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Story-Driven Health: Alaska's Race to Wellness

Alaska Native nonprofit to present at SXSW Interactive 2015

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA – March 11, 2015 – A 2012 New York Times editorial said, **“Alaska Natives have something to teach doctors and patients in the rest of the world.”** In Scotland, an NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement director remarked, **“It’s amazing that such a relatively small system as yours has had such a big impact on the whole world.”** And a former administrator for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services shared, **“I think it’s the leading example of health care redesign in the nation, maybe the world.”**

What makes a nonprofit health care organization owned and managed by Alaska Native people generate such praise? It’s the customer-driven overhaul of health care delivery, philosophy and values that led Southcentral Foundation (SCF) to shift focus from a medical model – pills, procedures and problem solving by “professionals” for “patients” – to a model focused on relationships, building from the community’s strengths and putting the customer-owner in the driver’s seat. Changing the language and culture of the health care system to promote resiliency and self-determination has been very effective in improving health outcomes for SCF customer-owners.

“For 50 years, Alaska Native people in Southcentral Alaska received their health care as “beneficiaries” (or patients) of an Indian Health Service hospital. Waits were long, care was impersonal; we were identified by numbers, not names. There was disconnect between care for the mind and care for the body. Patients weren't happy, employees weren't happy. Health statistics were bleak. Many patients left the Native system altogether to find better care. When Congress passed a federal law in favor of self-determination, a door opened for our Alaska Native people to own the entities that deliver the services. This law was an opportunity for innovation – to completely redesign the regional health system based on our values and needs,” said SCF President/CEO Dr. Katherine Gottlieb.

“Today, SCF is outperforming most other leading health care systems. The way people are connecting to the health care system and getting involved has been inspirational and energizing for employees, community partners, and our customer-owners,” adds Gottlieb, who is of Sugpiaq and Filipino heritage and began her health care career some 30 years ago in the remote Alaska community of Seldovia – population 300 and accessible only by boat or plane.

SCF’s Nuka System of Care is a health care system created, managed and owned by Alaska Native people to achieve physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness. It is comprised of organizational strategies and processes, practices and supporting infrastructure that work together -- in relationship - to support wellness, resulting in increased health outcomes and decreased cost.

Gottlieb, along with SCF Vice President of Medical Services Dr. Douglas Eby, will present **“Story-Driven Health: Alaska's Race to Wellness”** at SXSW Interactive on **Saturday, March 14 at 5 p.m.** in the Green Room of the JW Marriott 308 (110 E. 2nd Street, Room 201-202).

Defining “Story-Driven Health: Alaska's Race to Wellness”:

- A physician, a behavioral health consultant, an administrative support and a dietitian are sitting in a circle sharing their story. Why would a health care organization want every employee to learn how to share and receive story? It’s moving beyond customer feedback.

- This session highlights SCF's story of whole health care system transformation – an exemplary model of change illustrating what can be accomplished when people choose to control their own destiny.
- The story-driven Nuka System of Care is comprised of organizational strategies and processes, practices, and supporting infrastructure that work together – in relationship – to support wellness, resulting in increased health outcomes and decreased cost.
 - 93% Employee Satisfaction 2014
 - 93% Customer Satisfaction 2014
 - 23% Decrease in ER/Urgent Care from 2008 to 2015
 - 25% Decrease in Primary Care visits from 2008 to 2015
 - Exceeds 90th Percentile compared nationally in HEDIS (measured ongoing) for:
 - Board certification
 - Diabetes LDL <100
 - Diabetes care annual testing
 - Asthma appropriate medications
 - Tobacco screening & quit rates
 - 75th-90th percentile in HEDIS (measured ongoing) for:
 - Colorectal Cancer Screening rates
 - Cervical Cancer Screening rates
 - Breast Cancer Screening rates
 - Depression Screening rates
- By listening to customer stories, SCF learned it needed to provide more than health care. It took SCF's fearless, customer-owner-led Board of Directors and President/CEO Dr. Katherine Gottlieb, a MacArthur Genius award winner, to embrace the idea of whole health care transformation, stare down fierce opposition and let customers rewrite the roadmap to wellness.
- This session will guide how organizations can empower customers to become owners of a service – and its delivery – in any consumer arena.

While managing nearly two decades of exponential growth, including growing the workforce from fewer than 100 to more than 1,800 employees and the operating budget from \$3 million to \$290 million, SCF has distinguished itself as one of the nation's leading health care systems. SCF hosts visitors from around the world, including representatives from 35 states and 11 countries, looking to learn from SCF's accomplishments.

About Southcentral Foundation

Southcentral Foundation is an Alaska Native health care organization established under the tribal authority of Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) in 1982 to improve the health and social conditions of Alaska Native people. SCF has grown from a single dental clinic to an internationally recognized, award-winning health care organization employing more than 1,800 people and managing more than 80 health care programs and services to serve 65,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people in Anchorage, Mat-Su Borough and 55 rural villages in the Anchorage Service Unit. Additionally, since 1999, SCF has jointly owned and managed the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. SCF's Nuka System of Care has earned the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and other national and international recognitions for performance excellence and innovation.

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