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Virginia Mason Memorial recognized as among most sustainable health care facilities in the country with four awards

Practice Greenhealth Emerald Award honors Virginia Mason Memorial for its superior sustainability programs

(YAKIMA, WA) – In recognition for outstanding accomplishments in sustainability, Virginia Mason Memorial has received four awards this year from Practice Greenhealth, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care. The awards are given each year to honor environmental achievements in the health care sector.

The Greenhealth Emerald Award is presented to hospitals that demonstrate superior sustainability programs. The award recognizes Virginia Mason Memorial’s ongoing commitment to improving its environmental performance and maintaining a top standard of excellence in sustainability.

The Circles of Excellence Award, given to Virginia Mason Memorial for Healthy Food in Health Care, honors hospitals for outstanding performance in one specific area, such as reducing use of toxic chemicals or sourcing food sustainably. These awards highlight hospitals that are driving innovation in sustainability. There can be up to 10 designees selected for each Circle of Excellence category.

The Healthy Food category award highlights leaders in sustainable food services, including meat and sugar-sweetened beverage reduction, healthier meat procurement, local sourcing, food waste prevention and management. Top hospitals have written policies and an educational strategy that addresses the food system as a critical component in an overall sustainability plan.

The Greening the Operating Room Recognition Award acknowledges hospital sustainability programs that drive environmental stewardship within the surgical suite.

The Making Medicine Mercury-Free Award, new for Virginia Mason Memorial this year, is given to health-care facilities that have virtually eliminated mercury and have policies in place to prevent it from re-entering the facility. Mercury is one of the most hazardous chemicals and is associated with many health risks.

"We are proud to be named one of the top 10 hospitals in the country for our work toward providing healthy food for our patients, employees and visitors. We will continue to make sustainability a top priority everywhere we can, from eliminating mercury from our facilities to greening our operating rooms and more," said CEO Russ Myers.

"We embarked on our environmental sustainability journey four years ago, and I'm really proud of our staff and leadership," said Kate Gottlieb, Sustainability Program coordinator. "I can't wait to see how our work impacts Yakima and the health of our community."

Virginia Mason Memorial strives to serve food to patients, visitors and staff that is local, organic and sustainable whenever possible. Memorial buys meat and marine-certified seafood that are free of antibiotics and hormones when possible. In the past three years, Virginia Mason Memorial's garden, on the hospital campus, has provided 12,000 pounds of produce that was used in the cafeteria and served to patients.

In addition, Virginia Mason Memorial collected over 250 tons of recycling on the hospital's main campus in 2017. Energy use was reduced 3.2 percent.

In 2017, the Memorial OR diverted 16,498 pounds of medical waste from landfills through reduction and reprocessing devices with Stryker's Sustainability Solutions. Also, a sock recycling program, in which lightly used socks are washed and donated to the Union Gospel Mission, was also started.

The awards will be presented at the Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards Gala on May 9 in San Diego at the CleanMed Conference & Exhibition.

For more about sustainability efforts at Virginia Mason Memorial go to <https://www.yakimamemorial.org/sustainability.asp>.

About Virginia Mason Memorial

Part of the Virginia Mason Health System, Virginia Mason Memorial is a 226-bed, acute-care, nonprofit, community hospital serving Central Washington's Yakima Valley. Virginia Mason Memorial includes primary care practices and specialty care services including high-quality cardiac care; cancer care through North Star Lodge; breast health at `Ohana Mammography Center; acute hospice and respite care at Cottage in the Meadow, winner of the Circle of Life Award from the American Hospital Association for innovative palliative and end-of-life care; pain management at Water's Edge; an advanced NICU unit, the only place in Central Washington that offers specialty care for at-risk infants; advanced services for children with special health care needs at Children's Village; and The Memorial Foundation, a separate 501c(3) organization that raises funds for innovative health care programs in the Yakima Valley.

About Practice Greenhealth

Practice Greenhealth is the nation's leading health care community dedicated to transforming health care worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes a community anchor for sustainability and a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice. To learn more about Practice Greenhealth visit www.practicegreenhealth.org.

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