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MEDBANK OF MARYLAND INC.

Meds by mail

By Sharon Seidel

Nestled amid the pretty greenery of Towson sits MEDBANK of Maryland Inc., a vigilante organization that, since July 2001, has provided more than \$6.4 million in prescription medicines to more than 11,000 low-income, under- and uninsured Maryland residents.

As executive director of MEDBANK, Christine R. Garland has been instrumental in developing an organization that “is facilitating nothing less than a minor revolution in the way underinsured and uninsured Maryland residents can receive medication,” says Sherry Welch, who nominated the organization for the Innovator award.



Christine R. Garland, executive director of MEDBANK of Maryland Inc.

MEDBANK has accomplished the seemingly daunting task of transcending the usual tension between pharmaceutical companies and health service nonprofit organizations to forge a positive working relationship that greatly benefits some of Maryland’s low-income residents.

The typical MEDBANK patient has a monthly income of \$1,300, or 175 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For a patient who has hypertension and diabetes and no prescription insurance, his monthly drug expenses are easily \$200 per month, or 15 percent of his monthly income, explains Garland.

Without MEDBANK, “our patients would have no way of accessing medications that are vital to their health,” Garland said.

Ideally, all Maryland residents would have health and prescription insurance. Because this is not the case, MEDBANK is doing the next best thing: opening the Central Fill pharmacy. The pharmacy will expand MEDBANK’s operations and allow it to get needed medications to eligible patients more quickly.

"[Without MEDBANK], our patients would have no way of accessing medications that are vital to their health." - Christine R. Garland, Executive Director, MEDBANK of Maryland Inc.

Garland explains that in the current MEDBANK facility, patients need to wait six to eight weeks before they can receive their medications. Because medications will be dispensed directly from the pharmacy by mail, patients no longer will receive their medications within two to seven working days.

MEDBANK estimates that the pharmacy, which began filling prescriptions and dispensing donated medicines last month, will distribute about \$100,000 in medicines per month, or \$1.2 million per year.

Garland explains that the inspiration behind this innovation is simply wanting to get medicines to

people quicker. Looking toward the future, she says the creation of a national network or franchise would be a wonderful sort of follow-up to the current program.

The advent of the MEDBANK pharmacy is resourceful, unique and unwavering in its efforts to help people with their most basic needs. By creating the first Central Fill pharmacy, MEDBANK is and should be a model for other organizations wishing and working to better their communities.

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