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## Patient health isn't the only focus at Fletcher Allen Health Care.

BURLINGTON, VERMONT



**FLETCHER ALLEN HEALTH CARE** is both a community hospital and, in partnership with the University of Vermont, the state's academic medical center. Its mission is to improve the health of the people in the communities they serve by integrating patient care, education and research in a caring environment. Recently, the hospital expanded its patient roster by implementing a sustainability program in nutrition services. Now its objective is to improve the health of its patients, community and the environment.

The main goal of Fletcher Allen Health Care's sustainability program was to reduce its energy and water use by decreasing its volume of petroleum-based products and by implementing a Farm-to-Fork program.

In order to reduce waste, Fletcher Allen Health Care switched from foam cups and plates to biodegradable corn PLA cups and plates made from 100 percent reclaimed fibers. PLA cups are as light and strong as plastic cups, but they fully degrade into water, carbon dioxide and organic material when composted. Fletcher Allen intends to compost the biodegradable plates at their facility. The hospital has also replaced disposable catering trays with reusable trays, saving approximately \$1,000 annually.

In addition to reducing waste, Fletcher Allen Health Care has also implemented a Farm-to-Fork program that helps neighborhood farmers by purchasing their produce locally. Buying from local farms helps minimize the pollution resulting from transporting non-local produce. Two local farmers allow the hospital to store produce on their farms during the winter months. As a result, the hospital's farmers' market, which happens on site every Wednesday, has been expanded.

In addition to produce, the hospital is exploring the viability of the local beef supply in order to decrease the amount of antibiotics in the food supply. Currently, the hospital purchases all ground beef from a local farm that raises Black Angus cattle with no added hormones, steroids or antibiotics. The hospital has also

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decreased its use of dairy products that have been produced using recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBST). Today, all milk, mozzarella cheese and most yogurts are rBST-free.



Fletcher Allen's work with local farmers continues one step further. The hospital holds farmers' luncheons to educate employees, patients, consumers and other health care providers and organizations about the importance of their food production system and how it relates to both human and environmental health.



In addition to reducing waste and implementing a Farm-to-Fork program, Fletcher Allen has also decreased energy use by upgrading to more energy-efficient equipment. Fletcher Allen recently renovated one of its kitchens with a new water-chilled air handler, replacing an older, less-efficient unit. The anticipated annual water savings from the new air handler are approximately 4.6 million gallons.

Financially, Fletcher Allen has made some investments. Switching to biodegradable plates increased annual costs by approximately \$15,000. However, once on-site composting begins, about 15,000 pounds per year will be diverted from the landfill. Additionally, Fletcher Allen saves roughly \$1,000 annually by replacing the disposable catering trays with reusable trays. In regard to organic produce, the hospital spent 10 percent more on some products from one local farm, but saved about \$720 per year on butternut squash from the other farm. The new air handler cost the hospital \$57,000, but with anticipated water savings of \$36,000 annually, the hospital will recoup the cost in less than two years.

Fletcher Allen Health Care is focused on improving patient health, the community and the environment. By reducing waste, implementing a Farm-to-Fork program and decreasing its energy and water consumption, the hospital is one step closer to doing just that.