

# Report to Our Communities

January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021



## Letter from Ballad Health CEO and Chairman Alan Levine:



Despite the challenges faced by so many in our region brought by the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, Ballad Health and our servant leaders throughout the organization have proudly stood to support our neighbors and families in the Appalachian Highlands.

In addition to our ongoing response dating back to Spring, 2020, this year we increased vaccine availability by opening a COVID-19 vaccination center, launched a Center for Post-COVID Care and implemented an innovative COVID-19 care-at-home program, Safe at Home, which supported the recovery of COVID-19 patients in their homes rather than in the hospital, while helping to reduce the overwhelming burden on our staffing resources.

While responding to the pandemic was undoubtedly our top priority throughout 2021, Ballad Health has continued on its journey to deploy initiatives intended to improve the overall health and well-being of the 1.2 million people living in the Appalachian Highlands.

We opened America's newest rural hospital, Lee County Community Hospital, in Pennington Gap, Virginia. We launched the Niswonger Children's Network to expand access to high quality pediatric care regionally and continued our journey to develop closer relationships with our patients and team members through digital transformation and the introduction of powerful apps and connectivity.

Under our Certificate of Public Advantage (COPA) in Tennessee and a Cooperative Agreement in Virginia, we continued through the pandemic to make new investments in population health, behavioral health services, rural access and pediatric care, and

academics and research, all while continuing to reduce the overall cost of health care. **Ballad Health has reduced the cost of health care in our region by more than \$200 million annually.**

While hospitals, and more specifically rural hospitals, continue to struggle in a volatile environment with respect to intense labor shortages and inflation, what sets Ballad Health apart is the scale of our health delivery system. While Ballad Health is not immune from the challenges impacting rural communities, our scale provides a level of protection from many of the pressures causing closures of rural hospitals. No doubt, logical steps to realign resources, reduce cost and enhance quality remain priorities, sometimes these decisions can create uncertainty for our communities. Ballad Health remains committed to communicating with our communities about the challenges affecting rural hospitals, and steps we are taking to protect access in our communities.

The evidence of Ballad Health's benefit to our region is clear and supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia and State of Tennessee, both of which have continuously found that Ballad Health is achieving the public benefit intended by our creation. We have demonstrated measurable improvement in quality of care, even achieving top decile performance on many quality measures.

We hope this Report to Our Communities is informative, and we certainly encourage you to stay informed about what we are doing and how you can be involved.



## Ballad Health: re-imagining rural healthcare

Ballad Health is dedicated to improving the health of the 29-county Appalachian Highlands region. Sharing our story is important as we work to galvanize our stakeholders and communities, and this report is a crucial conduit by which we keep them, our regulators and our payer partners informed.

Rural healthcare faces many challenges, as do the rural communities we serve. Economic, demographic and behavioral factors all contribute to inter-generational cycles of financial disadvantage and poor health that impact every sector of the community. But our region's rich culture provides strengths that we draw on to break those cycles to create a new legacy of health and vitality for the next generation. By working collaboratively with community organizations through initiatives such as the 300-member STRONG Accountable Care Community, and investing in programs and services that promote overall health, Ballad Health is creating a new national model for rural healthcare.



This report, the second published since the 2018 merger of Ballad Health, will cover the 12-month period from Jan. 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2021.

For reference, Ballad Health operates on a fiscal year that begins July 1 and ends June 30.



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January

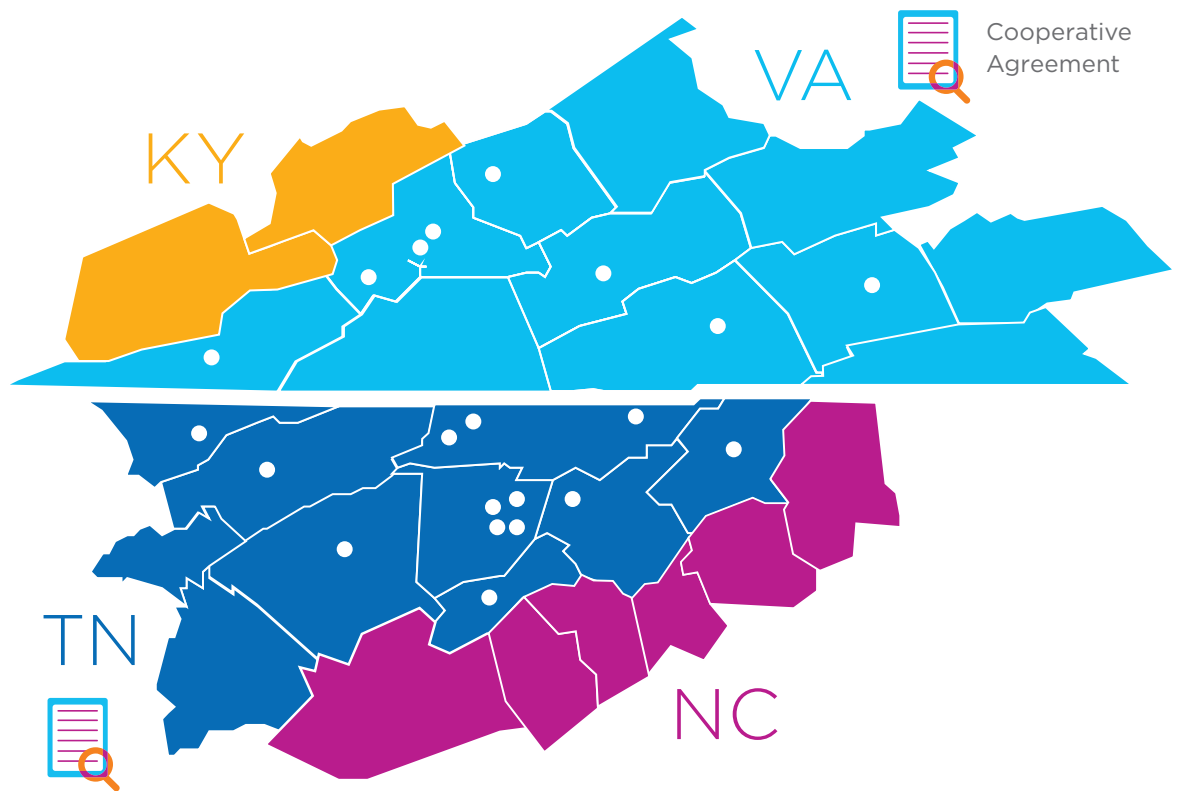
2021



December

2021





Certificate of Public Advantage

2018  
merger

29  
counties

21  
hospitals

-  a dedicated children's hospital
-  several community hospitals
-  four critical access hospitals
-  behavioral health hospitals
-  an addiction treatment facility
-  long-term care facilities
-  home care and hospice services
-  retail pharmacies
-  outpatient services
-  a comprehensive, fully integrated physician practice with locations throughout the region

## Our Ballad Health values, determined by our team members

Nearly 13,000 Ballad Health team members from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds **deliver on Ballad Health's mission every day.** At every level of the organization, Ballad Health is made stronger by their dedication, effort and continuous engagement to help us **always improve.**



When Ballad Health was formed, we asked our team members to help define and describe the values by which we should guide how we interact with each other, our patients and our community. More than 3,000 team members provided input. These values are:

- **Creativity** – We seek to discover and promote innovative ideas and the unique talents of each team member to bring value to our community.
- **Caring** – We listen with empathy and appreciation and respond with kindness and compassion.
- **Honesty** – We own our actions and practice the highest ethical standards with transparency and fair behaviors.
- **Respect** – We appreciate the strengths of our community and practice true collaboration and skilled communication in everything we do.
- **Faith** – We nurture the mind, body and spirit of each individual to inspire hope and improve the health and well-being of our community.
- **Quality** – We work as a team to bring best practices, advanced technology and experiences to provide the highest-quality care. We devote ourselves to continuous improvement, service excellence and a zero-harm environment.



**Our mission**  
Honor those we serve by delivering the best possible care



**Our vision**  
Build a legacy of superior health by listening to and caring for those we serve



**Our values**  
Creativity  
Caring  
Honesty  
Respect  
Faith  
Quality



I don't think there's any higher calling than healthcare. The nurses, doctors and care teams come in here every single day and give it all they've got.



**Aimee Light**

Director of cardiovascular services,  
Holston Valley Medical Center



As a health system comprised of people committed to serving others, Ballad Health team members gave everything they had in 2021 to ensure our communities were protected against COVID-19, while delivering the best possible care to those in need.



**Alan Levine**

Chairman of the Board and  
Chief Executive Officer

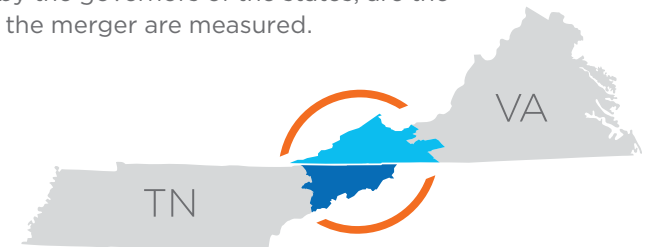
## Steps taken by Ballad Health and the results related to the benefits established in law by the State of Tennessee and Commonwealth of Virginia

Ballad Health is an integrated community health improvement organization serving 29 counties of the Appalachian Highlands in Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Northwest North Carolina and Southeast Kentucky. Our system of 21 hospitals, post-acute care and behavioral health services, and a large multi-specialty group physician practice works closely with an active independent medical community and community stakeholders to improve the health and well-being of more than 1 million people. By leading in the adoption of value-based payments, addressing health-related social needs, funding clinical and health systems research and committing to long-term investments in strong children and families in our region, Ballad Health is striving to become a national model for rural health and healthcare

Ballad Health was formed in 2018 through a merger of two legacy health systems. This merger was made possible through overwhelming bipartisan action of the General Assemblies of Tennessee and Virginia, in addition to each state's governor, attorneys general and health commissioners.

Through official state action, the merger was sanctioned under state-action immunity in compliance with federal antitrust law. The action approving the merger was officially taken through the agreements made between Ballad Health and the State of Tennessee in the Certificate of Public Advantage (COPA) and the Letter Authorizing the Cooperative Agreement (CA) in Virginia.

The ultimate policy supporting the imposition of state-action immunity is determined by the states' General Assemblies, and the clear advantages of the COPA and CA are contained in statute. These priorities, created by the general assemblies and affirmed by the governors of the states, are the benchmarks by which the benefits of the merger are measured.









# Steps taken by Ballad Health and the results related to the benefits established in law by the State of Tennessee and Commonwealth of Virginia

As a not-for-profit, private entity created through the unique actions of Virginia and Tennessee, Ballad Health’s compliance with the terms of the COPA and Cooperative Agreement is supervised by the respective states. Ballad Health seeks to consistently meet the highest standard of public benefit for the residents of the Appalachian Highlands.

While the doctrine of state-action immunity to federal anti-trust law applies to Ballad Health related to inpatient acute care services, the reality is that more than 60% of Ballad Health’s revenue is comprised of outpatient services, which remain highly competitive within the service area. As such, the region served by Ballad Health continues to maintain a high degree of competition for the majority of health care services sought and received by consumers.

In addition to complying with the terms of the COPA and CA, Ballad Health has invested in, and implemented, numerous initiatives that are proven benefits to the public. While there are too many to list in this report, we have chosen to provide a sampling.

These priorities, as specifically articulated by law, are the critical success factors for whether the policy contained within statute is being accomplished. The policies articulated by the General Assemblies and governors are the guiding principles for the board of directors and leadership of Ballad Health. These policies speak toward the benefits of the merger, as outlined in Tennessee and Virginia law, and include:

-  • **Enhancement of quality** of hospital and hospital-related care
-  • **Gains in cost efficiency and cost containment** of services provided by the hospitals
-  • **Preservation of hospital facilities** in geographic proximity to the communities traditionally served by those facilities to ensure access to care
-  • **Improvements in the utilization** of hospital resources and equipment
-  • **Demonstration of population health improvement** in the region
-  • **Avoidance of duplication** of hospital resources



**In Virginia**, the law provides for two additional benefits, including “total cost of care” and “participation in the state’s Medicaid program.”



**In Tennessee**, the law provides a unique benefit of “the extent to which medically underserved populations have access to and are projected to utilize the proposed services.”

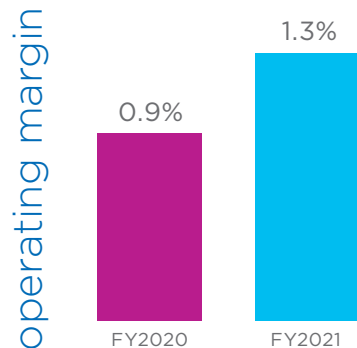


## Financial stability and patient volumes

Ballad Health is also following through on its promise to bring financial stability to its two legacy health systems and achieve synergies by removing duplicative services and investing in greater access to new services.

The two hospitals in Greene County were financially struggling, losing nearly \$25 million in a two-year period prior to the merger. With Ballad Health's creation, both hospitals were consolidated into one, and the other facility was converted into a residential facility for women who are pregnant and suffering from substance abuse disorders.

Projects like these, intended to reverse financial declines and create new avenues for services and system stability, are exactly why Ballad Health was created.



Ballad Health continues to identify ways to reduce unnecessary administrative and overhead cost, improve quality, eliminate unnecessary duplication of high-cost services and seek better supply pricing – all of which further reduced the overall cost of care for patients in the Appalachian Highlands. Ballad Health has utilized the savings it has created and invested them into a population health infrastructure, Epic electronic medical record platform, provider recruitment, academics and training.

Throughout 2020, due to extreme volatility related to surges in the number of cases of COVID-19 requiring hospitalization, Ballad Health experienced material declines in volumes, including inpatient discharges, surgeries, urgent care and emergency department visits. A similar decline was experienced by most health systems and physician organizations in the United States.

Comparing the 2021 fiscal year to the prior fiscal year, Ballad Health saw a **10% decrease in emergency department visits** and **20% decrease in urgent care visits**, excluding telehealth visits.



To read more detailed accomplishments and achievements, visit our [website](#).

# Terry

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Terry Shipley assumed her chest discomfort and shortness of breath came from stress and weight gain. But knowing her family history of coronary artery disease, she decided to see her doctor. Test results were normal, but a follow-up appointment a year later showed concerning abnormalities. Further testing revealed two blockages in the arteries leading to her heart.

Terry says the thought of undergoing double bypass surgery was scary, but her doctors at Johnson City Medical Center put her at ease. Since having the surgery, she now walks up to five miles a day. "I feel like I want to go and do more," she said. "I feel like I've been given a second chance. I look forward to being an advocate for heart surgery, too. I'd say to anyone, if you have chest pain or shortness of breath, even if you're unsure, get it checked out - especially if you have a family history of heart disease. It could save your life, just like it did mine."

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## A few examples of our commitment to improving the overall health and well-being of our region

Ballad Health rewrote the story of rural health last summer by doing something few other health systems across the country have done: opening a new rural hospital for the second time in less than three years.

Lee County Community Hospital, a 10-bed modern medical facility serving rural Pennington Gap, Virginia, and its surrounding communities in Southwest Virginia and Southeast Kentucky, officially opened its doors to the public on Thursday, July 1. Now open and serving patients, the new Lee County Community Hospital has been specifically designed to meet the needs of its community, with acute and emergency services available 24/7, diagnostic radiology and lab services, outpatient cardiology and additional rotating clinics for specialty care and telehealth access.



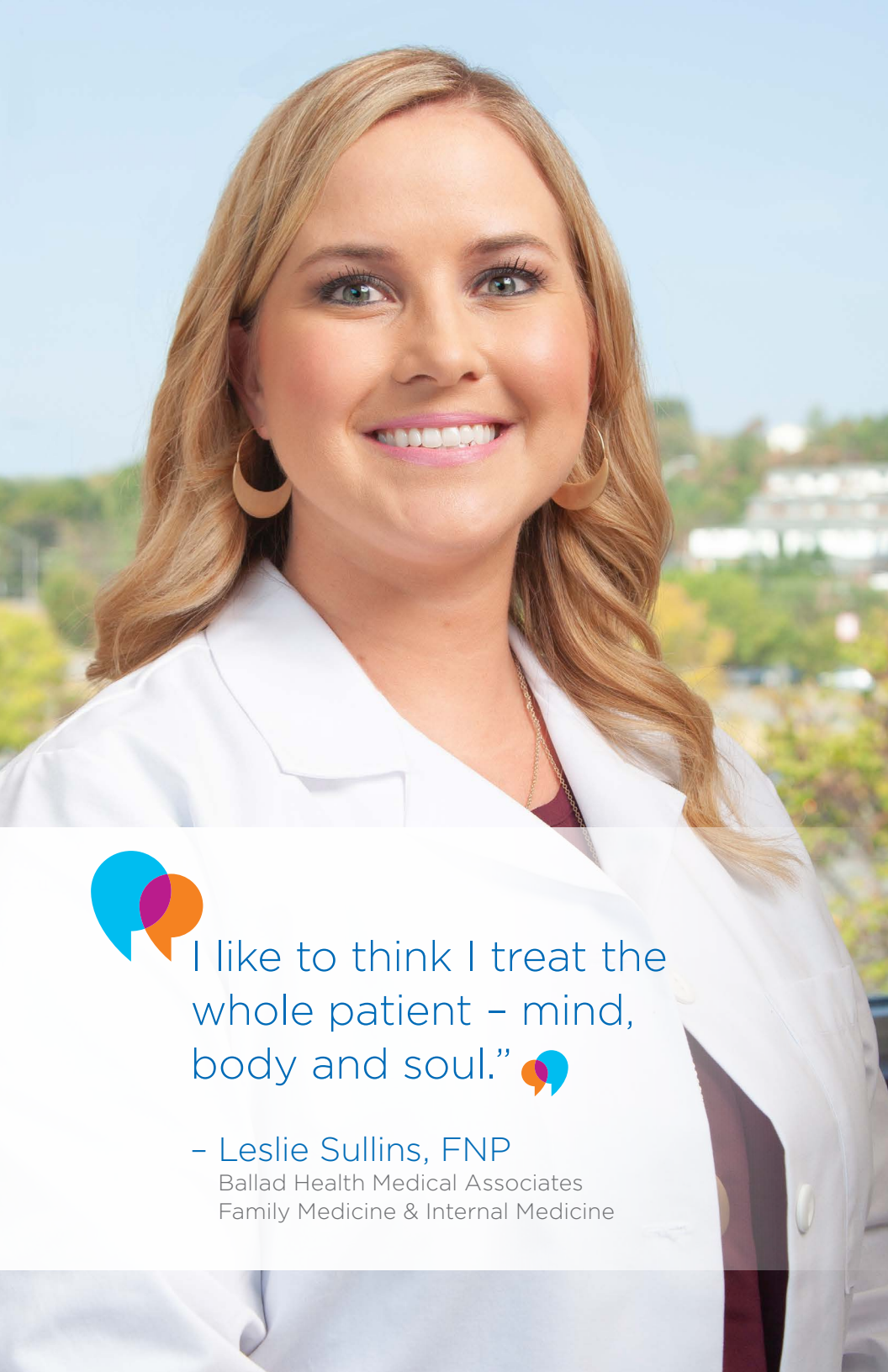
**Ballad Health worked with two community foundations to make more than \$310 million of new funds available to improve quality of life and access to healthcare in rural Southwest Virginia.**

In November, the health system announced an agreement with the Wellspring Foundation and the Smyth County Community Foundation that paves the way for new population health initiatives throughout Southwest Virginia.

Through the terms of the new agreement, Ballad Health is now the sole owner of Johnston Memorial Hospital and Smyth County Community Hospital. This agreement produced more than \$310 million for the local foundations in these communities, which will support other charitable organizations, community health initiatives, educational activities, workforce development and education for the healthcare workforce in Southwest Virginia.







I like to think I treat the whole patient – mind, body and soul.”

– Leslie Sullins, FNP  
Ballad Health Medical Associates  
Family Medicine & Internal Medicine

## A few examples of our commitment to improving the overall health and well-being of our region

Ballad Health announced in October a commitment of \$10 million to create the Appalachian Highlands Center for Nursing Advancement at East Tennessee State University.

The Center will be dedicated to bringing nursing, business, liberal arts, education and other academic and support programs together to increase the pipeline of opportunity and augment the supply of nurses and nursing support in the Appalachian Highlands. The Center will develop partnerships with other colleges and universities in Tennessee and Virginia to advance the clinical practice of nursing, enhance interprofessional collaboration, contribute to knowledge about nursing workflow and generate nursing scholarships and innovation.



In March, Ballad Health formed a new Children’s Resource Center (CRC) at Johnston Memorial Hospital and announced a financial investment to bring Virginia’s Kids Belong to the region.

Virginia’s Kids Belong is a proven program dedicated to helping children in foster care find forever homes and helping children and families in the foster care system. The CRC’s main goal is to assist families with preventing illness and injury, while serving as a resource to provide quality and trusted information to parents.



## A few examples of our commitment to improving the overall health and well-being of our region

Ballad Health announced an agreement with RIP Medical Debt (RIP) in June that eliminated \$277,971,455 worth of non-governmental payer medical debt for approximately 82,000 people previously served by Ballad Health.

RIP is a national non-profit that uses donated funds to purchase medical debts belonging to financially burdened individuals. RIP has historically acquired accounts from the secondary debt market, such as debt buyers and collection agencies, to forgive the acquired debt.

Ballad Health was the first health system in the United States that RIP had successfully worked with directly. This effort has paved the way for other hospitals around the country to also begin eliminating medical debt in the same way.

~~\$277,971,455~~

non-governmental payer  
medical debt - **eliminated**

In May, Ballad Health announced it would invest \$2 million in 21 regional, community-based organizations to support strategies aimed at improving children's health outcomes in the region, including providing social support services and navigation for women suffering from addiction, preventing food insecurity, parenting and resiliency training and keeping youth from dropping out of school.



The work these community organizations are doing will help ensure that children and families reach their full potential.

**STRONG** +  **UNITE US**

Ballad Health and the region's STRONG Accountable Care Community unveiled a new partnership and coordinated care network with Unite Us that will enhance community members' health and well-being.

The partnership, announced in June, will join Ballad Health with the Unite Tennessee and Unite Virginia networks. These networks connect people with unmet health and social service needs, such as housing, food, transportation and employment.

Within Ballad Health, specially trained staff now conduct health-related social needs screenings for gaps in care, such as food and housing insecurity, transportation challenges or other obstacles. The Unite Us technology helps staff connect families with community organizations committed to resolving those issues. The network, however, is not dependent on Ballad Health. Participating organizations also now use the system to refer clients to each other – even if the people they're referring aren't Ballad Health patients.





## Community benefit



4-year total benefit



\$525,320,000



\$6,300,000

4-year contributions to health promotion programs



\$38,600,000

4-year community health improvement services



\$1,120,000

4-year research



\$102,700,000

4-year health profession education



\$34,700,000

4-year subsidized health services



\$140,100,000

4-year charity care



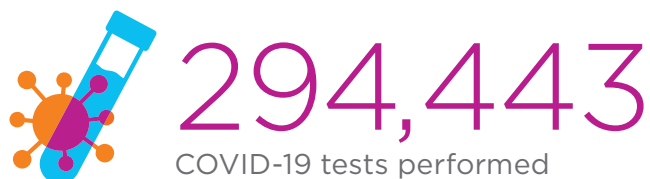
\$201,800,000

4-year unreimbursed care

# Supporting our communities through a pandemic

In March 2020, Ballad Health executed its disaster plan in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) global pandemic. This included the activation of the Corporate Emergency Operations Center to coordinate efforts across the system and around the region to rapidly plan for and execute ongoing response to the issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout 2021, Ballad Health continued to battle against COVID-19, as new variants emerged, such as the delta and omicron variants. These variants hit the Ballad Health service region particularly hard, as emergency rooms experienced significant surges. In addition to caring for patients within the walls of the hospital, Ballad Health also provided significant support to the community through testing and vaccination efforts. In 2021 alone, Ballad Health conducted 294,443 tests and delivered 88,101 total doses of COVID-19 vaccines.



## Introducing Safe at Home

In September 2021, Ballad Health expanded its at-home COVID-19 care program, called Safe at Home, to include patients presenting at Ballad Health urgent care and primary care locations, in addition to those presenting at Ballad Health hospitals.

Implemented in November 2020, the Safe at Home program was designed to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed and conserve inpatient beds ahead of predicted COVID-19 surges.

Eligible patients in the Safe at Home program receive a pulse oximeter and thermometer to monitor their vitals at home and ensure their condition does not worsen past the point of being able to seek appropriate and timely care. Patients also routinely interact with Ballad Health clinical team members through routine phone calls during their enrollment in the program.

COVID-19 patients enrolled in the program are monitored for a minimum of five to seven days, with monitoring lasting as long as 10 to 14 days. Patients are also referred to their primary care physician for routine care, and patients with persistent symptoms lasting 21 to 30 days are referred to Ballad Health's Center for Post-COVID Care.



Safe at Home was a grassroots initiative that originated from Johnston Memorial Hospital's emergency department physician group, under the leadership of Dr. Brian Dawson.

Since its inception in November 2020 until the end of 2021, approximately 5,654 patients participated in the program. At one point during the height of the COVID-19 surge, the Safe at Home program was actively monitoring approximately 200 patients on any given day.



## Supporting our communities through a pandemic

### Center for Post-COVID Care

In April of 2021, Ballad Health launched the region's first Center for Post-COVID Care, an innovative approach to COVID-19 care that creates an access point to comprehensive clinical care for patients who are struggling with post-COVID symptoms. Up to 40% of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 experience a broad range of lingering symptoms that include shortness of breath and coughing, fatigue, brain fog, chest pain, headaches, muscle pain, mood changes and changes in smell and taste.

The Center works by assigning a navigator to each patient with long-term symptoms and coordinating care between primary and specialty care providers across a range of services, including pulmonary rehabilitation, behavioral health, cardiovascular care and support groups.

Through the Center for Post-COVID Care, Ballad Health offers a full spectrum of services, including care navigation and case management, for post-COVID patients. The health system is also fostering research and learning opportunities and collaborating with other leading institutions to understand post-COVID care and increase awareness to healthcare providers, patients and community members of this condition.

Ballad Health's Center for Post-COVID Care is the first of its kind in the region. Previously, patients seeking these services could have experienced at best a fractured or disjointed care plan or sought care from providers farther from home.

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Ballad Health's  
Center for  
Post-COVID  
Care is the  
**first of its kind**  
in the region.

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# Virtual health



Jan. 1, 2021-Dec. 1, 2021

49,399  
virtual health visits

450  
patients treated at  
Post-COVID care clinic

1,946  
virtual urgent care visits

5,254  
patients treated in  
Safe at Home program

39,706  
phone visits

3.5%  
Safe at Home COVID-19  
at-home care program  
total admission rate since  
inception

9,693  
video visits



What I really like about nursing is that we see people when they're at their lowest and then we get to make them feel better. We're there when they really need somebody.



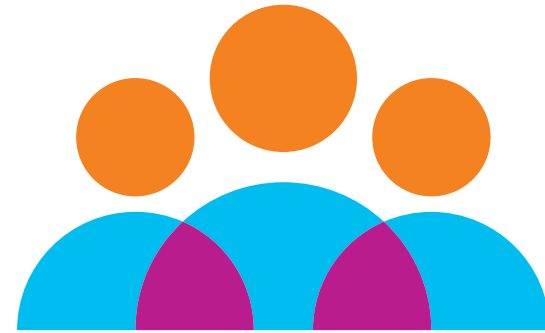
**Taylor Morlock, RN**

## Our team members

It takes nearly 13,000 team members – physicians, lab technicians, nurses and everyone in between – working together to care for our community. Every hour, every day of the year, our team members provide exceptional healthcare to the patients and families we serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic put tremendous strain on all of our team members, especially those working on the front line. Nurses and doctors whose efforts usually lead to successful outcomes in the hospital had to face the reality that many patients with COVID-19 would not leave the hospital alive. Because of the risk of infection for family members, our team members were often the only one in the room with the patient as they passed. Making matters more difficult, many nurses left the profession or left to work as travel nurses, leaving those who remained to work with less support.

Ballad Health responded aggressively to provide support to our team members during this time through increased support staffing, bonuses and permanent pay adjustments. We also invested in additional team member counseling through our Employee Assistance Program.



### Some of the initiatives announced in 2021 include:



More than  
**\$125 million**  
of annualized investment in wage increases for nursing, nursing support and other areas



**A commitment to** the major investment of tens of millions of dollars directed towards the expansion of **affordable childcare and ongoing subsidies for team members.**



## Our team members



**Full scholarships** for eligible team members.



**Tuition reimbursement** for existing team members who wish to pursue a higher level of education.



**Special incentive payout** for team members.



**Recruitment bonuses** for any Ballad Health team members who refer key clinical positions to the system.



**Nursing support plans** that include programs to train nurse ambassadors, clinical CNA educators and the addition of many additional support positions.

We are grateful for the **compassion** and **spirit of family** by our team members that gives our **community confidence** to select Ballad Health, and our teams, for their health and wellness.



# Shana

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A series of lab results convinced Shana Haynie that it was time to pursue a healthier lifestyle. When Shana, the infection prevention practitioner and team member health nurse at Sycamore Shoals Hospital in Elizabethton, received a lab work report that was out of range, she was motivated to make diet and exercise changes that found her 20 pounds lighter and feeling better within one month.

Now, Shana says she's lost about 65 pounds and that she'd like to lose another 15 to 20 pounds. She is pleased, though, to have maintained the weight loss for several months.

Looking at the future, Shana says she's happy that Ballard Health provides annual wellness checks because she can mark her progress from year to year. She wants to continue to drop those final few pounds to reach her ideal weight, and she encourages team members to do the same. She also has set a goal to join The Wellness Center so she can continue her new healthy lifestyle.







# Dr. Kathleen Seaton

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Human connection. That's the key to fighting addiction, says Kathleen Seaton, MD, the new medical director at Ballad Health's Overmountain Recovery. For Dr. Seaton, teaching patients to connect with others is what she is most passionate about. "I'm an all-in doctor who likes to talk to my patients," she says. "Strong human connection is the best way to help a person have a better life when sober. Human connection helps stabilize life."

"Everyone on the planet has some degree of emotional or mental health struggles. It could be addiction, anxiety or unsolved issues dealing with old wounds, and all of us can benefit from medical or social support," she says. Dr. Seaton also points out that greater awareness of mental health issues can go a long way in encouraging the community to provide support for patients struggling with addiction. "These are your neighbors, your childhood friends, your employees who have these issues. Any support you can give, especially employment, encouragement, social connection, can help. It's part of the human connection that leads to a better life for all."

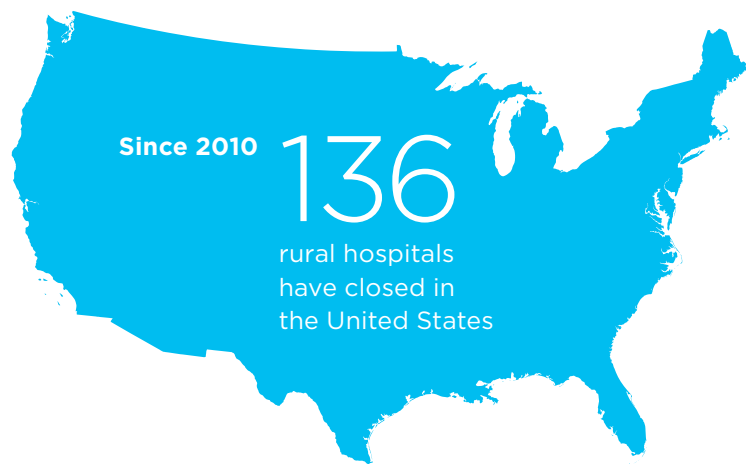
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**OVERMOUNTAIN  
RECOVERY**

## Re-imagining rural healthcare

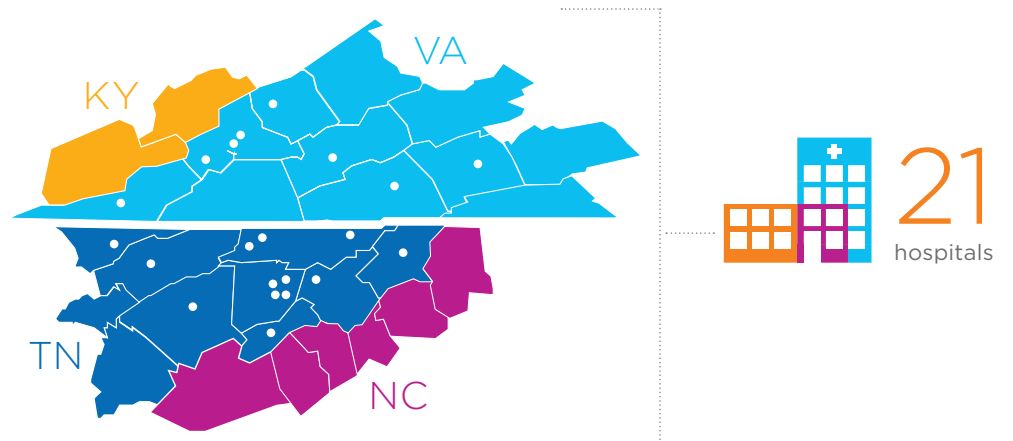
**Nationwide**, more than 136 rural hospitals have closed since 2010, according to the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research.



In the region served by Ballad Health, however, it is a different story. Every community in the region with a hospital prior to the merger creating Ballad Health continues to be served by a hospital.

In fact, in the middle of the pandemic, Ballad Health opened the country's newest rural hospital. In July 2021, Ballad Health followed through on its promise to the residents of Lee County, Virginia, and reopened Lee County Community Hospital in Pennington Gap.

Ballad Health is also thinking outside of the hospital walls when it comes to re-imagining rural healthcare. For example – Ballad Health's STRONG Pregnancies and STRONG Starts programs work with families, obstetricians, hospitals and community organizations to connect every mother and child with the support they need. Open to every new mother and child regardless of income or insurance, community health workers and health navigators will provide services to families for five years to help ensure all of our children reach kindergarten ready to learn. Once fully up and running, the program will support up to 30,000 families a year!



## Re-imagining rural healthcare

Other examples of how we are re-imagining access to rural healthcare:



### Appalachian Highlands Center for Nursing Advancement:

In October 2021, Ballad Health and East Tennessee State University announced the creation of the Appalachian Highlands Center for Nursing Advancement at East Tennessee State University.

Even prior to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the nation faced a shortage of nurses, with more than 1 million nurses expected to retire before 2030, according to a study published in Medical Care. Combining this with the historically high acuity of hospitalized patients creates a high-stress situation for practicing nurses, leading to burnout and higher turnover rates.

Partnering with other local colleges and universities, the Center's goal is to attract and keep more nurses in the profession by advancing the clinical practice of nursing, enhance interprofessional collaboration, contribute to knowledge about nursing workflow and generate nursing scholarships and innovation. It will focus on data and research, collaboration with key stakeholders across the region and advocacy to promote the nursing profession, especially in rural communities.

The Center will partner with other institutions to develop a common pipeline for high school students to identify those with aptitudes for the sciences and help match them with employment and pathways to certification as a nursing support professional or for a nursing degree. These programs could match students with jobs within Ballad Health while they're in high school, which provide a path to certification by their high school graduations, linking them with the possibility of scholarships for nursing degrees, as well as employment opportunities within Ballad Health.



### Telehealth growth:

Ballad Health continues to grow its comprehensive telehealth program, Connected Care, which uses a variety of technologies to connect patients to their care providers in real-time, regardless of location. During the pandemic, Ballad Health expanded its Connected Care telehealth program to include more than 300 providers and specialty physicians.

This program has expanded access to medical care for thousands of existing patients and new patients, particularly those who live in rural areas.

# 300

providers and  
specialty physicians

## Re-imagining rural healthcare



## Ballad Health launches Niswonger Children's Network

In March 2021, Ballad Health announced the launch of the Ballad Health Niswonger Children's Network, a regional system of healthcare and community services marking a new phase in high standards of care and well-being for children, regardless of where they live, across Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

**It was the beginning of a new era in care for children in the region.**

The announcement included a massive philanthropic investment into a comprehensive, regional system of care that, combined with Ballad Health's investment, represents a nearly \$60 million commitment to children, families, and the future of the Appalachian Highlands.

"Our goal is to meet the needs of communities all over the region, and those needs are met inside and outside the walls of hospitals," said Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine. "Our goal is to meet these needs even before a baby is born, and to be the family's resource all the way through childhood."

Ballad Health's investment of nearly \$60 million includes a combination of Ballad Health capital resources, gifts from the J.D. Nicewonder family and others, as well as the Ballad Health Foundation's ongoing fundraising activities on behalf of Niswonger Children's Hospital and network.

Adding to their recent investment creating the J.D. Nicewonder Family Pediatric Emergency Department at Bristol Regional Medical Center, the Nicewonder family, well-known philanthropists in the area, announced a \$7 million commitment toward the Niswonger Children's Network and the creation of two regional centers for pediatrics – a Center for Perinatal and Neonatal Care and a Center for Pediatric Specialties, both located at Niswonger Children's Hospital in Johnson City.

The Nicewonder family announced their commitment, the first major gift they've made in the health system outside of Bristol, because of their belief in the strength of the Ballad Health vision for regional economic and family health.

Lisa Carter, now Ballad Health's Southern Market president, had served as CEO of Niswonger Children's Hospital since 2015, and she became the Niswonger Children's Network's CEO.





## Re-imagining rural healthcare

“Families from throughout the region have always considered Niswonger Children’s Hospital ‘their hospital.’ With the new Niswonger Children’s Network, we are creating a pathway for access to the same high-quality care and resources across the entire Appalachian Highlands,” she said. “If you see that a service is a part of this network, then you know there is a high-quality partnership in place designed to provide the best standard of care worthy of the Niswonger brand.”

**The Niswonger Children’s Network made some impactful moves in 2021, including:**

### Creation of a new Children’s Resource Center at Johnston Memorial Hospital

The new Children’s Resource Center (CRC) inside Johnston Memorial Hospital in Abingdon, Virginia, is committed to improving children’s lives through: safety/injury prevention programs, such as bike helmet education, medication safety in the home, child passenger safety training and other programs; wellness programs, which collaborate with existing community programs and create new ones to get children more active and families eating healthier; and literacy programs, as studies have found a significant relationship between reading levels and health status, and improved reading levels greatly improve the chances of finishing school.

### Partnership with Virginia’s Kids Belong

Along with the announcement of the CRC at Johnston Memorial, the network also announced an initial financial contribution toward bringing Virginia’s Kids Belong into the region. Virginia’s Kids Belong is a proven program dedicated to helping children in foster care find forever homes and helping children and families in the foster care system.

### COVID-19 family vaccination event

Held at Unicoi County Hospital in Erwin, Tennessee, the event was part of a push to bolster maternity care and early childhood development care in the region. Ballad Health’s vaccination efforts were developed with input from the children’s network’s pediatric experts. As a result, all Ballad Health Community Vaccination Centers and vaccination events were well-prepared for pediatric vaccine patients, and child life specialists were onsite to ensure a child-friendly environment, with smaller syringes and distraction items on hand.



### New playground at Niswonger Children’s Hospital

The new playground is accessible to children and their siblings, regardless of their abilities and development. It is an extension of the hospital’s therapy department and includes a saucer swing, roller slide and music center that can also be used to further children’s treatment plans.



# Niswonger Children's Network

## Plans for new pediatric ER at Indian Path Community Hospital

Ballad Health announced plans for a new pediatric emergency department at Indian Path Community Hospital in Kingsport, Tennessee. It will complement the newly-opened J.D. Nicewonder Family Pediatric Emergency Department at Bristol Regional Medical Center and the pediatric emergency room at Niswonger Children's Hospital in Johnson City, placing specialized, acute care for children in Johnson City, Kingsport and Bristol.

## Transition at Indian Path to a Center for Women and Babies

The new pediatric ER accompanies Indian Path's transition into a Center for Women and Babies. With the recommendation of the Kingsport Visioning Committee, the Ballad Health Board of Directors committed more than \$8 million to the project. The consolidation of women and children's services to one location will allow Ballad Health to centralize strong teams of caregivers and specialists to give patients better access to the care they need. Women of all ages will be able to receive care in the new center - patients can receive obstetric care in addition to comprehensive breast and cervical care, geriatric services and gynecology services. The move of the Barbara Humphreys Birthing Center from Holston Valley Medical Center to Indian Path has occurred as other preparations are being made for realignment of other services.

There was a lot accomplished in 2021, but that's just the beginning. Ballad Health's Niswonger Children's Network has much more to come as it moves into Year 2 of its mission to make life better and healthier for women and children in the Appalachian Highlands.









# Ashleigh

Accountable Health Community Navigator



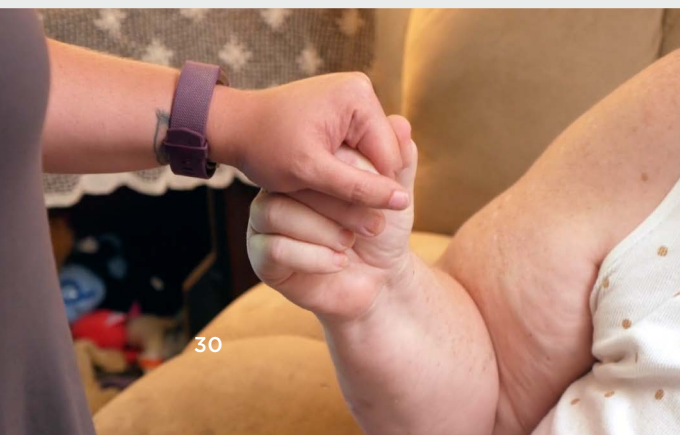
“One of my most memorable patients is Linda Allen. We first spoke just before Christmas. She said she was not in a very good housing situation. The main goal was to get her in a better place to live. She ended up moving in with a friend for a few weeks before getting an apartment of her own. Relocating made her feel so much safer.

I connected her with resources to get her apartment sprayed for bugs and told her about the farmer’s market program that matches the first \$25 a recipient spends. She was very interested in that. And I helped her find a Silver Sneakers exercise program in her area.

I also learned that Linda needed glasses, but she never asked for assistance to get them, so I had a lightbulb moment where I asked Ballad Health Foundation if they would be able to help. I wanted to surprise her because of all the hard work she had put forward. She was so excited about her glasses and kept expressing how thankful she was for the help, and that she was now able to see!

I followed up with her recently, and she said she was doing 100% better. She’s unable to work because of health problems, but said she had started volunteering part time at a thrift store. I think that’s just wonderful.

Linda really wanted to make changes in her life, and I referred her to resources. But she did all the work. I was supporting her along the way. She’s a different person now, and she credits this program for it.”



## Measuring our impact through research

### In the heart of rural America, Ballad Health is a world leader in cardiovascular clinical trials.

For example, this summer, at Holston Valley Medical Center, Dr. Chris Metzger, Ballad Health's chair of clinical research and medical director of the interventional and diagnostic catheterization labs, led a new clinical trial in the United States for a potentially groundbreaking new carotid stent.

Dr. Metzger and his team performed the first six cases of the CGuard® Embolic Protection System (EPS) on Thursday, July 22, marking the first time the leading-edge carotid artery stent has been used in this country.

Manufactured and developed by InspireMD, the CGuard® system is a novel mesh carotid stent designed to prevent strokes caused by carotid artery disease.

“Ballad Health is committed to advancing medical science that has the potential to improve the human condition,” said Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine. “Through our clinical research team - headed by Dr. Metzger - we can enrich our communities by offering unique, groundbreaking treatment options that often aren't available at most hospitals and health systems.

“The Appalachian Highlands is leading the United States in bringing what could be the next big breakthrough in stroke prevention. The CGuard® system has the potential to significantly improve care and outcomes for patients all over the world, and it's happening here first - all because of the reputation and expertise of Dr. Metzger and his team.”



Under Dr. Metzger's leadership, the cardiovascular program at Holston Valley has performed as the No. 1 or No. 2 enroller in the United States and globally in at least 30 top research trials. Additionally, Dr. Metzger and his colleagues at Holston Valley have led the hospital to earn recognition through dozens of accolades and honors in the past decade. Despite facing a global pandemic, Holston Valley received several honors in 2021, which includes earning the National Cardiovascular Data Registry's Platinum Performance Achievement award for the 10th consecutive year.



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No. 1 or No. 2 enroller in U.S. in at least 30 top research trials

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## Measuring our impact through research

Dr. Metzger's expertise is in such high demand for medical conferences, a camera was installed in his cath lab to accommodate his regular demonstrations for national and international medical conferences such as VIVA New Cardiovascular Horizons, International Symposium of Endovascular Therapy, AMP and Transcatheter Cardiovascular Therapeutics (TCT) and Interventional Advances.

Similarly, for the initial July 22 CGuard® cases, Ballad Health obtained informed consent from patients to allow live streaming of the first procedures, so other team members, community leaders and members of the public could observe the work being done in Holston Valley's cath lab.

Dr. Metzger also contributes to medical education by hosting endovascular fellows from several of the nation's top institutions - including Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital and Cleveland Clinic - every year, so physicians can train at Holston Valley before completing their education. To date, Ballad Health has welcomed around 250 physicians to the Appalachian Highlands for cardiovascular training, and several have later elected to join the health system's medical staffs to continue learning and growing their careers with Dr. Metzger.



The Appalachian Highlands is leading the United States in bringing what could be the next big breakthrough in stroke prevention. The CGuard® system has the potential to significantly improve care and outcomes for patients all over the world, and it's happening here first - all because of the reputation and expertise of Dr. Metzger and his team.

- Alan Levine,  
Ballad Health Chairman and  
Chief Executive Officer



## Focusing on quality

Ballad Health continues to make headway in its aim of being a zero-harm, top-decile health system by improving the quality of care delivered to patients by reducing hospital-acquired infection rates and improving other key indicators related to quality care.

To measure quality of care, the State of Tennessee established a scoring system that measures key indicators related to quality care and compares those scores to a baseline figure established prior to the merger.

In 2021, seven of our quality measures performed among the top decile in the country, the most in the health system's history. Those metrics included in-hospital fall with hip fracture rate, post-operative sepsis rate and perioperative hemorrhage or hematoma rate, among others.

These quality metrics were achieved during a time when COVID-19 had a terrible impact on hospital operations, while associated infections and complications have deteriorated nationally.

**7** **Quality measures**  
Performed in the top decile in the country

## Hospital-Acquired Conditions Reduction Program

Data released on Ballad Health's Hospital-Acquired Conditions (HAC) Reduction Program and the Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program (HRRP) is another example of the health system achieving its promise of delivering high-quality care. The HAC Reduction Program encourages hospitals to improve patients' safety and reduce the number of conditions people experience from their time in the hospital. For the HRRP, hospitals are penalized financially for things like excessive readmissions for certain patient conditions.

The total HAC score is based on data from six quality measures:

- Patient safety
- CLABSI (central line-associated bloodstream infections)
- CAUTI (catheter-associated urinary tract infections)
- Surgical site infections for the colon and abdominal hysterectomy
- MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus)
- C-diff (Clostridium difficile infection)

Some types of hospitals are not eligible for this program, but 11 of Ballad Health's 14 eligible facilities met their HAC reduction goal from FY20 to FY21. Among the biggest successes were Bristol Regional Medical Center, which had an 85.8% reduction, and Johnson City Medical Center, which had a 60% reduction.

"We strive to be a zero-harm health system, but it doesn't happen without a plan in place and all our teams working hard," said Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine. "I want to thank our team members who have made this a priority and dedicated themselves to keeping our patients safe."

↓ 85.8%  
Bristol Regional Medical Center

↓ 60%  
Johnson City Medical Center

## Focusing on quality

Ballad Health launched a series of initiatives that have helped achieve these reductions, including the work of the Clinical Council, implementation of systemwide tiered safety huddles and bold and ambitious initiatives like “30 in 90” – reducing infections by 30% over 90 days – that target hospital-acquired infections like C. diff, CAUTI, surgical site infections and others.

In 2018, Ballad Health launched its first “30 in 90” initiative targeting C. diff, one of the most common microbial causes of healthcare-associated infections in United States hospitals and costs up to \$4.8 billion each year in excess healthcare costs for acute care facilities alone.

**70%**  
reduction in C. diff cases since inception

Not only did Ballad Health achieve its goal of reducing the number of C. diff cases by 30% within 90 days, the reduction in C. diff cases has continued as Ballad Health has now reduced C. diff cases by 70% since the program’s inception.

“This is the result of painstakingly dedicated effort all across Ballad Health,” said Dr. Amit Vashist, chief clinical officer for Ballad Health, who was also the inaugural chair of the clinical council, “This project, initiated from our board of directors, who at the very outset committed to this zero-harm goal, all the way through to our clinical teams including our physicians, nursing, infection prevention folks and other team members in our hospitals.


“It takes a village to accomplish these lofty objectives, and we are incredibly proud of the work our clinical teams continue to be engaged in under extremely tough circumstances.”

## Emphasizing zero-harm through tiered-safety huddles

As part of Ballad Health’s systemwide initiative to improve safety and reduce harm, Ballad Health has continued its tiered-safety huddle program throughout the pandemic, which continues to grow in popularity among frontline caregivers.

Each day, across the entire Ballad Health organization, frontline team members begin their morning with huddles focused on clinical quality and safety. These huddles provide an organized manner for team members to express opportunities to improve safety and quality and strive towards becoming a zero-harm institution.

Any issues identified during those huddles are elevated to hospital leadership. If hospital leadership cannot resolve the issue, the issue is further elevated to the market level and then to the corporate level. Using this approach, Ballad Health can improve outcomes and enhance safety by rapidly deploying resources to support and solve safety issues as they arise.



It takes a village to accomplish these lofty objectives, and we are incredibly proud of the work our clinical teams continue to be engaged in under extremely tough circumstances.

– Dr. Amit Vashist,  
Chief clinical officer, Ballad Health



## Focusing on quality

### Launch of IBM/Watson Top Health System Journey

Since the merger in 2018, one of Ballad Health's priorities has been to instill a zero-harm culture and become one of the highest-performing health systems in America for the quality of care it delivers to patients.

After a stringent review of the various systems for measuring that success, Ballad Health leaders ultimately chose IBM/Watson because it provided measurable, achievable and valid guideposts for the health system to follow. To help lead Ballad Health on this journey to become a top health system in the nation, health system leaders formed the IBM/Watson Top 15 Health System Task Force, which is comprised of stakeholders from multiple departments of Ballad Health.

IBM/Watson identifies the top 15 performing health systems in the nation based on four key performance domains: inpatient outcomes, extended outcomes, operational efficiency and patient experience.

Dr. Amit Vashist, Ballad Health's chief clinical officer who leads the IBM Watson Top Health System journey, stated, "We looked far and wide at various methodologies to identify the most appropriate benchmarks to measure ourselves against, and we ultimately chose IBM/Watson because it included an ideal blend of metrics and measures that are truly meaningful and appealed to our frontline clinicians, such as hospital-acquired conditions, ED throughput, readmissions, mortality, costs of care and length of stay."

Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine also issued a memo to all Ballad Health team members shortly after the formation of the task force to inform them of the initiative and its goals.

"It is vital that all our team members put those practices in place that will contribute toward our overall goal of becoming a top-15 health system," Levine said.

"We are seeking to succeed in this initiative not for the purpose of recognition, but because we know the result will truly be good for our region and for the people we are entrusted to serve. Having a top-performing health delivery system is critical to our region's economy, our families and to the growth and prosperity of our communities. It's efforts like this that differentiates Ballad Health from merely being a collection of hospitals."





# Aiden

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Aiden Compton was one of the statistics people see in the news. Born dependent on the drugs his mother took while she was pregnant, he spent the beginning of his life in a specially designed unit for babies suffering from drug withdrawal, called Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), in Niswonger Children's Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Despite his heartbreaking start to life, Aiden had two things going for him that have led him to be the happy tow-headed boy with the crooked smile he is today. First, he had a loving aunt willing to step in and give him what he needed most: love, nurturing and time. Susan Compton, a hospice nurse, and her partner, Julie Vallez, had already adopted one NAS baby and knew what he needed and what was in store. Pediatrician Dr. Shawn Hollinger attributed Aiden's rapid weaning from morphine during his early days to their loving care.

Secondly, he had access to the specialized medical care he needed at the unit designated just for drug-dependent babies in the NAS Unit at Niswonger Children's Hospital.

"Caring for an NAS baby is hard, and the nurses could see when I needed a break," Susan said. "They took care of him, but they also took care of me. I've been a nurse a long time, and the staff is the most caring, most compassionate I've seen. They were wonderful."

Though he still needs specialized care because of his exposure to drugs, such as Bell's Palsy (which gives Aiden his crooked smile) and feeding and speech issues, Aiden is smart as a whip, Susan says. "Cognitively, he's 100% and has amazing fine motor skills. I think he will be a doctor."

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## Focusing on quality

### State of Tennessee survey gives high marks to Ballad Health Level I Trauma Program

In July, the Tennessee Department of Health issued its Level I Trauma Center Reverification Site Visit Report for the trauma program at Johnson City Medical Center.

The report found the hospital had “demonstrated an outstanding commitment to care for the injured patient.” Further, the survey resulted in zero deficiencies, a first for trauma care in the region. The survey reviewed the trauma center, emergency department, surgical ICU, hemodialysis, radiology, operating rooms, lab services, quality assurance programs and the qualifications of the entire trauma team.

The 2021 report details the accomplishments made at the trauma center since its last survey in 2017 (prior to Ballad Health’s creation) and specifically cites improvements in the region’s trauma system since the consolidation, which include:

- Consolidation of the air-medical transport service and centralization of trauma traffic coordination in a single Ballad Health Command Center
- Excellent response times to trauma activations
- Addition of multiple key trauma program staff
- Additional resident coverage for the trauma service
- Significant increase in research publications with the addition of new trauma faculty and a research coordinator
- Surgical specialty coverage was reviewed, and consultants are readily available and invested in the trauma program. No coverage problems were noted.

- The trauma surgical team is entirely board-certified, and all but one is also board-certified in critical care medicine.
- Nurse ratios in the intensive care units are appropriate, and there is immediate access to laboratory and imaging services. All essential equipment is available on the units.
- There is a well-defined budget, which demonstrates excellent support for the program.

The trauma program at Johnson City Medical Center is operated through a partnership between East Tennessee State University’s Quillen College of Medicine and Ballad Health. In addition to the cited qualifications of the trauma team, the survey report also cites the addition of research capacity and an “increase in the program’s research output,” a stated goal of the consolidation of the region’s trauma program.

“We have seen recent events where the coordinated trauma system has saved the lives of people from the far reaches of Southwest Virginia and throughout Northeast Tennessee,” said Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine. “The observation of the state experts make it clear why this is happening. The commitment of each of our hospitals and local EMS departments to quality, speed, and patient outcomes has helped us see a reduction in trauma-related mortality.”

This has translated  
into lives saved  
and lives improved.





I'm not only proud of the folks at ETSU and Johnson City Medical Center, but at all our hospitals – Kingsport, Bristol, Greeneville, Norton – all of them. A regional and coordinated trauma system is what we wanted to create, and to do so successfully requires the participation and support of the entire Ballad Health family.”



– Eric Deaton,  
Chief Operating Officer  
Ballad Health



## Focusing on quality



### Clinical Council

A unique feature of Ballad Health is the establishment of a robust and diverse Clinical Council comprised of approximately 30 physicians. The physicians were nominated by the leadership of all Ballad Health hospitals, the health system's medical group and independently practicing community physicians. The Council's members are physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice providers and nurses. The Council reports directly to the Quality Committee of the Ballad Health Board of Directors.

The Council's goal is to ensure excellence in clinical care through physician engagement and leadership. They are also charged with providing guidance for Ballad Health's transformation into a community health improvement system. The Council has led efforts resulting in several important quality measures now performing among the top-decile health systems in America.



## Enhancing patient experience through digital transformation

Ballad Health's conversion to a single technology platform, called Epic, is just the first of many steps the system is taking as part of its digital transformation journey. Going "digital" means helping make Ballad Health the easiest healthcare provider in the region for people to find the right physicians, make an appointment, register with no hassle, communicate securely with providers and have easy and secure access to their personal health information.

Last year, Ballad Health launched an app for patients, giving them direct access to new services, including real-time scheduling, digital access to health information, price transparency and better coordination between providers, regardless of their location. More than 150,000 Ballad Health patients use the Ballad Health app, with thousands joining each month.



150,000+

Ballad Health app users

### Don't have the app?

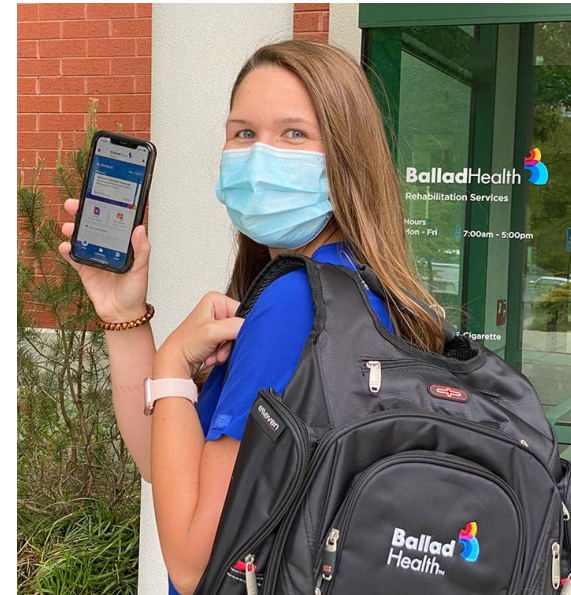
Open your smartphone camera and scan the QR code to download the Ballad Health app.

In 2021, Ballad Health continued making progress in the digital realm by launching another app specifically for team members.

Called Ballad Teams, the app launched in early May and gave team members easy access to their personal payroll data as well as information and functions designed to make their day easier. Surveys and focus groups with team members determine what functions get added to the app.

### What's in the Ballad Teams app?

- Personalized PTO balances and pay
- Ballad Health News and important system announcements
- "Smart Square," where clinical team members can access their work schedules
- Personalized benefits information and contact information
- Team member discounts
- Share a Story - a place where team members share shout-outs about team members or personal accomplishments, as well as inspiring stories and mission moments
- Job listings within the health system
- Quick access to human resources, help desk and the IT service desk
- Access to our Ballad Health external app, where team members can create a MyChart account to schedule medical appointments, get an estimate, request a prescription refill and more
- Links to Ballad Health's website, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube sites





# Enhancing patient experience through digital transformation

## Introducing B-Well

Ballad Health also launched a new feature in the Ballad Teams app called B-Well.

Ballad Health partnered with Sharecare, a digital health company, to offer more resources to team members to help them manage their overall well-being. The Sharecare platform provides each team members – regardless of where they are on their health journey – with a personalized health profile, where they can easily connect to information, programs and professionals to live their healthiest and happiest life.

Sharecare offers team members award-winning content for mindfulness and mental strength to help them overcome the stress of working at a health system during a pandemic. This program offers breathing and relaxation exercises, guided meditations, sleep sounds and more.

The Sharecare platform also gives team members access to the evolving story of their health in a profile, where they can securely store and access their health data. The personal health information provided through Sharecare is private and is not shared with Ballad Health.

Utilizing the “green day” trackers through device sensors to track factors that influence health, team members can work to complete various B-Well challenges that make it fun and easy for them to stay on track of their goals.



## Improving population health

Ballad Health intentionally describes itself as a community health improvement organization.

Years of research show a large portion of an individual's health is determined by factors other than healthcare services. Income, education, race and ethnicity, family and community support, genetics and behavioral choices all play a very large role in health and well-being.

Traditional hospital systems focus on one part of the equation - healthcare services. Ballad Health is determined to go beyond that and help identify and connect our patients and community to a host of supports that make up total health and well-being. These efforts focus on children, elders and everyone in between.



### STRONG Accountable Care Community

The STRONG Accountable Care Community (STRONG ACC) is a multi-sector coalition spanning two states with more than 300 participating organizations in 21 counties throughout Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. Members have all agreed to work together towards a set of common health and well-being goals.

Those focus areas include:

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma and resilience training
- Workforce training
- Creating and maintaining a community data dashboard
- No Wrong Door initiative, which aims to break down barriers to services and improve inter-agency coordination

The STRONG ACC uses the Collective Impact model to engage diverse stakeholders, build a common agenda for the region and address the important interconnected relationship between health, education and income, seeking to impact all three for lasting generational change.

### Collective Impact Model

Continuous Engagement

Aligned Action

Shared Measurement

Common Agenda

## Improving population health

With financial and administrative support from Ballad Health and the United Way of Southwest Virginia, the coalition is governed by a 24-member leadership council that includes decision makers from higher education, public health, business, social services, public education, behavioral health and more.

The STRONG ACC has had a number of early successes, including the creation of a first-ever [regional data dashboard](#) and implementation of the No Wrong Door initiative using technology from Unite Us, which creates a common record for health and social services providers to refer individuals to each other. Using this technology, Ballad Health can now refer patients in need to food banks, utility support, housing assistance and other services. These social services agencies, churches, and other can also use the system to refer to each other.

In 2021, Tennesseans for Quality Early Education (TQEE) launched its Bright Start TN initiative and selected Northeast Tennessee to be one of six inaugural communities to receive \$300,000 to develop and launch a plan to accelerate learning outcomes and reduce opportunity and achievement gaps for children from birth through third grade.

The STRONG ACC was selected by TQEE to be the convening entity for Bright Start and is now engaging stakeholders across 10 counties to craft a strategic plan. In addition, the STRONG ACC successfully collaborated with the First Tennessee Development District to apply for and receive a \$333,558 planning grant from the Tennessee Department of Human Services to develop and pilot an initiative aimed at helping low-income families build capacity and reduce dependency on government assistance.

STRONG ACC  
Leadership  
Council

12

Tennesseans

12

Virginians

## STRONG ACC Goals 2021

Q1

Establish all Working Groups and Chairs

Q2

Launch No Wrong Door Initiative

Q3

Launch Regional Data Dashboard

Q4

Implement ACES/Resilience and Life Skill/  
Work Force Training Initiatives

## Improving population health

### **Ballad Health invests \$2 million in community organizations to improve children's health in the Appalachian Highlands**

Reinforcing its long-standing commitment to community health improvement in the Appalachian Highlands, Ballad Health supported 21 regional, community-based organizations this past year with a \$2 million investment.

Ballad Health is working alongside these organizations across Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia to support specific goals and strategies aimed at improving health outcomes in the region, ranging from providing social support services and navigation for women suffering from addiction to keeping youth from dropping out of school. These investments recognize the important correlation between early childhood experiences, educational achievement and health outcomes. They also recognize the importance of collective impact, a concept embraced by the regional STRONG Accountable Care Community.

[List of partners](#)

### **Ballad Health launches effort to provide STRONG Futures for women and babies**

In Tennessee, more than 8,000 children are in state custody through the public foster care system — meaning those children have been removed from family situations that are potentially harmful to them. Addiction, illiteracy, abuse and neglect are among the driving forces that lead to this result. Underlying much of this is the relationship between parents and alcohol and drugs.

In early 2021, Ballad Health announced a major investment into serving the specialized needs of pregnant women, babies and families who suffer from the pain of addiction.

Ballad Health STRONG Futures is housed in the former Takoma Regional Hospital in Greeneville and provides residential and other care for pregnant women and mothers who suffer from addiction or need other behavioral health services. The program provides a range of residential and intensive outpatient behavioral health services that help ensure the strongest-possible new beginnings for women and their children. The program is unique in that children may live with the mother during treatment. Programs for financial stability, educational classes and fathers are also offered.



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I am proud that our administration is working to partner with regional healthcare leaders like Ballad Health and ETSU to provide high-quality care to more Tennesseans. Women and their children deserve strong starts, and **Ballad Health has built a modern approach**. This investment will deliver much-needed care to families in Northeast Tennessee.



– Bill Lee,  
Governor, State of Tennessee



## Improving population health

### Ballad Health launches effort to provide **STRONG Futures for women and babies (cont.)**

“Ballad Health is proud to bring these much-needed services to women in the Appalachian Highlands,” said Tammy Albright, vice president and chief executive officer of Ballad Health Behavioral Health Services and former president of Greeneville Community Hospital.

“Having long-term safe housing is vital for these women and families. It gives them the ability to focus on their family and their road to recovery.

This program is a big step in our efforts to bridge some of the gaps in care for our community. This program is an investment that can also help break the cycle of poverty and bring brighter futures to families in the Appalachian Highlands.”

The plans for developing the STRONG Futures program were so compelling that the State of Tennessee made its own independent commitment to support the program through a two-year, \$7 million grant furnished by the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

Ballad Health received strong support from state and local leaders, including Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, who said, “I am proud that our administration is working to partner with regional healthcare leaders like Ballad Health and ETSU to provide high-quality care to more Tennesseans. Women and their children deserve strong starts, and Ballad Health has built a modern approach. This investment will deliver much-needed care to families in Northeast Tennessee.”


STRONG Futures serves community members in Carter, Cocke, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington counties. The STRONG Futures program has served 147 families, impacting over 800 individuals.

10  
counties served

147  
families served

800  
individuals served



Donating to the children's hospital is an important way to touch lives. Our focus on children's health is because it's a foundational need for their lives going forward. My dad has always been concerned about our future generations. 

**Carolyn Nicewonder Beverly**

## Ballad Health Foundation: Donors make the difference

One thing we know about Ballad Health Foundation donors is that they are intentional givers. They are confident that their gift is changing healthcare in our region, and they give gladly and generously, even during the midst of a pandemic.



### Here's how they gave back to their communities in 2021:

#### They gave us an investment in the future:

- **The J.D. Nicewonder family's** pace-setting \$7 million gift to support Niswonger Children's Network is the second-largest single investment into the children's hospital. The funds will be used to create two regional centers for pediatrics - a Center for Perinatal and Neonatal Care and a Center for Pediatric Specialties, both at Niswonger Children's Hospital.
- **Eastman Credit Union's** board of directors approved a \$1 million gift to expand healthcare opportunities for expectant mothers, babies, children and families. The money will be used to support Ballad Health Niswonger Children's Network projects at Niswonger Children's Hospital and in the Center for Women and Babies at Indian Path Community Hospital.
- Funds from **Speedway Children's Charities Jeff Byrd Grant**, Children Exceeding Expectations School, teamed with Niswonger Children's Hospital Radiothon donations, built an accessible playground at Niswonger Children's Hospital as part of the therapy department.



# Ballad Health Foundation: Donors make the difference

## They give faithfully:

- For the 13th year, **Champion Chevrolet** in Johnson City donated brand new cars for the Ballad Health Niswonger Children's Network Raffle, raising \$1.2 million for pediatric care.



- Despite the pandemic, donors from all over the region and beyond, gave a collective \$445,000 during the 2021 annual Niswonger Children's Hospital Radiothon to help children in our region, exceeding all previous records.



**\$445,000**

raised during the 2021 annual Niswonger Children's Hospital Radiothon

## They know every penny counts

- People in the community raised nearly \$380,000 by "rounding up" their bill at local partner businesses like Panda Express, Ollie's Bargain Outlet and Walmart to benefit Ballad Health Niswonger Children's Network.

## They want to give back

- After losing their daughter, McKinley, who was stillborn at 32 weeks, **Katie Mumpower and husband Ryan Lawson** were inspired to raise money to fund a special cooling crib for Franklin Woods Community Hospital that gives parents of stillborns more time with their baby. Ballad Health Foundation added to the couple's gift to make sure all six Ballad Health family birthing centers now have a CuddleCot.



**4,500**

business and community members made gifts to the Ballad Health Foundation

**1/3**

of donors were Ballad Health team members



# Ballad Health Foundation: Donors make the difference

## Ballad Health Foundation: How we help

Thanks to our generous givers, Ballad Health Foundation is here to lend a hand. No repayment needed. No “catches.” Just a caring arm of Ballad Health that actively seeks ways to make a difference in the life, quality and health of all people in our region. No matter who they are.

In addition to supporting programs, groups and larger-scale projects, Ballad Health Foundation is dedicated to supporting individual team members and community members in their times of need.

## Here’s how we did it in 2021:

### We helped patients:

- A patient who was a hairdresser working out of her home couldn’t lift her arm to style hair after breast cancer surgery and radiation. She and her husband struggled to pay bills while she was out of work, using credit cards for gas and groceries. Then, a tire on their car blew out while traveling to cancer treatments, and the brakes needed replacing. Through our Cancer Patient Assistance Fund, we were able to get a replacement tire and brakes and help pay some utility bills so she could focus on treatment and healing.
- Foundation funds provided fuel for heaters for several hospice patients during the winter.
- We bought a lift chair for a hospice patient who had extreme lymphedema in her arm due to breast cancer and couldn’t sleep comfortably in a bed.

# \$4.8 million

total amount Ballad Health Foundation committed this year to facility needs, services and clinical and community health improvement programs

### We helped families:

- Through our Patient Assistance Fund, we paid rent for struggling parents of a child on hospice.
- When a 15-year-old hospice patient died, Ballad Health Foundation covered the cost of the funeral.

### We helped team members:

- When team member Patrick Early was told by the car repair shop it wasn’t safe to leave the shop without new tires, the Team Member Assistance Fund supplied new tires for his car. “It really made a difference,” said Patrick.



- When a manager at Woodridge Hospital noticed that the nurses’ stations needed new chairs but they didn’t fit the current budget, he contacted Ballad Health Foundation. Brand new chairs were purchased to replace the worn-out ones, delighting and improving the morale of the team members.



# Governance Structure

## Board of Directors

Ballad Health is governed by a board of directors consisting of 11 regional leaders representing the diversity, industry and expertise of the 29-county region served by the health system.

The members were chosen using best practices for selection of health system boards based on needed competencies for the governing body, including experience in the areas of governance, administration, business and strategy. Eight of the board's members are Tennessee residents, and three are Virginia residents. The group also includes two physicians, one currently practicing, and one who recently retired after serving as president of the Tennessee Medical Association.

The board is tasked with managing the long-term interests of the health system and ensuring Ballad Health delivers high-quality healthcare and human services to the communities it serves. In furtherance of its fiduciary responsibility, the board has eight standing committees. Each committee is composed of board members and other members of the community who are experts in a particular subject area.

The standing committees that report to the board are:

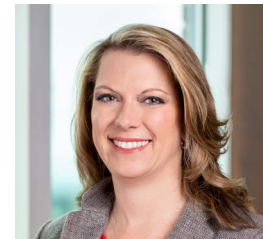
- The Executive Committee: The Executive Committee exercises the full authority, power and duties of the Board of Directors to act in certain situations based on authority delegated to it by the board.
- The Audit and Compliance Committee: The Audit and Compliance Committee oversees the integrity of Ballad Health's financial reporting, financial controls and compliance program. As a best practice, the Audit and Compliance programs of Ballad Health report directly to the Audit and Compliance Committee to ensure the independence of these functions.
- The Finance Committee: This committee reviews budgets, monitors ongoing financial performance and monitors the health system's investment policy and retirement programs.
- The Quality, Service and Safety Committee: While the Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for quality patient care, this committee is composed of physician and allied health leaders who oversee, monitor and evaluate the quality of patient care. It also oversees the system's credentialing functions and medical staff regulatory processes and annually assesses the system's performance improvement programs.



Alan Levine



David Lester



Julie Bennett



David Golden



David May, MD



Aldo Nosedá

# Governance Structure

- The Executive Compensation Committee: This committee evaluates and approves the compensation program. Ballad Health adheres to the highest standards of compensation governance, following the IRS standards for rebuttable presumption of reasonableness. These standards include ensuring the committee is independent, considers credible data for comparison, utilizes the input of an independent expert or experts and reviews the data on an ongoing basis to ensure competitiveness of pay and pay which is within the appropriate range for a not-for-profit executive.
- The Population Health and Social Responsibility Committee: This committee is responsible for oversight of social responsibility initiatives and programs, as well as the implementation of a population health infrastructure designed to serve the region.
- The Governance/Nominating Committee: This committee ensures there is an effective process for filling board vacancies and committee positions, and also considers issues of governance and governance goals.
- The Workforce Committee: The Workforce Committee provides recommendations related to implementing recruitment and retention plans, workforce policies, education and professional development of the clinical workforce and employee benefits.

## The Ballad Health Board of Directors:

- [Alan Levine](#), Chair/President/Chief Executive Officer
- [David Lester](#), Vice Chair/Lead Independent Director
- [Julie Bennett](#)
- [David Golden](#)
- [David May, MD](#)
- [Aldo Noseda](#)
- [Scott Niswonger](#)
- [Dr. Brian Noland](#)
- [Gary Peacock](#)
- [Doug Springer, MD](#)
- [Keith Wilson](#)



Scott Niswonger



Dr. Brian Noland



Gary Peacock



Doug Springer, MD



Keith Wilson



The board of directors of Ballad Health was assembled to follow best practices in the governance of healthcare systems. As the region's largest employer, and with the incredible responsibility of stewardship of so many important community assets, our region deserves no less than best practice. Our board members live here, work here and rely on the services of Ballad Health, just as our neighbors do. So each decision we make, we consider as though it affects our own families. We appreciate the hard work of the Ballad Health team, who labor every day to serve the families in our region. The board of directors is deeply committed to our mission, and we share this passion with the entire team.



**David Lester**

Vice Chair and Lead Independent  
Member of the Board of Directors



# Governance Structure

## Active Supervision and Structure

As an entity authorized under the state-action immunity doctrine under federal anti-trust law, Ballad Health's creation is consistent with Tennessee and Virginia policy, as determined by the legislatures and governors. Further, Ballad Health subjects itself to active state supervision to ensure ongoing public advantage.

The Tennessee Department of Health concluded that the Ballad Health COPA continues to provide public advantage in both of its annual reports issued to date:



[Tennessee Department of Health COPA 2020](#)



[Tennessee Department of Health COPA 2019](#)

The Virginia Commissioner of Health similarly found a public advantage in his annual report:



[Virginia Commissioner of Health Annual Decision 2020](#)

## COPA Monitor (Tennessee and Virginia)

The COPA Monitor in Tennessee is an expert retained by the state for the purpose of ongoing monitoring of the COPA.

The duties and responsibilities of the Tennessee COPA Monitor include:

- Reviewing the reports that Ballad Health is required to submit for completeness and compliance
- Conducting audits on a regular basis as needed to verify information to determine COPA compliance
- Reporting to the state any findings of noncompliance
- Publishing an annual report

In Virginia, two monitors provide support to the Virginia State Health Commissioner as part of the Commissioner's active supervision of the CA.

## COPA Compliance Office

The COPA Compliance Office is a function within Ballad Health that reports to the Audit and Compliance Committee of the Ballad Health Board of Directors. The COPA Compliance Office is responsible for reviewing complaints related to the COPA in Tennessee and the CA in Virginia, and when appropriate, investigating the facts related to the complaint.

If the COPA Compliance Office believes a violation occurred, it can recommend corrective action. The COPA Compliance Office is responsible for ensuring there is a mechanism for receiving complaints, including the ability to make complaints anonymously. The COPA Compliance Office evaluates and identifies potential systemic problems, particularly those related to compliance with the COPA and the CA. Each year, the COPA Compliance Office prepares a report that accounts for any activities taken by the office and identifies any potential violations.

Additionally, the COPA Compliance Office is responsible for serving as the contact with the Tennessee and Virginia Departments of Health for ongoing communication and compliance with the COPA and the CA. The COPA Compliance Office also prepares and submits required deliverables, quarterly and annual reports to the Tennessee and Virginia Departments of Health.







[balladhealth.org](http://balladhealth.org)