

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Opinion

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Hospital closings offer area unique opportunity

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As a geriatrician, I read with great interest The News article, "Vowing to keep Catholic hospitals open." A perfect storm is forming locally and nationally in addressing the needs of a rapidly aging population. Only we can determine whether this storm destroys us or defines us.

Can Western New York transform its grief over closing hospitals into an effort to pull together disparate community resources for a common purpose - to improve the health and well-being of its older adults and those who care about and for them?

Imagine a place where seniors and caregivers can go to get all their health and social service needs met. A place of learning, care and research. A clearinghouse of information and best practices. A hub from which volunteer and faith institutions can better fulfill their missions of service to the elderly.

Imagine a center at which health professional students serve apprenticeships and provide needed services at low cost. A location at which varied disciplines and organizations work as cross-pollinating individuals and teams to tackle the complex issues and syndromes of aging. A visible focal point of geriatric care excellence that all can see clearly and support.

Perhaps such an institution could be the nucleus of a new identity that defines the Buffalo metropolitan area as one of the "most senior-friendly and senior-smart" regions in America.

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