVI is here to accept the award on behalf of Carle.

Congratulations, and on behalf of the low-income individuals and families that you serve, we thank you!