



Today's News Monday, March 02, 2009

New Village Care Head

Village Care of New York promoted Emma DeVito to president and chief executive. She succeeds Arthur Webb, who became Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers' chief operating officer. Ms. DeVito joined Village Care as chief financial officer in 1991 and has been chief operating officer since 2003. Village Care, a \$130 million nonprofit with 1,500 employees, operates SeniorChoices and a network of AIDS services. It is building a rehabilitation and skilled nursing care center on West Houston Street that is set to open in 2010.

Guv Seeks Credit Help

With scores of New York hospitals reporting problems getting credit, Gov. David Paterson is calling on the Obama administration to help revive the municipal bond market. In a recent letter to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, Mr. Paterson said a solution to the credit crunch is for the government to provide affordable bond insurance. "One possibility is providing \$2 billion to \$3 billion in capital for the municipal bond insurance market," he wrote. In addition to local governments and schools, hospitals are among the entities that rely on the municipal bond market for funding. "Continued weakness in that market could undermine the stimulus effort," the governor said.

Nurse Pension Alarm

The New York State Nurses Association is holding a rally today to urge trustees of its pension plans to take advantage of a new federal law that could prevent a panic over a drop in the value of the union's pension fund. In the 12 months ended Oct. 9, 2008, the NYSNA pension plans lost about 32% of their value. Under federal law, that puts the plans in a so-called red zone and gives the pension plans' trustees the right to reduce benefits for retiring nurses. The new law, passed in October, gives the plans some breathing space. It allows the trustees to formally declare that the plans are still solvent while they wait for investments to improve. NYSNA says the trustees are dragging their feet in using the law in the hope of reducing retiree benefits, which are paid through hospitals' contributions. The union also says it fears that if nurses who are eligible for retirement start wondering whether they will be able to get full pension benefits in the future, they will retire now. "This could lead to an immediate mass exodus of more than 2,500 nurses," a NYSNA spokeswoman says. The demonstration is at

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Immigrants left out of health coverage debate

If New York is going to successfully cover the uninsured, the state needs to be serious about getting health benefits for immigrants. More than one-third of the state's immigrants are uninsured. Together, they account for 25% of all uninsured New Yorkers. But the various proposals for universal coverage do not properly tackle the issue of immigrants, according to a new study. The authors examined the major proposals solicited by the state under its Partnership for Coverage initiative, which was created to explore universal coverage in New York.

The study concludes that while none of the proposals are likely to diminish immigrant coverage, none really address barriers that uniquely affect immigrants. If special provisions are not included in the design of coverage expansion plans, many immigrants will remain uninsured.

Many immigrants work for employers who do not offer insurance. Illegal or temporary immigrants don't have coverage. Immigrants also face cultural barriers in getting health benefits.

The study is by New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage and the New York Immigration Coalition, funded by a grant from the New York State Health Foundation. It is at www.cidny.org.

At a Glance

UNINSURED: "Covering the Uninsured: Options for Reform" is the title of a Webcast at 12:15 p.m. today sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation. It features a briefing with a panel of experts discussing options for expanding coverage for the uninsured and underinsured in the context of health reform. For information, see www.kaisernet.org.

R.I.P., CARITAS: Mary Immaculate Hospital and St. John's Queens Hospital shut down operations on Saturday. Their clinics might remain open for another week.