

COMMUNITY TIES

4 ideas to expand community outreach — and reap the benefits

Bruce Kupper's official titles are CEO of MEDARVA Healthcare and administrator at Stony Point Surgery Center, but unofficially, he's head cheerleader for community engagement. Under Kupper's leadership, MEDARVA serves its Richmond, Virginia, community through a variety of local programs and initiatives, from sponsoring nonprofit fundraising events, to offering a free colonoscopy day, to providing mobile vision and hearing screenings for kindergarteners.

MEDARVA focuses on doing good in the community, says Kupper, but not so much on taking the credit.

"It's more important to be known for the quality of what you do and your impact on the community," he says. "If you focus on quality, the branding will come."

Your ASC's ability to grow depends on attracting new patients. Engaging with your community shows you care and allows healthcare consumers to get to know you — and trust you — before they need you. While providing both patient education and complimentary health services are great ways to engage outside the walls of your facility, Kupper encourages ASCs to be creative to make an impact.

01 Partner with worthy organizations.

"Be known by the company you keep," Kupper says. MEDARVA collaborates with local organizations that deliver critical community services, such as the Goochland Free Clinic, which provides food, shelter and healthcare to vulnerable residents.

02 Reach out to referrers and insurers.

"Primary care doctors never leave their offices, so they will never know what the surgeons at your ASC are doing," says Toni Rice, business development officer, Radiology Associates of Richmond, and a former executive at HCA Capital Division. Reach out with information, visit their offices or invite them in, she says. "Organize lunch-and-learns and teach them about new surgical techniques."

03 Start a dialogue.

Encourage conversation about important issues affecting your community, Kupper says. "A few years ago, Joe Klein [writer for Time magazine] wrote about the last few months of his parents' life. We feel one of our jobs in the community is to stimulate conversation, so we invited Joe to speak. Nearly 400 people attended. We've also hosted debates between congressional candidates."

04 Focus on value.

Communicate the value that your ASC brings to the local healthcare system, Kupper says. Price transparency, low rates of surgical infections, minimally invasive techniques and shorter rehabilitations add value for healthcare consumers. For example, "Out-of-pocket costs for patients can be significantly lower than at hospitals," says Rice. "This is a tremendous community benefit," especially as patients bear more of their healthcare costs. ■

